

Dear Friends of EPES,

EPES' XI International Training Program (the Escuela) was held during the third month of national protests in Chile. Ninety-four percent of Chileans are demanding a change of the 1980 Constitution in order to be able to build a fairer country. The demands of the social movement are the right to education and health, pensions and living wages. EPES supports the Chilean people in their struggle for dignity and justice, and condemns the state terrorism that prevails in the country.

The police repression has been denounced by four international human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. The National Institute of Human Rights has received 4,780 complaints as of January 15, 2020, for homicides, torture, mutilation, arbitrary detentions, sexual violence, among other human rights violations; and has filed 1,118 legal actions in favor of 1,476 victims.

The EPES team evaluated whether or not to hold the Escuela following months of extreme unrest and police violence. In mid December, we agreed that the situation was calm enough (due to the summer) to carry it out without risks for the participants.

We are happy to share this Update of the events of the XI International Escuela. We had an incredible group of 19 committed young people from 8 Latin American countries.

Blessings to all and thank you for your love and support,

*Karen 2 Anderson*

Karen Anderson

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile, Director of EPES' International Training Program

## EPES' ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM: GRADUATES FROM EIGHT LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES ARE READY TO CHANGE THE WORLD



According to Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, "Education doesn't change the world, it changes the people who will change the world." Since 2010, EPES has helped strengthen networks of health educators and advocates throughout Latin America and several African countries. The International Training Program on Popular Education for Health, popularly known as the Escuela (School), embodies EPES' commitment to continue to foster community organization and participation in health among grassroots communities in Chile and beyond Chile's borders. This most recent course brings the total number of participants to 206 people from 25 countries since the school's launching over a decade ago.

This year, nineteen people from Colombia, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Peru, Puerto Rico, United States, Haiti and Chile, participated in the eleventh edition of the Escuela from January 5th to the 15th in Santiago and Concepción. Key support was provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) for the participation of community health workers from Lutheran churches in Guatemala, Peru and Nicaragua.



**Julio Cesar Cao Catún**

Rural Health Program,  
Augustinian Lutheran Church  
of Guatemala (ILAG)

*"At the International Training Program, we discovered a liberation education model for educators and communities that is easy to implement adapting the methodologies to the contexts of our communities. I thank EPES for their effort and work to train popular educators from different parts of the world to transform the realities of their own communities."*



# EPES' ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 11TH ESCUELA

The first day focused on *The History and Principles of Popular Education* and the *EPES training model*. Sonia Covarrubias, Executive Director of EPES, underscored that processes of change centered on people's needs depend upon the participation of those people. Such processes also require the generation of forms of organization and mobilization that foster the exercise and reclaiming of people's rights, she explained.

Valeria García, health promoter of the La Bandera neighborhood's historic Llaleta Group, once again shared her moving testimony of the radical change EPES training signified for her life. Becoming a health promoter forged an unswerving commitment to social transformation that brought about dignified quality of life for her community and her own family.

## COMMUNITY ACTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL SESSIONS

During the first week in Santiago, *Escuela* participants became acquainted with the work undertaken by health promotion groups trained by EPES. Accompanied by members of the Llaleta, David Werner and Circle of Women for Health community health teams, they visited working class neighborhoods of El Bosque and San Ramón, home to the health promoters, where they learned to identify major problems the communities face. Based on a community needs assessment done by walking through the neighborhoods and talking with the health teams, *Escuela* participants identified key problems and then planned and organized community health actions.

On January 10th, participants led by the health promotion groups held two community actions on the importance of taking responsibility as a community for the garbage a neighborhood generates. They also called for the municipal government to enact a monthly program to remove rubbish and household appliances from public spaces where some neighbors inappropriately leave it on account of difficult economic straits.

During the week, sessions were given on *Introduction to Popular Education*, *EPES Training Model*, *Tools for Effective Communications in Community Work*, *Popular Education and Social Determinants of Health (DSS) with a Gender Focus*, and *Approaches and Methodologies for Promotion and Recovery of Nutritional Health*.



*Escuela participants and community health promoters pose exuberantly for the photo as they wrap up their community action, **Love for Community is the Cure for Garbage**. One of the many activities they did in the open market was tell a story using a giant picture book they made to educate children about recycling and keeping their neighborhoods healthy and free of garbage.*



*Reyna López from Nicaragua participating in the community action in La Bandera where the group performed a skit in the open market and also held a survey with neighbors to learn about their concerns for the neighborhood and proposals for addressing the issue of garbage.*



*Escuela participants learning about EPES' educational games from staff member Jorge Olivares, coordinator of EPES' resource center.*



*Working in small groups to analyze problems and generate collective responses is key to the methodology used during the Escuela.*





## THE SECOND WEEK OF THE ESCUELA AT THE EPES RETREAT CENTER IN CONCEPCIÓN

The second week, students travelled six hours south to Concepción, to continue the training program at the EPES center there in Hualpén.

The sessions given by EPES Concepción staff included *Participatory Assessments: Exploring Designs*, *Learn by Playing: Experience and Analysis of EPES Educational Games*, *Weaving Health Networks*, focused on environmental issues and violence against women, and *Participatory Evaluations: Exploring Methods and Techniques*.

## CULTURAL NIGHT

### A TRIBUTE TO THE RIGHT TO LIVE IN PEACE

As in previous years, the EPES International School organized a cultural night, at which participants share folk dances, music, poetry and the stories of their countries. This 2020 featured cultural expressions from Nicaragua, Guatemala, Colombia, Chile, Peru and Puerto Rico.

The international cultural celebration opened with the anthem of the Chilean social movement that in mid-January marked its third month. Participants intoned Víctor Jara's ***El Derecho de Vivir en Paz (The Right to Live in Peace)***, their voices filling the EPES community center at Hualpén with the inspirational song. Víctor Jara wrote the song's lyrics to denounce genocide in the Vietnam War but fifty years later they are as current as ever, in light of injustice and human rights violations committed in Chile, Guatemala, Colombia, and throughout the world where nations stand up to oppressive regimes.



Argentine theologian Rev. Lisandro Orlov, of the United Evangelical Church in Argentina, presented "Faith Communities and Promotion of Rights: Health Without Stigma

or Discrimination." The Rev Orlov, who is former Latin America Regional Coordinator of the Lutheran World Federation's HIV/AIDS campaign, has shared his knowledge and insights at every Escuela since its founding.

## VILLA MONTAHUE



### STUDENTS LEARNED ABOUT THE STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY BY WOMEN OF VILLA MONTAHUE

While in Concepción, *Escuela* participants also met women leaders of the Villa Montahue Health and Environment Committee, in the town of Penco. Students visited the Villa Montahue neighborhood and learned about the post-disaster recovery process, as well as the fire prevention program launched with support from EPES Foundation.

The leaders recounted the hard road they had followed to lift up and organize their community after the earthquake and tsunami of February 27, 2010. In 2017, the homes they had built were threatened by forest fires that destroyed hundreds of acres nearby, once again imperiling their community's existence.



# VOICES FROM THE 11TH ESCUELA – REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS



## GRADUATION



The Escuela culminated with the presentations of projects participants developed to put EPES methods into practice when they return to their home communities.

## CELEBRATING 19 NEW POPULAR HEALTH EDUCATORS

The final day of the XI International Training Course on Popular Education for Health culminated with presentations of the projects participants developed to put EPES methods into practice upon returning to their home communities. The projects reflected the participatory methodology taught during the Escuela, which is the core of EPES' 38 years working for the right to dignified health.

Sexual and reproductive rights, women's rights, senior citizen health, and environmental concerns were some of the issues that participants will tackle in their territories thanks to lessons learned from EPES in Chile.

Karen Anderson (ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile), director of the International Training Course on Popular Education for Health and EPES founder, addressed participants at the graduation ceremony. Expressing her appreciation for the new educators' commitments, she encouraged them to continue to work firmly to transform their communities so as to achieve justice, health and dignified life.



### Cynthia Melissa Kancha Meza

Nurse, coordinator of the Cusco Holistic Women's Health Program, Lutheran Church of Peru, with support and funding from ELCA.

*"The International Escuela has been an important learning experience and enrichment of our previous knowledge gained in EPES training workshops that we participated in May of 2019.\* The popular education methodologies proposed during the Escuela will allow us to strengthen the community work we develop in Cusco and expand overall participation in our work. Thanks to the Escuela, we return home re-energized and with new skills to work for holistic health for women, children and adolescents in our country. The project we designed at the Escuela, which aims to strengthen the current program, promotes holistic and dignified health addressing mental health, the promotion and prevention of noncommunicable diseases, healthy environments and the management of solid waste."*



### Raymundo Quib Chamam

Nurse, Health Program, Augustinian Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILAG).

*"Participating in the Escuela has been very important to me. It's an honor to visit Chile and live this experience. The lessons learned here will allow us to help improve the life of the communities where we work. I found the participatory community assessment to be of great relevance, because with it we can collectively identify what the problems are that the community faces. It is the first step to then create a work plan with the community to address the problem and try to resolve their needs. I liked that the process allows everyone to participate, reflect and share their opinions through different techniques, such as brainstorming."*

*We indigenous communities in Guatemala do not have the right to education, health, water, land, electricity and transportation, and popular education is a tool to begin to raise awareness among the population and change our current situation."*



### Floridalma Violeta Paa Macz

Milagro Educational Center for Women, of the Augustinian Lutheran Church in Guatemala (ILAG).

*"For me, the most important part of the Escuela was learning that I have rights. I didn't know what my rights were nor what I could do to exercise them. My dream is to help my community, which is going through a very difficult situation. Many girls are raped, become pregnant, remain at home without being able to leave, and don't have the opportunity to go to school, as I have. They remain quiet about the abuse because they are threatened by the men. Girls begin to be abused at the age of 10."*

*At EPES' Escuela, we developed a project to be implemented at the Lutheran Church's Milagro Educational Center to prevent childhood and adolescent pregnancy through education programs about sexual health, reproductive health, and family planning methods. My dream is to work with commitment, patience and kindness to improve the lives of girls and women from my community, so that they don't give up."*

\* The Cusco Holistic Women's Health program team from the Lutheran Church of Peru visited Chile to participate in the training course on health promotion through the application of popular education methodologies that was held May 27-31, 2019 at Foundation EPES in Concepción, Biobío Region.



## MORE REFLECTIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS



### Pablo Valenzuela San Román

Volunteer doctor with  
"Health to the Street" \*

*"The Escuela exceeded all of my first expectations, because EPES' teaching model provided us knowledge about popular education methodologies that we were later able to put into practice collectively. The EPES model changed all of my paradigms about how to educate, which was a truly enriching, deconstructing and emotional experience."*

*I will take all the acquired knowledge to "Health to the Street" to implement the project to create health promoters specializing in mental health, who will be able to facilitate spaces of conversation about emotion management for people victims of State violence. Popular education is fundamental, because it opens and creates a space in which people can express themselves and share their experiences, and thus learn in a different way than which we are accustomed."*



### Reyna Isabel López Neyra

International Community of Women Living with HIV (ICW), Women Ministry Leader at Lutheran Church of Nicaragua "Fe y Esperanza" (Faith and Hope).

*"From Chile, I returned to Nicaragua with a suitcase of very important educational tools to continue strengthening the work I do in my country. The project that I developed at the International School aims to improve the quality of life of women living with HIV in Masaya through healthy diets."*

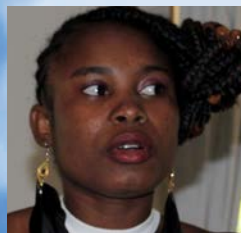
*Due to the side effects of retroviral treatment, women with HIV suffer from lipodystrophy, which is the concentration of fat in one part of the body, but if they also have eating disorders their health gets worse."*

*The EPES game "From seed to your plate" will be of great use as an educational tool to promote healthy eating. As petitioned by the Church, the project will be expanded to other communities, such as Somoto and Somotillo."*

*I will also facilitate a workshop to share popular education methodologies with the Youth Ministry of the Lutheran Church in Managua, as a means so that other promoters feel empowered by these tools and will then share them in their own communities."*

*Popular education should be implemented in all spaces and at all levels ranging from the community to institutions, because it is a transformative tool."*

**The International School granted scholarships to two women, one from Haiti and the other from Colombia, who are residents in Chile and participate in organizations that fight for the rights of the immigrant community.**



### Windia Amilca

Union of Haitians for Progress in Chile (UNHAPROCH)

*"At the International School I learned so much about popular education methodologies, the social determinants of health, but the most important thing I learned is that I have rights as an immigrant woman. The Escuela helped me to overcome all the fear I had and to know that we have to fight for the right to live in peace. I want to help migrants who arrive in Chile lose the fear to organize to demand their rights."*

*The project that arises from what I learned at the Escuela addresses the problem that we face in accessing the healthcare system as black immigrant women. Together with my colleague Heidy Julieth Micolta Montaña from Black Microsessions we will conduct a study to learn how black immigrant women perceive the healthcare services in the municipality of El Bosque. Our motivation arises from the fact that we know that many of us cannot access public healthcare services for different reasons, such as discrimination and bad treatment."*



### Heidy Julieth Micolta Montaña

Sociologist, Microsesiones Negras (Black Microsessions). (Originally from Colombia now living in Chile.)

*"I am grateful to my ancestors and to the universe for allowing me to live this experience. I thank my woman peers, whose love, affection and wisdom granted us the opportunity to relate to one another like sisters. Thank you for all the knowledge shared between us. Without a doubt, it has been a stir of emotions."*

*Thank you to EPES Foundation for granting me a scholarship — you can't imagine how much it has meant to me. Popular education changed my life, my perception about research and activism, sociology and communities. I have been looking for answers for the past few months, and I found the answer at the International School."*

*To the black sisters with whom I met, a thousand thanks for the affection among us and for hugging one another from afar. We will never again be alone. The struggle crosses borders. I am grateful for the trust and the black love shared between us."*

*To all, my infinite gratitude, for the transformative conversations from the soul."*

\* "Health to the Street" is a grassroots organization of health professionals that emerged spontaneously in the context of the social revolt in Chile, as a means to provide first-aid care to the individuals wounded by the Police Special Forces in Dignity Square, the epicenter of protests in Santiago. Since October 19, 2019, they have assisted more than 3000 people.



### CONTACT EPES

#### EPES Santiago:

Fundación EPES  
Phone: (56-2) 25487617  
Fax: (56-2) 25486021  
E-mail: [epes@epes.cl](mailto:epes@epes.cl)

#### EPES Concepción:

EPES "Gaston Toledo" Popular Education Center  
Hualpén, Concepción, Chile  
Phone: (56-41) 247-0570  
E-mail: [epesconce@epes.cl](mailto:epesconce@epes.cl)

EPES was created in 1982 to promote health with dignity for the poor through empowerment, mobilization and collective action. It began as a program of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and maintains close ties nationally and internationally with the Lutheran church and is an ELCA Global Mission supported ministry. EPES became an independent, non-profit Chilean foundation in 2002.

### USE THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF EPES!

Go to [www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice), or call 1-800-847-4836 to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to AHA.

### LEARN ABOUT OTHER EPES ACTIVITIES AT:

[www.epes.cl](http://www.epes.cl) or Action for Health in the Americas (AHA): [www.actionforhealth.org](http://www.actionforhealth.org) or Chile Libre de Tabaco: [www.chilelibredetabaco.cl](http://www.chilelibredetabaco.cl) On Facebook: EPES Fundación; Action for Health in the Americas; Red Chile Libre de Tabaco.

