

Team Name: Sharing approaches to tuberculosis care and prevention among two California counties, the State of California, and the State of Baja California in Mexico

Major Activities: The International Community Foundation (ICF) spearheaded this effort to develop a formal and sustainable mechanism for the Counties of San Diego and Imperial, the State of California, and the State of Baja California (Mexico) to continue their cooperative efforts to address cross-border tuberculosis (TB) cases. Multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) is of particular concern on both sides of the border.

ICF spent considerable time and effort establishing a new nonprofit agency on the Mexican side of the border called *Puentes de Esperanza*. Although the public health system in Mexico provides various aspects of TB care, there was no single contact to coordinate with the TB contact in San Diego or Imperial County. *Puentes*, through a designated *promotora*, offers the comprehensive services that support cross-border TB efforts, including case management, continuity of care, contact tracing and reporting. *Puentes* can also purchase the expensive MDR-TB medication regimen at a lower cost than is possible in the States.

Another major activity was the development of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) for ICF and all of the involved governments (with the exception of the State of California, as it turned out that governmental restrictions prohibited participation in this type of legal agreement). The MOA provides an extremely detailed description of how each signature agency will collaborate with others to provide TB prevention and care services. The MOU underwent myriad legal reviews and revisions before it was acceptable to all signatories.

Major Accomplishments: The MOA that formalizes all of the current informal, cooperative efforts was signed June 2015. This marks a significant achievement, given all of the legal and cultural barriers inherent in a bi-national agreement. The MOA sets the foundation needed to institutionalize the ongoing collaboration that is critical to successfully prevent and treat cross-border cases of TB.

Furthermore, by the end of the project period Imperial County and Baja California had successfully treated a complex case of multi-drug resistance TB. Providers on both sides of the border credit *Puentes* -- and specifically its *promotora* -- for this accomplishment.

Challenges: The project team experienced cultural challenges while working on this effort, with the most tangible issue being the differences in communication style. In the Mexican culture, the development of an MOA entails numerous and lengthy discussions over a period of time, while in American culture this process is much more abbreviated. Not anticipating this cultural difference, the US partners did not build in sufficient time for discussions with their Mexican counterparts and the discussions between the Mexican participants. Working with bureaucracies presented another barrier, as each government operated differently and each approval process was lengthier than expected. Finally, there were several leadership and staff changes in the participating agencies on both sides of the border, causing further interruptions and delays. All of these challenges were eventually overcome by the perseverance of the project team.