

# GUATEMALA



## THE NEED

Guatemala is the most populous country in Central America and has among the highest income inequality and poverty in the region. In Guatemala's Western Highlands, 76.2% of the population lives in poverty, and over two-thirds of children are chronically malnourished (stunted). As food insecurity has deepened for the most vulnerable in Guatemala due to persistent drought and other shocks, migration to the United States has continued to steadily increase. Key indices related to education are also abysmal in Guatemala. Female literacy rates overall in Guatemala are among the lowest in Latin America at 63% nationwide, reaching as high as 90% in some indigenous communities. Finally, barriers to accessing high-quality, facility-based care have contributed to Guatemala's high ratio of maternal mortality, the highest in Central America.



**REGIONAL FOCUS:**  
Huehuetenango and  
Guatemala Departments

## 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.

## 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. Once established and operational, WE groups become a sustainable, ongoing business and economic development platform that is entirely managed by the members themselves. To date, over 900 WE groups have been formed by PCI in rural and urban areas throughout Guatemala, reaching approximately 15,600 women and their families.

Two years ago, PCI and Gap, Inc. joined forces to bring the company's Personal Advancement and Career Enhancement (P.A.C.E.) life skills curriculum to PCI's WE group platform. Nearly 200 women graduated from the WE-P.A.C.E pilot program, and PCI is expanding the WE-P.A.C.E. training opportunity to WE groups in northern Guatemala and rural Tanzania, with a target of reaching 9,500 women over the next two years.

Women Empowered groups have granted over 6,293 small loans to Guatemalan women, amounting to more than \$400,000 USD invested in the health, education and productivity of Guatemalan families.

## TRANSFORMING URBAN, HIGH-RISK NEIGHBORHOODS

With funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, PCI is developing innovative, scalable methodologies for upgrading high risk informal urban settlements into safer, healthier, and more resilient neighborhoods. Based on PCI's Neighborhood Approach, which was used by PCI and partners to respond to the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, PCI's "Barrio Mio" project in Guatemala focuses on reducing vulnerability to crises before they happen. By convening a broad range of partners - including ministries, municipalities, private sector partners, universities, and communities - Barrio Mio has developed and scaled strategies to upgrade high risk informal settlements and improve integrated urban emergency response. Barrio Mio has now scaled to seven municipalities throughout Guatemala and has the support of over 40 partners. The methodology has been adopted by the Government of Guatemala as the national policy for emergency response and urban upgrading.



## ABOUT PCI

PCI (Project Concern International), a Global Communities Partner, is a global development organization that drives innovation from the ground up to enhance health, end hunger, overcome hardship, and advance women and girls —resulting in meaningful and measurable change in people’s lives. Founded in 1961, PCI impacted more than 21 million lives in fiscal year 2019 through programs in 13 countries spanning Asia, Africa and the Americas.

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## IMPROVING FOOD SECURITY & REDUCING VULNERABILITY

Over the past three years, PCI has been working to mitigate the impact of extreme drought conditions in highly vulnerable households in Huehuetenango through various USAID-funded emergency food security programs. Through these programs, PCI has increased access to food for 6,000 households - with a focus on 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, PCI is working to improve 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 has implemented integrated school feeding programs in Guatemala with funding from the USDA McGovern Dole International Food for Education program. Now in its third phase, PCI’s EDUCAMOS project aims to improve access to, and the quality of, education for 36,660 students in 294 primary schools throughout the department of Huehuetenango. Implemented in partnership with the Guatemalan Ministry of Education and literacy partner Juarez & Associates, EDUCAMOS strengthens local schools and builds capacity at local, regional and national levels through strategies such as:

- Building literacy skills for students through teacher training and increased access to reading materials;
- Improving student nutrition by providing daily school meals and establishing school gardens;
- Enhancing health through infrastructure such as latrines and water systems;
- Supporting Guatemala’s transition to a national school feeding program; and
- Empowering schools and communities by strengthening Parent Teacher Associations and establishing Women Empowered savings groups.

As a complementary project, PCI is leading a consortium with partners Catholic Relief Services and Save the Children International to incorporate locally-grown fresh fruits, vegetables, and eggs into school meals by linking local farmers with schools in the departments of Huehuetenango, Quiché, and Totonicapán. This USDA-funded Local Regional Procurement project, called *Nuestra Cosecha* (“Our Harvest” in Spanish), is playing an important role in helping the Government of Guatemala to implement its National School Feeding Law, which requires schools to significantly increase the use of locally-sourced foods in school meals.

## Casa Materna

### PCI’S MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH LEGACY PROGRAM

For two decades, PCI’s *Casa Materna* (Mother’s House), has provided outreach, education services, clinical services 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. 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.