ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY
IN
HIV/AIDS

INTRODUCTION

HIV/AIDS is not just a health problem; it is a social development crisis that needs to be urgently addressed by all sectors of society. Recognizing the impact that HIV/AIDS has on all of its development programs, Project Concern International (PCI) has made HIV/AIDS one of its most important organizational priorities. PCI currently operates HIV/AIDS programs in Bolivia, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Nicaragua, the U.S./Mexico border region, Ethiopia and Zambia.

PCI believes that, with the right support, communities can lead the way in transforming the dynamics of HIV/AIDS infection, illness, and death into new beginnings of health and hope. A cornerstone of PCI's HIV/AIDS work is building the capacity of local organizations to deliver and sustain effective HIV/AIDS programs. This includes fostering multi-sectoral partnerships among government agencies, non-governmental organizations, private companies, faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, and other groups, while building bridges across traditionally isolated sectors such as health, education, social welfare, defense, and agriculture—an approach that helps create more powerful, far-reaching and sustainable HIV/AIDS programs.

DESCRIPTION OF CAPACITY

PCI has been active in HIV/AIDS response since the early 1990s, and its current HIV/AIDS and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) portfolio spans the range of prevention, care and support interventions in countries representing every stage of the pandemic, from emerging to advanced epidemics. PCI has proven strengths in the following program areas: OVC, including providing health care, psychosocial support, educational and livelihood opportunities, family strengthening interventions, and integration of OVC into home-based care programs; Street children, with an emphasis on getting children off the street and back into caring family environments; Home-based care, including health care, psychosocial and livelihood support, advocacy and legal interventions, and antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence support and monitoring; and, Prevention among high-risk groups, including truckers, sex workers, migrant laborers, injecting drug users, soldiers, police, children and adolescents, and prevention-of-mother-to-child transmission.

All of PCI’s HIV/AIDS programs build organizational capacity and link local organizations to work collaboratively to provide quality services and scale up program reach. PCI’s BEACON Initiative (Building Effective AIDS Coalitions, Organizations and Networks) provides a customized package of organizational capacity assessment and capacity building services to help local organizations better manage themselves, access new resources, become more stable and...
sustainable, and deliver effective, high quality HIV/AIDS programs. With USAID support from 1997-2005, participating organizations in India, Indonesia, Zambia, and along the US-Mexico border have been gaining the capacities and resources needed to help prevent the spread of HIV infection, provide care and support for HIV positive people and their families, and help protect and improve the well-being of highly vulnerable children.

**GEOGRAPHICAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**Zambia and Ethiopia**

**Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC)**

PCI assists families and communities in Zambia and Ethiopia to protect the well-being and health of vulnerable children, including those orphaned by HIV/AIDS. All of PCI’s OVC programs emphasize a child-centered approach that puts children and adolescents at the heart of program design and implementation.

In the late 1990s PCI pilot-tested the first wide-scale community mobilization programs to strengthen community capacity to cope with the growing number of OVC in two districts in Zambia. Supported by USAID, this work included building the skills of community members to identify and address the priority needs of OVC, and facilitating the formation of multi-sectoral district- and community-level OVC committees, which continue to play a vital role in mitigating the impact of HIV/AIDS on children. The successful program model has since been scaled-up in Zambia by other international and local organizations with USAID support.

Alarmed by the growing numbers of children taking to the streets in Zambia, in 2000 PCI launched *Africa KidSAFE* (Shelter, Advocacy, Food, and Education) with 10 grassroots organizations in the capital city of Lusaka, with support from numerous private funders. Linking these organizations together in a network, KidSAFE is helping to rebuild the "social safety net" that has been broken by poverty and HIV/AIDS. KidSAFE's family tracing, foster care, and shelter services return children to safe and caring living environments, and drop-in centers provide children with counseling, medical care, nutritious meals, and structured recreation. Small business training and loans help caretakers provide for children and keep them off the streets. KidSAFE is now being scaled-up with USAID support throughout major urban centers in Zambia.

KidSAFE's community schools enable street children and other at-risk children to continue their basic education and eventually return to formal schools. PCI and the KidSAFE network launched the first major community school feeding program for HIV/AIDS-affected families and children in urban Zambia in 2003 with support from the World Food Programme, which is reaching 70,000 children every day through over 200 community schools. PCI works with community schools to meet children’s daily needs, and builds the capacity of the schools to manage and deliver high quality and sustainable educational services. Participating schools also provide life skills and HIV/AIDS education, recreation, psychosocial and other support services.

In the fall of 2004, PCI began implementation of its USAID PEPFAR-funded *BELONG* Project (*Better Education and Life Opportunities for Vulnerable Children through Networking and*
Organizational Growth). Primary partners include Bwafwano Community Home-based Care Organization in Zambia, and Hiwot HIV/AIDS Prevention, Care and Support Organization (HAPCSO) in Ethiopia, as well as international partners The Futures Group and Pact, Inc. BELONG is designed to scale up comprehensive OVC support in both Zambia and Ethiopia by building the capacity of grassroots organizations to provide services for OVC and to work in collaboration with other organizations in a “learning partnership.” The project builds on successful models developed by PCI and local partners in Zambia over the past eight years, to expand and improve OVC services through community channels, including formal and informal schools, women’s groups, community-based and faith-based organizations and networks, and cultural and religious bodies such as Idirs (local funeral societies) in Ethiopia.

Community organizations are being strengthened to incorporate OVC services into their home-based care and other programs, and selected local non-governmental organizations are being strengthened to serve as mentors to smaller organizations seeking to provide services to OVC. Pact’s award-winning WORTH model of women’s empowerment through savings, loans, literacy skills building and business training is being adapted for use by female caretakers and older OVC to increase livelihood opportunities, and local organizations are being trained to support women in this work.

**Care and Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS**

PCI has been helping Bwafwano Community Home-based Care Organization and other grassroots organizations in Zambia build their HIV/AIDS care and support programs since 1997. In 2002, with support from Pact Community REACH, PCI launched a program to expand Bwafwano’s successful home-based care program, which now provides a comprehensive package of HIV/AIDS care and support services including clinic and home-based health care, counseling, nutritional support, tuberculosis treatment, and voluntary HIV counseling and testing. Programs for children in HIV/AIDS-affected households include counseling and access to health care, basic education, and food. Materials and methods for training volunteer caregivers were developed in collaboration with international partner JHPIEGO based on the Bwafwano home-based care model, and are being used to improve the quality and reach of programs for people living with HIV/AIDS and their children throughout Zambia.

**HIV Prevention with Defense Forces**

The Zambia Defense Force (ZDF) has been seriously affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. PCI launched a new program in 2003 with support from the U.S. Department of Defense to help prevent the spread of HIV among ZDF personnel and their families. Through this program, PCI is equipping the ZDF with the skills and resources they need to manage and sustain effective HIV prevention programs, including establishing a peer education program, developing and implementing exciting videos and other media to support behavior change, establishing voluntary HIV counseling and testing centers, and improving the diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. The program expanded in 2004 to include care and treatment for those already infected with HIV.
Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Adherence Support and Monitoring

Adherence is a critical component of effective ART programs that is often difficult to achieve. In 2004, Project Concern International (PCI) started engaging home-based care organizations to provide ART adherence support to AIDS patients in Lusaka and Mongu. PCI manages this program in partnership with the Lusaka Urban District Health Management Board, Mongu Lewanika General Hospital and the Centre for Infectious Disease Research in Zambia (CIDRZ), which is a collaboration with the University of Alabama-Birmingham. In the first year of the program, reported adherence rates are above 95%, and there are significant increases in the number of people attending voluntary counseling and testing services.

PCI trains home-based care organizations in a range of topics vital to ensuring proper adherence, including the basics of HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, adherence, psychosocial counseling, data collection and monitoring. With CIDRZ, PCI also developed the first ART adherence training manual for home-based caregivers in Zambia. By maintaining strong referral links, home-based care organizations and health centers are forging the partnerships they need to sustain and replicate this critical program. In addition, a pilot study being undertaken by PCI and CIDRZ, with support from the World Food Programme, is assessing the impact of food on adherence and patient well-being. Data from this study will influence program scale-up throughout Zambia as well as in other high prevalence countries.

Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission

As an isolated fishing district in the northeastern corner of Zambia, Nchelenge faces unique HIV risks. The mobility of fisherman, fish traders, and truck drivers who transport fish to major cities and have unprotected sex with sex workers along the way, contributes to the spread of the virus. PCI launched the NCHE (Nutrition, Child and Community Health, HIV/AIDS Education) program in 2002 with support from USAID. The project is intended to prevent the spread of HIV from mother-to-child, increase access to voluntary HIV counseling and testing, and reduce stigma concerning HIV/AIDS, as well as to improve overall child health and nutrition. By incorporating voluntary HIV counseling and testing into women's health services, PCI is helping women make healthier decisions about their pregnancies and avoid spreading HIV to their children during pregnancy and delivery, or through breastfeeding.

India

Care and Support for People Living with HIV/AIDS

PCI launched the PATHWAY project in 2001 in Pune, Maharashtra, with local partners NMP+ (the Network of Maharashtra by people living with HIV/AIDS) and Sevadham Trust, with support from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. PATHWAY builds dynamic partnerships among people living with HIV/AIDS, public and private health and social service providers, grassroots organizations, and community members to expand access to care, support and treatment for thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS and their families in Maharasta, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh.
Home-based care teams and a mobile clinic are the cornerstones of the PATHWAY referral network, bringing basic healthcare, treatment for sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis treatment, and voluntary HIV counseling and testing into the poorest communities where AIDS is becoming more visible. Sensitization activities are reducing stigma among health care providers, who previously refused to treat HIV positive people but now participate in the program's extensive referral network. Partnership with national ART roll-out programs is expanding access to treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. A key to PATHWAY's success is the extensive involvement of people living with HIV/AIDS, who co-manage and implement the program through NMP+ and other local positive people's networks.

**HIV Prevention with Truckers**

Truckers are at high risk of HIV due to their mobility, interactions with sex workers without using condoms, and generally low knowledge about HIV. PCI started the Healthy Highway Project in 1999 to build healthier attitudes and sexual behaviors among truckers, crew members, and communities along trucking routes. At rest-stops along a major highway in Rajasthan, PCI outreach workers engage truckers in discussions about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. Rest-stop staff, gas station workers, mechanics, and private health professionals are trained as peer educators and reinforce the work of project staff. The project, which was initiated with support from the British government and is now funded by the Indian government and private donors, has reached tens of thousands of truckers and transport workers with vitally needed information, condoms, and diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, and has succeeded in creating peer support for healthier sexual behavior.

**Street and Working Children**

PCI has been improving the quality of life for some of New Delhi's most destitute and vulnerable children since 2000, with support from Family Health International and private donors. Thousands of street and working children are receiving counseling, meals, health care, and basic education through PCI drop-in centers and referral partnerships. Vocational training and income-earning opportunities are helping these children improve their ability to take care of themselves. A PCI residential center provides shelter for those most in need, and conducts family tracing and counseling to help reintegrate children living on the streets back into families. A mobile van further extends healthcare and counseling to children on the streets and brings more children into the project's network of services. PCI also supports a street children's theatre group, which raises awareness about the situation of children on the streets and about HIV/AIDS, and advocates for the rights of children.

**Indonesia**

**Prevention**

PCI is one of the only international NGOs that has worked over the long term to improve the health situation in Papua New Guinea. Most recently, PCI has been implementing a PEPFAR/FHI supported behavior change program in Papua, which features extensive rollout of an adapted version of the Stepping Stones methodology for increasing community dialogue and changing community attitudes and behaviors related to HIV risk. The program is based on the
principles of locally developed solutions, exploration of issues in same-gender groups, and sustainable behavior change through community engagement. PCI has implemented Stepping Stones programs in over 20 communities in Papua, reaching over 20,000 people. PCI has conducted television, radio and print campaigns targeting key behavioral barriers to AIDS prevention. These programs have had linkages to community level work, profiled individual success stories, deconstructed popular myths about HIV/AIDS, included interviews with expert staff, and disseminated essential information about HIV/AIDS prevention. Target audiences have included: villagers, community leaders, government officials and Faith Based groups. PCI has worked closely with local Ministry of Education officials to conduct teacher training and peer education. Out of school youth have been reached in hard to reach rural areas through Stepping Stones activities described above, as well as in small family settings and local community musical events. PCI has worked to reach deep into community structures by bringing together local religious leaders to both gain their perspective on HIV/AIDS as well as to demonstrate key prevention messages and strategies.

PCI integrates HIV prevention into all of its community health programs in Indonesia. This has included promoting condom use and preventing sexually transmitted infections in Jakarta, Surabaya, and Manado; engaging religious leaders in West Papua to provide sex education for men; and increasing awareness about HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections among high school students in Jakarta. PCI integrated HIV prevention activities and reproductive health awareness into the Reebok Company's on-going health services program, through implementation of a Worker's Health Initiative in two local factories. Most recently, PCI has been mobilizing people living with HIV/AIDS to educate and sensitize others about the disease in West Jakarta's poorest communities, an approach that has proven effective in making HIV/AIDS real for people while, at the same time, providing an opportunity for HIV positive people to help stop the spread of HIV.

**Latin America**

In **Honduras** in late 2003, PCI launched a new program with USDA support to strengthen the capacity of local organizations to address HIV/AIDS. With local partner ASONAPVSIDAH (The National Association of People Living with HIV/AIDS), PCI is working to expand the reach and quality of health and social support services for people living with HIV/AIDS, with an emphasis on increasing the income-earning ability of HIV positive people and their families. PCI is augmenting adolescent-focused HIV/AIDS awareness activities with partner COMVIDA (Communication & Life), and is assisting long-term partner CEPS (Center for Research and Social Promotion) to address the HIV/AIDS prevention needs of mobile populations along the Nicaraguan-Honduran border. The program expects to reach 25,000 people in Honduras and 4,000 in Nicaragua with critically needed HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and support services.

In **Bolivia**, PCI integrates HIV/AIDS prevention into all of its reproductive health work by equipping community health promoters, traditional birth attendants, and government health staff with skills for helping people avoid HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Rural communities look forward to the arrival of PCI's *Carpa Lila* (Lilac Tent) that travels from town to town, bringing a lively mix of "educational entertainment" activities that educate adolescents and adults about how they can improve their sexual/reproductive health and avoid sexually transmitted infections. PCI helps secondary school teachers use educational theater, games, and
other fun activities to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to protect their sexual/reproductive health and avoid HIV infection.

In Nicaragua with World Bank support, PCI and local partner CEPS initiated a project in 2002 to help teens reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV. Peer educators reach young people with activities that help them understand the changes experienced during adolescence, recognize the pressures on them to engage in sexual behavior, and help boost their confidence and skills for resisting unwanted or unsafe sex. The program engages youth on the streets, as well as in schools where teachers are trained to lead workshops on sexual and reproductive health.

US & Mexico

**The Border Health Initiative**

Since 1996, Project Concern International's Border Health Initiative (BHI) has been helping local organizations and bi-national networks become more effective in their HIV/AIDS work. With support from the California Endowment, the California Wellness Foundation, and other private donors, the BHI helps local organizations at the frontlines of HIV/AIDS response access funding and gain new knowledge and skills that enable them to reach more people with critically-needed HIV/AIDS services on both sides of the border.

**HIV Prevention with Adolescents**

Medicina Social Comunitaria (MSC), a Tijuana-based PCI affiliate non-governmental organization, promotes HIV/AIDS awareness in the U.S./Mexico border region and educates the public about reproductive health and rights. Since the 1980s, PCI/MSC has been strengthening school-based HIV/AIDS outreach for adolescents by training hundreds of secondary school teachers in Mexican border cities to design and implement effective, school-based HIV prevention programs. With World Bank support, PCI/MSC is also equipping young people at local, secondary, and preparatory schools in Tijuana with skills to educate their peers about HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health.

PCI's New Americans program works to improve the health and well-being of the estimated 30,000 African immigrants and refugees living in the Mid City community of San Diego, California. A core component of New Americans, Project B.R.O. (Brotherhood, Responsibility, Outreach), delivers and evaluates the effectiveness of an intensive, multi-pronged approach to improving sexual and reproductive health—including reducing HIV risk behavior—among 14 to 19-year-old African immigrant males.

**HIV Prevention with Men**

PCI/MSC is pioneering "masculinity" projects in northern Mexico that challenge negative stereotypes about what it means to be a man, and help men develop stronger self-esteem and healthy attitudes towards women. Discussion groups led by peers help men learn new ways of thinking about fatherhood, violence in the home, women's and children's health, and sexual behaviors that contribute to the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.
Masculinity projects are taking place in diverse settings including prisons, where they often include both male and female inmates.

**PCI ORGANIZATIONAL HISTORY**

Project Concern International (PCI) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization that has been dedicated to promoting community health, human rights and integrated development for 44 years. PCI provides technical assistance and services to about 3 million vulnerable people each year, concentrating interventions and programming in the following areas: maternal and child health; disease prevention, with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS; water and sanitation; food aid and food security; and networking, capacity building, and institutional strengthening. PCI currently operates programs in 11 countries on four continents: Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Bolivia, India, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Zambia and the United States. PCI is a registered non-profit organization in the United States, headquartered in San Diego, California, and is also a registered charitable organization in the United Kingdom.

*Motivated by our concern for the world’s vulnerable children, families and communities, PCI’s mission is to prevent disease, improve community health, and promote sustainable development through dynamic partnerships that build local capacity in efficient and measurable ways. PCI envisions a world where abundant resources are intentionally shared and communities are committed and able to ensure the health and well-being of their members.*