

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile

NO. 3: NEWS ROUND UP

EPES INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL: LAUNCHED IN 2010, BACK IN 2011

A long-time dream of EPES came true at the beginning of 2010 with the inauguration of its International Training Course on Popular Health. For two weeks in Santiago and Concepción, 20 participants from eight countries experienced first-hand the methodologies that EPES has pioneered over three decades of community work.

"An impressive collection of participatory tools for liberating action, alliance-building and everything we do to accompany our communities," is how Rubi Flores, Lutheran Church of Honduras, described the course.

The 2011 course, entitled "Dignity, Empowerment and Equity: Participatory and Community-Based Health Strategies" will be held from January 4 to 14 and will focus on EPES' response to community needs following the February earthquake.

For information, see www.epes.cl



Learning by doing: Participants in the EPES International Training Course gain experience doing HIV/AIDS education at a local farmer's market.

FAITH COMMUNITIES AND HIV/AIDS

How are Lutheran faith communities in Latin America addressing HIV/AIDS? How have HIV/AIDS-related issues changed the church?

Answers to these questions were culled from 26 in-depth interviews conducted by EPES at the request of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). EPES also "mapped" the HIV/AIDS programs of Lutheran churches and organizations in the region and presented findings to the ELCA "Transformed to Transform" consultation in Lima, Peru in late June.

"Our 'plus' as churches must be to emphasize radical inclusiveness, respect for all types of dignity, all types of people, irrespective of identity, since we see the image of God in each and every one," said conference participant Rev. Lisandro Orlov, Regional Coordinator for Latin America of the Lutheran World Federation HIV/AIDS Campaign.

NEW ANTI-VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN LINKS CITY, COMMUNITY

"For Me, For You, No + Violence" is the slogan of an EPES-led campaign that features an innovative partnership with the city of El Bosque, its health and social welfare services, and grassroots groups.

The campaign was launched in July at a popular neighborhood shopping mall with balloons, banners, music and massages for women. Activities will continue with workshops at clinics, mural painting and pamphlets on the streets, and conversations door-to-door, reaching thousands of El Bosque residents over four months.



Julia Navarro of the El Bosque AIDS Network community group, Rosario Castillo Executive Director EPES, and Sadi Moya Melo, mayor of El Bosque, sign the partnership pact.

TRAINING RURAL HEALTH PARAMEDICS



Rural health workers develop community participation skills.

Public health services around Chile are turning to EPES to train rural workers in community participation. More than 100 paramedics attended workshops in 2009, and more are scheduled this year.

Participants at a two-day session in central Chile said the workshop "clarified our ideas about acting as agents of change," according to Andrés Ramos, whose post attends 4,500 people. The EPES approach "renews our energy" in a job that is "gratifying, but tense."

Paramedic Héctor Jimenez said garbage collection and pesticide disposal are the 1,400-member community's top priorities. "And we can tackle these issues if we mobilize," he believes.

The program was funded by Chile's Health Ministry, which distributed 2,000 copies of the Manual that EPES developed for the training.

CONCEPCIÓN: AFTER THE QUAKE, RESPOND AND REBUILD

Concepción and the surrounding area were dealt a devastating blow by the February 27 earthquake and tsunami: scores died; thousands lost homes and livelihoods; schools, clinics, roads, bridges, factories, stores and dreams collapsed.

No individual or community can really be prepared for a catastrophe of this magnitude. But in many ways, EPES was. Its work with the poorest communities — the ones hit hardest — meant it was already there to mobilize resources, support local leaders, link up and put into motion the tremendous outpouring of solidarity that the tragedy unleashed.

Once assured that the EPES staff and building were safe, the Santiago and Concepción teams worked unceasingly. Dr. Lautauro López, EPES Concepción director, got water pumps going within 24 hours. Health monitors canvassed their neighborhoods with first aid information. In Santiago, EPES helped create the Ecumenical Emergency Committee (CIECH), which sent aid caravans as soon as roads reopened. The EPES center that so many AHA supporters helped build was the main collection and distribution point for these seven churches and organizations.

The video on the EPES website captures why working with the community is so important in the recovery process. Volunteers, staff, health promoters and neighbors express their concerns over being pushed aside by top-down decision-making, and claim their right to voice and action in the reconstruction process.



FIRST RESPONSE



(top) The EPES Center became the hub of the community, distributing water to 300 neighboring families. (above) Distributing food boxes.

EMERGENCY BRINGS EPES “BACK TO OUR BEGINNINGS”

“This catastrophe overturned many assumptions and brought us, as EPES, back to our roots. We carry earthquakes in our blood, so it wasn’t the buckling earth that most surprised us: it was the absence of an organized response. Most support came from people on the block, local organizations.

EPES’ strategy was to find the communities we could best help to empower and mobilize. Penco’s Villa Bosque Mar camp fit the bill. We were no strangers there: we knew the fishermen and seaweed collectors, their trade unions and food stalls. We identified leaders, mediated among them, and helped them diagnose their situation house-by-house. Given the shoddy housing they received, it was clear that winterizing was a priority. We also equipped the community hall, and are now conducting a first aid course there for women.

This feels like a return to our EPES origins: working in a shantytown — in this case, a new one, created not by a land takeover but by a natural disaster — empowering women around health and housing, fostering collective action.”

– Dr. Lautauro López, director, EPES Concepción



Dr. Lautauro López reviews medicine for emergency health kits; administers first aid to families living in tents.

THANK YOU

Thanks to the generous solidarity of so many supporters, EPES is focusing on two programs to address material and emotional needs of earthquake and tsunami victims. The EPES team says THANK YOU to the organizations below and to scores of individuals who said: ¡PRESENTE! WE’RE WITH YOU!

- | | |
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| 1199/SEIU (Service Employees International Union), New York | New Global Citizens Club, Shaker High, Latham, New York |
| A Mano, Takoma Park, Maryland | St. John’s Lutheran Church, Albany, New York |
| ACT International (Action by Churches Together) | St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Indianapolis, Indiana |
| ChileCAD (Chilean Cultural Association of Davis), California | Streng Family Fund |
| Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) | Trinity Lutheran Church, Owatonna, Minnesota |
| Global Ministries/Latin America-Caribbean/Disciples of Christ/UCC | Wheat Ridge Ministries |
| First Lutheran Church, Albany New York | Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Minnesota |
| La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, California | And... |
| Learning ZoneXpress, Owatonna, Minnesota | Chileans in Lyon, France |
| Lutheran World Federation | Friends from Canada, through TIDES |
| Mano a Mano con Chile, California | Friends from San Francisco, California |
| Mercy Corps | Friends from around the world, through Action for Health in the Americas (AHA) |

COMFORT AND SAFETY FOR SHAKEN CHILDREN



(above) Community leaders and teachers are among the 60 facilitators trained to date to lead “Comfort 4 Kids” workshops. (above right) Recovering confidence and culture. Abigail Figueroa, 5, participates in a workshop organized by a neighborhood group in Talcahuano that combines emotional support with Mapuche language, songs and legends.

More than 1,000 youths in five cities are participating in workshops based on the Mercy Corps Comfort4Kids model (see reports by Karen Anderson at: www.mercycorps.org). Younger children write and draw their feelings in a “My Earthquake/Tsunami Story” notebook that comes in a backpack with pencils, eraser, a stuffed animal and a flashlight. Older children receive volleyball nets, soccer balls, T-shirts and other equipment for a program of games and team sports.



Students at Rosa Medel Elementary School show off their backpacks from the Comfort4Kids program.

PENCO: SHELTER AND SUPPORT



Villa Bosque Mar, the camp for Penco residents whose homes were washed out to sea.

The Villa Bosque Mar resettlement camp is home to 50 families who once lived along the shore and depended on the sea. Independent people, low on schooling and income, they are now living in one-room government-issued wooden shelters that lack running water, sharing communal latrines and cold-water showers. But thanks to timely intervention, residents will face the winter dry and warm under repaired roofs, insulated walls, windows with glass, gas heaters, burners and real beds. EPES is also conducting emotional support workshops for women and training in health and first aid.



Zuñilda Barrales shows repairs underway. EPES bought a special mattress for her 104-year-old grandmother.

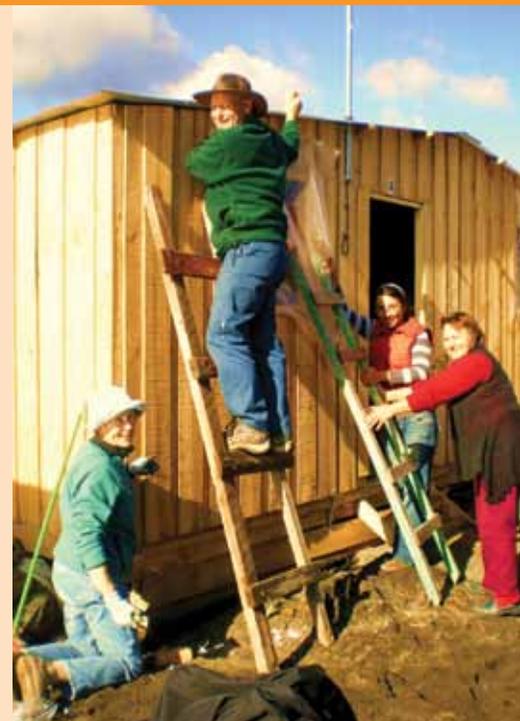
This “temporary” housing requires long-term commitment from EPES to help residents through the complicated process of obtaining permanent homes for new lives with health and dignity.

AHA BOARD MEMBER PITCHES IN

Rev. Scott Duffus, Lutheran pastor from Minnesota, is a new member of the Action for Health in the Americas (AHA) board. He’s also one of the artists who designed the mural in EPES Concepción. As the rebuilding began, Scott felt called to come to help.

“In Villa Bosque Mar,” Scott said, “I participated in a community already in action alongside people who, although they haven’t been living as neighbors for long, are sharing tools and ideas and figuring out together how best to do what needs to be done.”

“It’s a gift to be a part of this kind of community,” Duffus believes. “I think about a line from the AHA website: ‘We believe in the power of people to [create and] promote their own healthy communities, given the proper financial, educational and technical support.’ And that’s exactly what EPES is doing here.”



Scott and his mother Gloria help Carolina and her mother fix the leaks.

WOMEN AND TOBACCO: EPES TAKES THE LEAD

Chile has the highest rates of women smokers in the Americas. But until recently, women's groups have ignored tobacco control as a public health issue they can influence.

EPES is taking a leadership role in tobacco control advocacy in Chile. In 2007, EPES surveyed women's health leaders and tobacco control activists to identify synergies. The findings, discussed in a national meeting funded by the American Cancer Society, presented smoking as a social (not just medical) issue in which gender plays a determinant role. Since then, EPES' tobacco work has proceeded along two tracks: smoking as a women's issue, and coalition-building for more effective policies and legislation.

Its 2008 project "Food Without Cigarette Smoke" looked at tobacco-free workplaces from the perspective of low-income women who work in their homes to prepare food for sale.

EPES surveyed 2009 Presidential election candidates on their proposals for tobacco control and investigated campaign contributions and lobbying by the tobacco industry and its connections to the political elite.

Most recently, EPES has created the Tobacco Free Chile coalition, and in May addressed the Senate Finance Committee to support higher cigarette taxes.



Health promoters take to the streets with messages about second-hand smoke.



Meet some of the volunteers.

*Top row: Sarah, Claire, Marcela, Patti;
Bottom row: Margaret, Kristy, Camila*

HATS OFF TO VOLUNTEERS

Enriching EPES with their enthusiasm and energy, a new group of volunteers are spending the first part of 2010 as interns in the Santiago office. Following the paths of dozens of past volunteers who have left their mark, the current group includes Chileans completing social work degrees at Santiago universities and young women from Canada and the U.S. with diverse academic backgrounds but a common desire to learn first-hand about health and social justice in Latin America.

Meet: Wila Cidre, Harvard graduate from Puerto Rico, funded by a Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Fellowship; Margaret Gamboa, public health graduate and yoga instructor; Gretchen Hoge, a social worker and marathon runner; Lia Koski, a science major who works with pre-schoolers; Canadian Kristy Baron; and US volunteers Claire Pluard and Sarah McDonald. Hailing from Chile are: Patricia Viñals (whose mother is an EPES health monitor); Natalia Vásquez; Camila Andrea Araya; Marcela Saa; and Isidora Almarza. EPES Concepción has received tremendous support from anthropology student Magno Leal.



EDUCACIÓN POPULAR EN SALUD
POPULAR EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

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Karen Anderson, Director of the EPES International Training Course, ELCA Global Mission in Chile

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Pamela Eguiguren, midwife, faculty member, University of Chile, School of Public Health

Rosa Quintanilla, former EPES health promoter; educator, community leader and author

Rev. Oscar Sanhueza, Lutheran pastor Comunidad San Pedro, Coronel and Comunidad Vida Nueva, Chiguayante, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile Synod Council

María Stella Toro, historian, University of Chile; EPES staff representative

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More about EPES at Action for Health in the Americas (AHA): www.actionforhealth.org

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