

HEALTHY CHILDREN, HEALTHY FAMILIES | MEXICO



A CAUSE FOR CONCERN

Mexico is populated by 109 million people, almost half of which are living at or below the poverty line. In search of work and economic opportunities, many families have migrated to live directly along the U.S. - Mexico border. These *colonias* are often overpopulated and without basic services such as

sanitation and clean water. The lack of infrastructure due to rapid urbanization and difficult access to health services has left these impoverished communities vulnerable to many infectious and chronic diseases.

The border population is estimated to grow from 16 to 25 million by 2030, meaning that challenges to provide services to these populations will persist. Issues such as poor air quality from manufacturing and border traffic, inadequate water quality and quantity, and the lack of access to healthcare present serious challenges for this region.

According to the Mexican Ministry of Health, this will be the first generation of children whose life expectancy will be lower than that of their parents. Currently, 26% of school-aged children and 70% of adults are either overweight or obese due to poor nutrition (National Survey of Health and Nutrition, 2006). Furthermore, the instability and increasing violence characterizing this area is also having a grave impact on the communities' health and well-being. Project Concern International (PCI) recognizes these challenges and is committed to addressing the multiple and integrated needs of these communities to ensure stability and vitality for the border population.

History

In 1961 PCI's founder, Dr. Jim Turpin, volunteered his medical services in Tijuana, Mexico, and worked with local volunteer Maria Meza to save the lives of two small children suffering from pneumonia. That experience had a significant impact on him and that year he made a promise to help the vulnerable children and families of Mexico and around the world. Since then, PCI has expanded Dr. Turpin's work to address various issues around the world, including maternal and child health, infectious disease, food and nutrition, disaster risk reduction, community capacity building, social mobilization, and gender. PCI has worked most recently in Mexico with the Mexican Ministry of Health to increase average tuberculosis cure rate in 13 states and to mitigate influenza through community outreach and education. Throughout, PCI has continued to honor the legacy of Dr. Turpin by reaching out to Mexico's vulnerable border communities to provide health education, illness prevention, and medical support services.

>>> **IMPACT:** Since 1985, PCI has provided preventive care and immunizations to nearly 75 thousand children, about 2,500 children per year.



VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY:

- *"It has been very helpful to have the Community Health Worker close because when my children get sick, I come to her for guidance."*
- *"The Well Baby Clinic helped me by informing me of the best ways to take care of my children to prevent sickness."*



Program Overview

A program highly recognized by the Mexican Ministry of Health, PCI's Healthy Children, Healthy Families legacy program promotes healthy development among high-risk populations affected by limited or no access to basic services, including healthcare. With the donation of a mobile clinic from Sempra Energy in 2008, PCI gained access to additional remote and impoverished communities of Tijuana. Today, the mobile clinic travels to 7 different neighborhoods (*colonias*) each week and provides quality outreach, health education, and preventive medical services through house visits and community fairs.

PCI staff, medical doctors, and trained *promotoras* provide the following services for approximately 2,500 children per year: vital immunizations; monthly growth monitoring of infants and children; nutrition counseling; health cards to monitor progress; education on disease prevention; oral rehydration therapy and vitamins; referrals to primary and specialty health care; and dental health promotion. As PCI recognizes the important role of the whole family in health, the clinic also extends its services to adults, including nutrition counseling, promotional and educational materials. In the last two years, PCI identified and linked to vital services nearly 30 people with diabetes and 124 children suffering from first and second degree malnutrition.

Community volunteers and *promotoras* open up their homes for monthly clinics in order to maintain the health of the children and families in the area. As the only resource for many of these communities, they often also find themselves addressing more urgent cases such as the provision of oral rehydration therapy to children suffering from life-threatening diarrheal disease – the biggest killer of children under-five in Mexico – or the recognition and referral of children with respiratory distress symptoms.

About PCI

PCI (Project Concern International) is an San Diego-based, 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.

Since the organization was founded in 1961, PCI has steadily built its reputation as a leader in bi-national, community-based health programming along the U.S.-Mexico border.

PCI Legacy Program

Our legacy programs have unique importance for PCI, and are chosen because they represent some of our fundamental areas of focus – maternal and child health and nutrition – whose roots go back to the inception of PCI. These programs have strong track records of saving lives in the most vulnerable communities worldwide, and providing measurable solutions for preventable complications.

PCI is committed to securing resources for these programs beyond any one donor-defined life of project, as our signature strategies to serve communities in need. "Legacy" for PCI means continuity, compassion, consistency, and commitment. Partner with us on our Legacy programs, and start making your own impact today.

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