

# Rotary Public Health Unit – Merida, Mexico

Initial draft by: Kevin Webb,  
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## Current Situation:

Despite the fact that life expectancy at birth in Mexico has improved from forty-two years in 1940 to seventy-three in 2000, major inequalities persist in health and access to health care. The Mexican health care system has evolved into a series of disjointed subsystems that are incapable of delivering universal health insurance. Without greatly restructuring the way health care is financed, performance with respect to equity will remain poor.<sup>1</sup>

## Public Health

The focus of a public health intervention is to prevent rather than treat a disease through surveillance of cases and the promotion of healthy behaviors. Public is defined as the science and art of promoting health, preventing disease and prolonging healthy life through organized efforts of society. In addition to these activities, in many cases treating a disease can be vital to preventing it in others, such as during an outbreak of an infectious disease. Vaccination programs and distribution of condoms are examples of public health measures.

There is a vast discrepancy between access to healthcare and public health initiatives between developed nations and developing nations. In the developing world, many public health infrastructures are still forming. There may not be enough trained health workers or monetary resources to provide even a basic level of medical care and disease prevention. As a result, a large majority of disease and mortality in the developing world results from and contributes to extreme poverty. In many countries in Africa, governments spend less than USD\$10 per person on healthcare, while, in the United States, the federal government spent approximately USD\$4,500 per capita in 2000.

Many diseases are preventable through simple, non-medical methods. Public health plays a very important role in prevention efforts in both the developing world and in developed economies, either through the local health system or through international non-governmental organizations.<sup>2</sup>

## Public Health Unit:

A Public Health Unit is an official health agency established by a group of urban and rural municipalities to provide a more efficient community health program, carried out by full-time, specially qualified staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Mariana Barraza-Lloréns, Stefano Bertozzi, Eduardo González-Pier, and Juan Pablo Gutiérrez “Addressing Inequity In Health And Health Care In Mexico.” HEALTH AFFAIRS ~ Volume 21, Number 3. Page 48. <http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/reprint/21/3/47.pdf> Accessed: July 20, 2007

<sup>2</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public\\_health](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_health). Accessed July 20, 2007

Health units administer health promotion and disease prevention programs to inform the public about healthy life-styles, communicable disease control including education in STDs/AIDS, immunization, food premises inspection, healthy growth and development including parenting education, health education for all age groups and selected screening services.

Each health unit is governed by a board of health, which is an autonomous corporation under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, and is administered by the medical officer of health who reports to the local board of health. The board is largely made up of elected representatives from the local municipal councils. The ministry cost-shares the expenses with the municipalities.<sup>3</sup>

**Proposed Intervention:**

Implement a public health unit in the city of Merida that will:

1. Provide basic healthcare services for the local community in collaboration with the local hospital and Medical faculty of the University.
2. Provide and administer health related education programs to the local and the rural and remote communities. These programs could include:
  - a. Community Health Fairs;
  - b. Basic Nutrition and obesity;
  - c. Hygiene;
  - d. Etc....

As identified by the local community and healthcare experts as a priority need.

3. Facilitate the bringing of internationally acclaimed healthcare specialists to the local hospital and/or University to help train local healthcare workers.

**Beneficiaries:**

Need to identify the target population for the health unit (local and rural) according to gender (boy/girl & man/woman). It will also be necessary to identify the priority health care requirements of the population and have the health unit emphasize the appropriate interventions.

**Board of Health:**

The Board of Health is similar to a Board of Directors in that it oversees the operation of the Rotary Health Unit to ensure ethical and medical standards are maintained, handle complaints, ensure fiscal stewardship, etc... It will also work with the Executive Director to develop a sustainability plan.

Appointment to this board would be voluntary and members would be highly respected members of the community with high ethical character.

**Community Links:**

- Host and sponsor Rotary clubs;
- Local Community – RCC?;

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phu\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/contact/phu/phu_mn.html). Access July 20, 2007

- Local Medical facilities – hospital(s) & University;
- Medical & pharmaceutical companies (domestic & international);
- Local businesses & companies (healthy workers = productive workers);
- Government – local; State; Federal;
- International Governments – Canadian Consulate;
- Ex Patriot Canadians, Americans, etc... living in Mexico;
- Civil Society Organizations currently working with target beneficiaries.

**Requirements:**

- Building;
- Vehicle - Mobile Health Unit;
- Trained personnel:
  - Program facilitator(s) – e.g. coordinate health fairs throughout the state;
  - Administrative staff;
  - Trained Healthcare workers.
- Volunteers:
  - Doctors & nurses “on loan” from hospital/University (could include interns &/or medical students supervised by a qualified doctor);
  - Rotarians (local & foreign) – according to need and skills.
  - Doctors from overseas to provide training & perform specific interventions not available otherwise.
- Medical supplies – based upon community identified requirements
- Medical Equipment – examination beds; etc...
- Office Equipment (computers; phones; photocopier; desks & chairs; etc...)

**Cost:**

These costs are guesses. Actual costs will have to be fully researched before being submitted in a proposal:

Health Unit facility (fully furnished -	\$250,000
Mobile Health Unit -	\$75,000
Salaries -	\$200,000 / annum
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Executive Director;</li> <li>• 2 Program Facilitators;</li> <li>• 1 Administrative Assistant;</li> <li>• 3 Qualified Healthcare workers</li> </ul>	
Medical Equipment	\$75,000
Medical Supplies	<u>\$50,000</u> / annum
	<b>\$650,000</b>

**Organization Chart  
of  
Rotary Health Unit**

