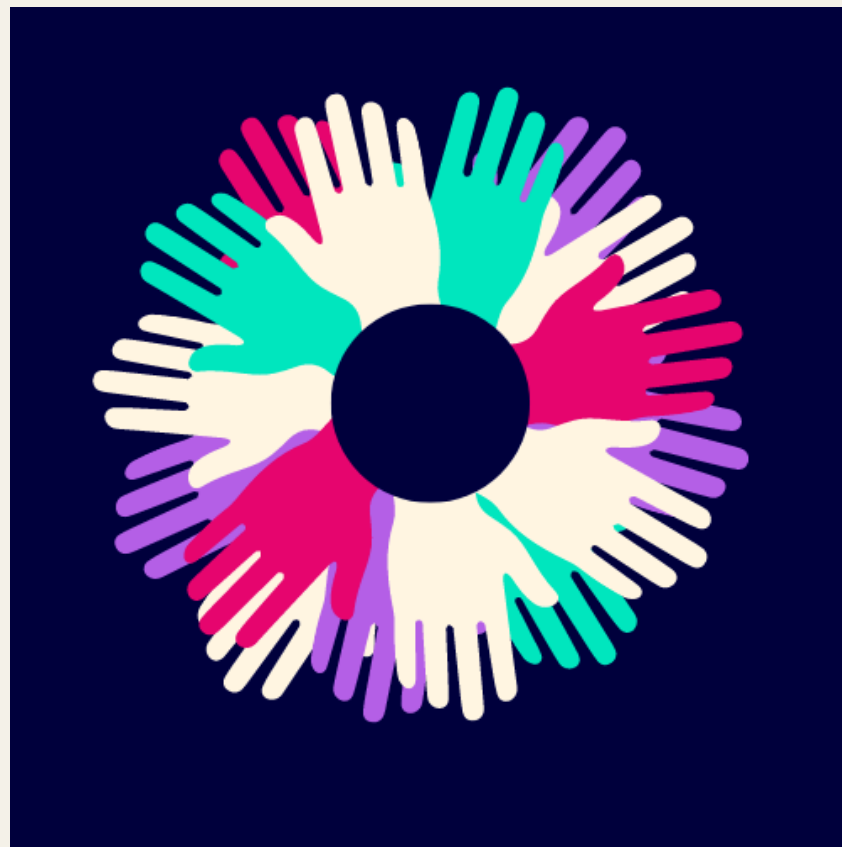


Manos Abiertas

SITE VISIT WITH POPULATION CONNECTION
SPRING 2025

“Woman-to-woman care”





MANOS ABIERTAS

Work: Women-led, community-based organization dedicated to advancing autonomous midwifery care and defending sexual and reproductive rights.

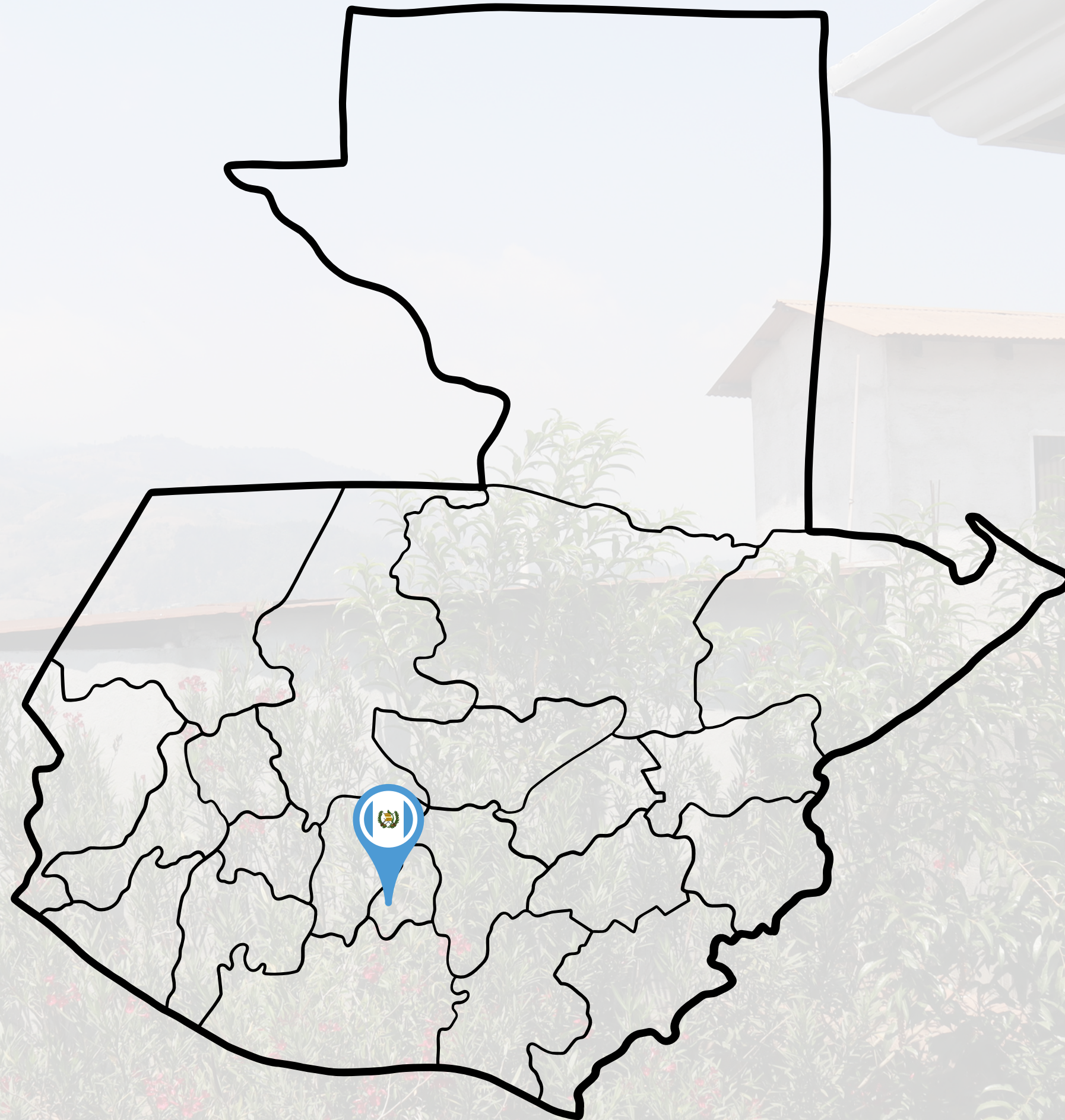
Manos Abiertas provides culturally competent education and holistic health services to empower Guatemalan women, particularly those in vulnerable situations.



Ciudad Vieja



Antigua



OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

"Obstetric violence" is the mistreatment, neglect, discrimination, or abuse of someone during pregnancy, childbirth, or the postpartum period by health care providers

- Physical abuse (rough or forced treatment)
- Verbal abuse (shaming, blaming, insults)
- Ignoring or refusing consent (e.g. for procedures, pain relief)
- Neglect (delayed/missing care, lack of privacy, inadequate resources)
- Denial of reproductive autonomy (refusal or pressure regarding childbirth)



OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

- **Sexual violence and forced pregnancy**
 - Between 2018-2024, ~14,700 births in girls aged 10-14 registered
 - Restrictive abortion laws
- **Maternal health outcomes**
 - Indigenous women account for about 45% of the population but $\frac{2}{3}$ of maternal deaths
- **Limited access to contraception and family planning services**
 - 1 in 3 Indigenous women have no access to health and family planning services
- **Denial of services, lack of information, and stigma**
 - Language barriers, lack of culturally appropriate care, logistical challenges (distance to facilities, lack of transport)
 - Health providers can sometimes refuse requests for things like pain medication when needed
 - Stigma—women and girls face blame, judgment for being sexually active, etc.



"My sister experienced obstetric violence at a hospital when she was giving birth to her son. When she got to the hospital, she asked for a female doctor, but was ignored.

The [male] doctor she was assigned told her to wait in the waiting room, even though she felt like she didn't have time to wait. She ended up having her baby in the waiting room. Because she was a woman, no one believed her. No one helped her."

**MIRIAM ELIZABETH SANTOS,
STUDENT MIDWIFE**



"Women have been conditioned and trained from very early on that they are not entitled to opinions about their bodies. They're not allowed to ask questions about their health. They're not encouraged to learn about their bodies.

So, what we do is we give the power of our bodies and our health and our autonomy to whatever male seems like the current authority—in this case, the doctors."

**DIANA FREIWALD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



"The presence of men is very strong."

"Men, just for being men, feel superior. That is worldwide."

"Men are often against family planning and birth control because they want kids. They believe that we should have as many children as God wants."

**EVELYN ELISA BOCEL,
JUNIOR MIDWIFE**



"There are different reasons why girls are getting pregnant—either because they're being abused, or because they don't have access to family planning, so they don't know that they can prevent unwanted pregnancies."

"When women have access to family planning, they are able to have better physical and mental health and can become more stable economically."

**MARÍA LESBIA BOCEL,
SENIOR MIDWIFE**



“If you have resources, quality care is widely available.”

“Patient-centered care, however, is not widely available—it’s not really a concept that has arrived here yet. As midwives, though, patient-centered care is just how we do it.”

**DIANA FREIWALD,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**



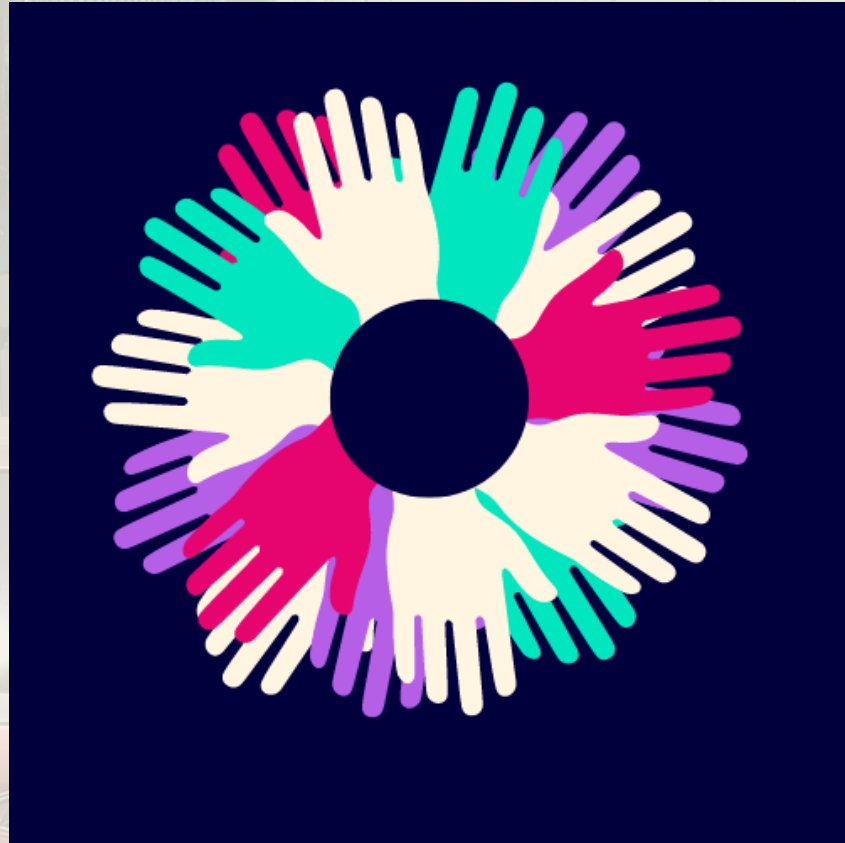
Manos Abiertas works to expand access to natural birthing methods, offering an alternative approach to childbirth that is rooted in compassion and holistic care.

"In midwifery, we say,

"What got the baby in is what's going to
get the baby out"

And that's oxytocin, that's love, that's intimacy, that's
comfortable spaces, that's being able to move, and so on."

-Diana



MANOS ABIERTAS



POPULATION
CONNECTION