

## “OUR HOUSE - NUESTRA CASA”

*A Touring Project for Tuberculosis Advocacy, Communication and Social Mobilization*

### WHAT IS “OUR HOUSE - NUESTRA CASA?”



It is a three-dimensional house which reflects the life and stories of people affected by tuberculosis (TB), their surroundings and their messages of reality and hope from the U.S.-Mexico Border and the rest of the country.

It is a tool for advocacy, communication and social mobilization promoting awareness among decision makers, health care providers, and the public in general to get involved in concrete action to prevent the spread of TB, reducing the number of cases and deaths caused by it.

### How is this project conceived?

This initiative stems from the need to reinforce the advocacy, communication and social mobilization efforts for the prevention and control of TB in Mexico. Realizing that the community and the persons affected by TB must be involved and their real-life situation addressed if efforts to combat the disease are to be effective, a novel approach was developed through “The Shack.”

Damien Schumann, talented photojournalist and committed social activist, first constructed “The TB/HIV Shack,” representing a typical South African, low-income dwelling, to raise awareness about one of the settings where TB and HIV/AIDS coexist. The Shack was presented with great success at various events including the 38<sup>th</sup> Union Conference on TB and Lung Health in South Africa in 2007 and the AIDS Conference in Mexico City, August of 2008.

Project Concern International (PCI) and the US-Mexico Border Health Association (USMBHA), with collaboration from the Mexico National Tuberculosis Program and financing from USAID-Mexico, took on the commitment to adapt Damien Schumann’s concept to “Nuestra Casa” and make this project a reality. The purpose of this mobile exhibit is to fulfill the social commitment to recognize and put in perspective the TB problem, to increase political will which will improve prevention and control of the disease, and to reduce the stigma and discrimination experienced by the persons affected by TB.

### How was this project accomplished?

During several months of planning and field work, Damien Schumann with help from persons affected by TB and TB Photovoice participants, health providers from health authorities, and community based organizations, visited 5 border cities: Tijuana, Baja California; Reynosa and Matamoros, Tamaulipas; Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua; and El Paso, Texas.



The purpose was to live at these sites and experience the TB situation, its psychosocial surroundings, and be able to capture and put this reality into context. Damien documented the experiences, the conditions that contribute to the development of the disease, as well as sharing the positive factors of the surroundings.

The results of these visits, interviews, testimonies and photographs are now part of this mobile exhibit which also contains personal items from individuals affected by TB who contributed with the goal that “other people not live through what we suffered.”

### What does “Nuestra casa” represent?

- The social reality and surrounding conditions of TB
- Stories of resilience and empowerment
- Stories of hope about what I can do to help with the TB situation

### How was “Nuestra Casa” built?



“Nuestra Casa” is a movable house mainly constructed out of wood and materials easily found in Mexican communities. It is easily dismantled and can be transported in sections or panels. The entire exhibit collapses down for transportation in a small moving truck. It is assembled in a few hours, following the guide manual and video with complete instructions. The house consists of a living room, kitchen, bathroom, a hallway or **Corridor of Hope (*Camino de la Esperanza*)** and a small patio at the main entrance. In this setting, the life stories of persons affected by TB are presented.

Standing, its dimensions are approximately 28x23 feet and its height is 9.5 feet. For shipment, the disassembled panels and the furniture will require three pallets of 8.5x5.7 feet and 6 feet in height. In addition, the tin roof panels are 3x13 feet.

### Who can exhibit “Nuestra Casa”?

Any institution or organization interested and concerned about TB as a public health problem, who realizes the potential of “Nuestra Casa” to motivate its visitors to become part of the TB prevention and control efforts, to spread the word and mobilize to generate a social change.

### What are the requirements to host this exhibit in my community?

- Have sufficient space to accommodate the structure and allow for traffic flow
- Have a responsible party to safeguard the exhibit
- Sign a letter of agreement
- Cover the shipment costs from the site where “Nuestra Casa” may be located to its destination and, in case there is no subsequent destination, the return of “Nuestra Casa” to its headquarters
- Provide protection from inclement weather if set outdoors
- Provide security against damages if outdoors or in a high traffic setting
- Repair any damages as needed
- Return the entire inventory of objects contained in the house

## What are the advantages of exhibiting “Nuestra Casa?”

Placing TB and the persons affected by TB on political and social agendas and/or raising their priority are favorable for TB control. Community participation, as well as the involvement of TB affected persons, is fundamental for successful social mobilization.

## How can I contribute to this project?

Let’s make the “Nuestra Casa” Project an exhibit with massive, community and social outreach nationally and internationally. One essential site for this exhibit is the 40<sup>th</sup> Union World Conference on Lung Health: Poverty and Lung Health in Cancun, Mexico, December 3-7, 2009.

You can also contribute by identifying potential health-related, cultural, artistic, and educational or community events in which “Nuestra Casa” may be exhibited.



*Photos by Damien Shumann*

**BE PART OF THE CHANGE AND INNOVATION  
IN ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MOBILIZATION**

## Where can I get more information?

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