

# GUATEMALA



Photo Courtesy of Jeffrey Lamont Brown

## THE NEED

Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America, with roughly 53% of its population living in poverty. In rural areas, such as the Western Highlands, food insecurity is wide-spread and affects the most vulnerable such as children and indigenous groups. Additionally, in remote, isolated communities the majority of women still give birth at home, contributing to one of the highest rates of maternal and infant mortality in Latin America. However, not only rural areas face challenges; urban migration has increased the number of unplanned settlements on the outskirts of Guatemala City which are highly susceptible to natural and other disasters.



**REGIONAL FOCUS:** Huehuetenango and Guatemala

**TECHNICAL EXPERTISE:** Economic Empowerment, Maternal & Child Health, Food and Nutrition Security, Disaster Risk Reduction & Response, Education, Water & Sanitation



## OVERVIEW

PCI began working in Guatemala in 1974, bringing basic health care to Mayan communities around Lake Atitlan. Throughout the 1980s, during the civil war that ravaged Guatemala, PCI trained an extensive network of volunteers and local leaders to deliver health services to families in need. Building on four decades of experience, PCI continues to work with Guatemalan communities to improve the lives of vulnerable populations. PCI is currently implementing various projects designed to diversify agricultural practices, improve the health and nutritional status of women and children and assist communities in improving their resiliency to disasters and other shocks.

## MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH LEGACY PROGRAM: CASA MATERNA

In 2000, PCI established *Casa Materna* (Mother's House), an integrated reproductive and maternal and child health program that provides outreach, and education services, out-patient clinical services, a pediatric clinic and an inpatient facility for women with high-risk pregnancies. Each year, PCI trains hundreds of community health workers, including traditional birth attendants, to identify women with high-risk pregnancies and refer them to *Casa Materna* for care, monitoring and safe delivery.

**Over the past 16 years, PCI's Casa Materna Program has provided more than 100,000 indigenous Mayan women with culturally-sensitive and high quality reproductive health care and enabled over 13,000 safe deliveries – without a single mother lost.**

## WOMEN'S ECONOMIC & SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Since 2012 PCI has implemented the Women Empowered (WE) Initiative in Guatemala, an integrated economic and social empowerment program that organizes women into groups where they pool their own resources, engage in productive activities and discuss community and social issues of mutual concern. At the national level, over 10,280 individuals (mostly women) have joined 586 savings groups which have collectively mobilized more than \$212,000 in savings.

**Women Empowered groups have granted over 2,200 small loans to women, amounting to more than \$132,000 invested in the health, education and productivity of Guatemalan families.**

Once established and operational, WE groups become a sustainable, ongoing business and economic development platform that is entirely directed and administered by the members themselves, without outside management, resources or long-term external support.



PCI (Project Concern International) is an international nonprofit on a mission to enhance health, end hunger and overcome hardship worldwide. Founded in 1961, PCI impacted the lives of more than 19 million people last year alone through programs in 15 countries spanning Asia, Africa and the Americas.



Members of a WE savings group



Students participating in PCI's Food for Education program



Community members map neighborhood risks and assets

### IMPROVING LIVELIHOODS & REDUCING VULNERABILITY

In collaboration with Save the Children, and with funding from USAID, PCI is implementing a six-year integrated food security program in Guatemala's Western Highlands. The program, named PAISANO (*Programa de Acciones Integradas de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional del Occidente*), seeks to reduce food insecurity among 26,000 vulnerable, rural households. The program focuses on increasing economic productivity, reducing chronic malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women and children under five and increasing community resilience to disasters and shocks.

Additionally, PCI is working to mitigate the impact of extreme drought conditions in highly vulnerable households in Huehuetenango through an emergency food security program. The USAID-funded program, entitled ACCION, is increasing access to food for households with pregnant women/new mothers and children who are malnourished through the distribution of nutrient-rich supplementary foods and food vouchers. In addition to responding to immediate needs for access to food, ACCION is improving hygiene, health and nutrition at the household and community levels and is securing treatment for severe cases of malnutrition.

### INCREASING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT & HEALTH

Since 2010, PCI's US Department of Agriculture-funded Food for Education program has flourished in six municipalities of Huehuetenango. Focusing on girls and indigenous populations, the program is designed to increase enrollment, retention and attendance rates of pre- and primary-school students through the provision of daily school breakfasts. PCI is also reaching parents with health and hygiene, nutrition and food security, and gender equity trainings as well as hosting school fairs that enable students to share nutrition, environment and youth leadership messages with other community members. Complementary activities such as solar disinfection of water, infrastructure improvements and the development of school gardens are also improving the quality of education and the health of children, teachers and communities.

### TRANSFORMING URBAN, HIGH-RISK NEIGHBORHOODS

With funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Barrio Mío is a collaboration between the Government of Guatemala, municipalities, the private sector, universities, local organizations, and local communities to develop scalable methodologies for upgrading high risk informal urban settlements into safer, healthier, and more resilient neighborhoods.

The strategy, based on PCI's "Neighborhood Approach," convenes a broad range of stakeholders—from women, men, children, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities in dangerous communities, to banks, municipalities, ministries, and construction companies, for example—to identify vulnerabilities and develop collaborative strategies to address them. *Barrio Mío*, which started in Mixco, Guatemala in 2012, has now scaled to 6 municipalities in the Department of Guatemala - Mixco, Amatitlan, San Miguel Petapa, Santa Catarina Pinula, Villa Canales, and Villa Nueva - and has the support of over 45 partners.

#### PCI/GUATEMALA

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