



# Humanitarian Assistance & Resilience



**Barrio Mio**, which means “My Neighborhood” in Spanish, is a partnership between PCI and USAID/OFDA which seeks to develop scalable methodologies for upgrading high risk informal urban settlements into safer, healthier, and more resilient neighborhoods. Barrio Mio has now scaled to seven municipalities throughout Guatemala and has the support of over 40 partners. Its methodology was recently adopted by the Government of Guatemala as the national policy for emergency response and urban upgrading.

## OVERVIEW

Since its founding in 1961, PCI has responded to humanitarian emergencies and worked in communities that are highly vulnerable to a broad range of shocks and stresses. Examples include providing medical services in the Vietnam War under the principles of neutrality and impartiality; responding to earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes as well as outbreaks of disease, drought, economic volatility, and climate change across Africa, Asia, and Latin America; and, reinforcing resilience in nomadic pastoralist areas of Africa, coastal areas of Bangladesh, and urban informal settlements in Guatemala and Haiti.

In many regions where PCI works, shocks and stresses of all types and sizes – not just large disasters – can erode households’ coping mechanisms and capacity to thrive. In addition to preventing and rebuilding communities after a disaster, cultivating resilience is essential in keeping communities safe from everyday trends that can undermine their lives and livelihoods (e.g., disease outbreaks, small neighborhood level hazards, crime and violence, shifts in local or regional markets, and dry spells or heavy rains that can threaten harvests).

PCI reinforces communities’ existing coping mechanisms and livelihoods, and helps them to develop context specific, evidence-based, strategies to make them more resilient to shocks. PCI also works closely with government agencies, private sector actors, community groups, local universities, and many other stakeholders to build capacity and align them behind proven strategies to create more resilient systems for managing risk. PCI’s risk management strategies—many of which started as small pilot projects at the community level—have been scaled across municipalities and states, and have informed national policies.

PCI’s responses to humanitarian crises are built on the understanding that effective emergency response not only requires utilizing lessons learned, best practices, and normative principles of the broader field of humanitarian assistance, but also a rigorous understanding of the local context, and the underlying factors associated with vulnerability. PCI believes that even emergency responses mobilized with the best of intentions, when not based on rigorous, integrated assessment of the local context, can have unintended negative consequences on local capacity to recover from crises and rebuild stronger, more resilient communities. For this reason, PCI’s emergency response objective is to not only save lives and meet immediate needs, but be accountable for laying a foundation for recovery and longer-term resilience.

## HOW WE WORK

PCI’s comprehensive and integrated approach works across many sectors spanning both urban and rural vulnerable communities and includes a particular focus on the protection of vulnerable populations including youth, women, the elderly and disabled. Through innovative, evidence-based programming, PCI works to empower communities and build their capacity to respond to emergencies, recover from crises, and reduce vulnerability to future shocks and stresses.



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 10 million people last year alone through programs in 15 countries spanning Asia, Africa and the Americas.



PCI's humanitarian assistance and resilience programs work across various sectors, such as:

**Health and Infectious Diseases**—through community mobilization, providing direct health services and health system strengthening in crises, and responding together with local counterparts to address outbreaks of disease, such as Ebola and Cholera.

**Food and Nutrition Security**—by addressing crop and animal disease, reinforcing agricultural productivity and livestock management practices, improving natural resource management, and promoting better nutrition through small scale agriculture in emergency contexts.

**Water, Sanitation and Hygiene**—by increasing access to clean water and sanitation in emergencies, building local capacity to repair and upgrade wells and sanitation systems, developing innovative sanitation systems in high risk informal urban environments, and generating rain water harvesting strategies in drought prone areas.



In Malawi, 100% of communities participating in PCI's Njira project, a USAID/Office of Food for Peace-funded development food aid program, now have access to weather information, climate projections, and vulnerability assessments to inform decision making, such as in farming.

**Shelter, Settlements and Housing**—providing rapid shelter solutions in the wake of disasters, as well as helping communities to rebuild and repair homes and access more affordable housing, in safer, healthier, and more prosperous neighborhoods.

**Reinforcing Livelihoods**—by helping communities recover livelihood activities in emergencies, diversifying livelihoods in areas of chronic vulnerability to economic shocks and stresses, and working with private partners to increase access to financial services and decrease economic exploitation.



**Disaster Risk Management** – by strengthening the capacity of communities and institutions to prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters, strengthening disaster management systems on the local and national levels, and mainstreaming the strategic use of relevant data, including GIS data, for effective decision-making, budgeting and disaster risk reduction planning.

## The "Neighborhood Approach": Reducing Vulnerability to Urban Disasters

In the wake of the 2010 Haiti earthquake, PCI, USAID/OFDA, and partners transformed a downtown area of Port-au-Prince that was 70% destroyed by the 2010 earthquake, and not only met immediate needs, but helped communities lay a foundation for recovery. It was then that PCI made an organizational commitment to develop new, innovative approaches to respond to complex urban disasters in a way that not only saves lives and livelihoods, but facilitates the rebuilding of safer, healthier and more prosperous neighborhoods. This approach, now known as the "Settlements" or "Neighborhood Approach," has since been utilized by many agencies to respond to urban crises. Additionally, in partnership with USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, PCI is now writing manuals for the field of humanitarian assistance on the methodology.

PCI has since utilized the Neighborhood Approach to develop a unique capacity to reduce vulnerability to urban disasters and upgrade informal high-risk settlements. The organization works with local private companies, government agencies, NGOs, universities and communities to tackle a broad range of challenges posed by urban informal settlements. These challenges include the ability to retrofit unsafe homes and build community mitigation infrastructure in existing settlements; the creation of financial products that help the urban poor afford safer houses; the design of urban water and sanitation systems; and the use of tailored strategies to reinforce the social and economic empowerment of women, youth, elderly and disabled in high risk settlements.



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