

EMERGENCIA

HEALTH PROGRAM

A pillar of the Hand in Hand for Development program



Health Program



Association Cojolya

Localization

Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala

Project Segment

Health care and female economic empowerment

Period

Since 2021 - ongoing

Target Group

Mayan weavers of the Cojolya Association.

Amount of funding needed

10.000 \$

The Origins

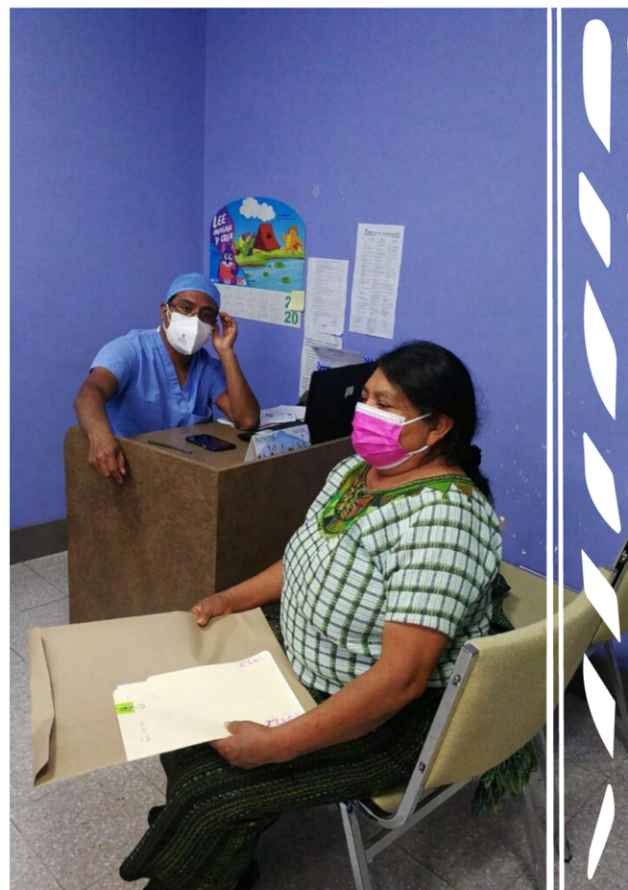
During the COVID-19 pandemic, Cojolya implemented outreach and awareness strategies to protect the artisan weavers and highlight the importance of seeking medical care in necessary and emergency situations. Through these efforts, **several critical health conditions among the weavers were identified**—not related to the pandemic, but rather stemming from **years of physical strain** due to backstrap loom weaving and a lack of consistent medical attention. The most prevalent issues were arthritis and chronic back pain.

In response, Cojolya established the Health Program in 2021 as a **subprogram of the Mano a Mano** por el Desarrollo Social Program. This initiative directly benefits all Cojolya artisans by **offering support for general medical consultations and access to necessary medications at a subsidized cost**. The Health Area now serves as a vital ally in promoting the well-being and long-term health of the weavers.

Identifying Health Challenges of the Mayan Weavers

At Cojolya, we believe that **every individual deserves equal and equitable access to healthcare** and essential medicines as a basic right. However, our analysis has revealed that much of the Tzutujil community has lost trust in local health services due to a **critical lack of adequate medical care** and a persistent shortage of medication.

In Santiago Atitlán, a Tzutujil town with approximately 50 000 inhabitants, there is **only one public health center** and a single private hospital to meet the community's needs. For generations, the custom has been to **seek medical help only in emergencies** or when an illness becomes severe. Furthermore, many people **rely on natural remedies**, which sometimes lead to positive outcomes, but in other cases, have negative or limited results.



The artisan weavers at Cojolya typically begin practicing their craft from a **very young age**, learning the art of weaving from mothers, grandmothers, and other family members. This tradition is deeply embedded in our cultural heritage.

Today, the average weaver at Cojolya is around 45 years old and has been weaving since the age of 10. Unfortunately, after **decades of weaving long hours daily without proper medical support**, many artisans suffer from chronic health issues, the most common being:



Arthritis



Chronic Back Pain

Through our extensive data analysis, we have identified **three main challenges** that hinder access to medical care for the weavers:

1

Limited and low-quality care in public health centers.

2

Financial barriers: High costs of medicines and private healthcare services

3

Habit of only seeking medical attention in emergencies, combined with prevalent use of natural remedies

The **goal of the Health Program** is to ensure that the artisan weavers have **access to general medical consultations** at Hospitalito Atitlán (the local private hospital) or can obtain necessary medications from local pharmacies through the financial support provided by the program.

How the Health Program works

At the beginning of each year, participating weavers receive a **Health Card**, which credits them with a designated amount that can be used for healthcare expenses throughout the year. This card serves as an **identification tool**, reflects the available balance, and provides the weaver with **privacy and confidence** when seeking medical care or purchasing medications. In urgent or severe cases, Cojolya offers additional financial support beyond the yearly allocated amount to ensure that the health and well-being of the weavers are prioritized.





A Growing Initiative: empowering weavers through healthcare access

In 2021, the year the program was established, the weavers participated in a general consultation day to create their medical records and receive an initial health diagnosis. The program started with 37 beneficiaries, and has since expanded to include 42 artisans.

Our goal is to **continue providing this vital support each year**, enabling the weavers to prioritize and maintain their health. The health of our weavers is fundamental for them to keep working in their profession. That's why it is **crucial to maintain and further strengthen this pillar** of our social program, ensuring our weavers stay healthy and thrive for years to come.

Thank you for your generosity—every donation makes a difference.



Contact

Asociación Cojolya
Calle Real, Cantón Tzanjuyu, Santiago Atitlán
Sololá, Guatemala

☎ (+502) 7721-7268

✉ info@cojolya.org.gt

🌐 <https://cojolya.org.gt>

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