



EDUCACIÓN POPULAR EN SALUD

WORKING FOR HEALTH, JUSTICE AND DIGNITY



History

EPES (*Educación Popular en Salud*) was founded 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. In 2005, EPES founded Action for Health in the Americas (AHA), a US-based 501(c)(3) non-profit partner organization to support EPES' activities in Chile.

EPES has centers in Santiago, the capital city of Chile, and the industrial city of Concepción in southern Chile.

Mission

EPES strives to improve the health and quality of life of people and communities living in situations of vulnerability through participatory strategies of education, advocacy and social mobilization, with a focus on gender equality, diversity, human rights and sustainability.

Methodology

EPES approaches health promotion and disease prevention from the contextual perspective of social and environmental determinants. The principles and methodologies of popular education are the inspiration behind EPES' approach to individual and collective empowerment.

EPES empowers community organizations for better health through a mix of educational activities (courses, workshops, seminars), advocacy, local partnerships, national alliances and networking.





International Volunteer Service Award

In 2012, the Pan American Health Organization/Pan American Health and Education Foundation honored EPES with the Clarence H. Moore Award for Excellence in Volunteer Service. This prize is awarded to non-governmental organizations for outstanding achievements in public health to improve the quality of life of people of the Americas.



Women's Participation and Leadership

EPES champions the development of women's participation and leadership. It prioritizes training and advocacy work, focusing on health issues such as respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights, freedom from gender-based violence, environmental protection, tobacco control and food security.

Over the past three decades, EPES has built relationships with low-income and working-class women, community-based organizations, like-minded NGOs, churches and faith-based groups, municipalities and government agencies. EPES partners with many local, national, Latin American regional and international activist networks and alliances.



Training Community Organizations

EPES promotes opportunities for individual and collective learning, empowerment and participation. In its first decades, EPES created and trained a network of neighborhood-based, women-led health promotion groups that continue to provide leadership in community health.

These groups pursue solutions to local health concerns, including violence against women, HIV, environmental pollution, breast cancer, mental health and other issues.



Training and Ongoing Support

EPES has developed and delivered a full range of training and ongoing support services, working with grassroots communities, trade unions, churches, municipalities, and national and international organizations. These training workshops provide knowledge and skills for community intervention in health care systems from a human rights and gender equality perspective.

Public Policy Advocacy

EPES is active in public policy advocacy, including the design and implementation of legislation, policies and programs that guarantee the universal right to health. EPES' advocacy campaigns have had national impact.

Its efforts to combat Chile's high smoking rates through effective legislation were instrumental in enacting Chile's stringent 2013 tobacco control law. EPES created *Chile Libre de Tabaco* (Tobacco Free Chile), a multidisciplinary coalition that worked with Congress, public health authorities, researchers, medical associations and community organizations to enact national bans on indoor smoking and cigarette advertising, and to increase tobacco taxes.

In 2011, the coalition received international recognition from the PanAmerican Health Organization. Again, in 2014, the InterAmerican Heart Foundation honored the coalition for its work to improve tobacco control policies and protect the health of the population.

EPES is also a national advocate for food security through its work to promote guaranteed access to adequate, culturally-appropriate nutrition, based on its broad analysis of the links between poor nutrition, skyrocketing obesity rates and social inequality. EPES couples its food security advocacy work with practical workshops for community women and health educators on nutrition and healthy eating.

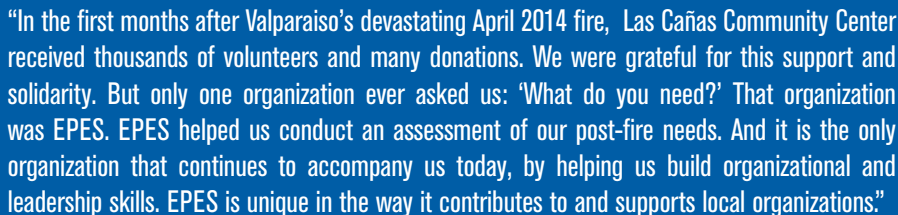




EPES has firsthand experience responding to natural disasters and similar emergencies. Its teams encourage collective participatory responses to disaster and recovery in ways that foster human dignity, diversity and gender equality.

EPES knows how to move quickly to help disaster-struck communities assess their immediate needs and map out longer-term goals. It has pioneered a program of emotional recovery activities designed to help women and children overcome post-disaster trauma in Chile. EPES provides immediate material support to devastated communities, and then helps them access public resources and monitor the disbursement process.

EPES is a member of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, an international network of more than 100 humanitarian assistance and development agencies supported by faith-based groups.



—**Mauricio Salazar**, director of Las Cañas Community Center, Valparaíso



Educational Materials

The EPES approach to the empowerment of individuals and communities facing current and historic discrimination begins with giving value and visibility to the knowledge and tools they already possess. This process builds on existing practices to foster personal and collective growth.

EPES has conducted research using a wide range of methodologies for investigation, action and systematization, especially in the area of community-based education on sexuality and violence against women.

EPES has produced an enormous array of educational materials—including brochures, flyers, fact sheets, buttons, postcards and posters—covering a broad range of community health issues. In particular, its unique educational board games pioneered the creation of a space for honest, open conversation around such difficult topics as sexuality, HIV, alcoholism and mental health. Community groups across Latin America and the United States use these board games to engage individuals and groups in a transformative learning experience.



The EPES Resource Center for Action (CREA)

The resource center (known as CREA, the *Centro de Recursos Educativos para la Acción*) is the repository of educational materials used by EPES in its 36 years of promoting community action for health.

It houses a collection—unlike any other in Chile—of books, magazines and training manuals on popular education and strategies for collective action. Its photographic and audiovisual archives chronicle the creation of EPES and local efforts for health, rights and dignity since the 1980s. It also houses popular education materials (flyers, factsheets, handouts posters, etc.) on the many specific health issues (HIV, sexuality, violence against women, sanitation, nutrition, etc.) of primary concern to community health promotion groups.

Access to CREA is free and open to the public. The CREA staff provides bibliographic support for research projects and guidance on how to use EPES educational games and other resources.



The EPES International Training Course

In 2010, EPES launched its first Escuela Internacional, an international training course on popular education and participatory and community-based strategies for health.

Held annually in Santiago and Concepción, the two-week course explores participatory strategies and methodologies for health promotion in local communities. Its approach is summed up by its motto: Hands-On Learning for the Right to Health. Participants return to their home countries transformed by a learning experience that reignites dreams and renews hopes for change.

Now approaching its 10th year, the *Escuela Internacional* has hosted 187 participants from 21 countries across Latin America and the United States, as well as several African countries. Participants include university students, health care professionals, social workers, social scientists, popular educators, teachers, church workers and social activists.

In Africa, the EPES training course has been implemented in rural villages in Kenya by the Hope Foundation for African Women, whose staff attended the EPES program in 2014. Since then, EPES has worked closely with the Hope Foundation in an advisory role.





—Fundación—
Educación Popular en Salud

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ACTION FOR HEALTH IN THE AMERICAS (AHA)
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To give to EPES, donate online at
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or send your tax-deductible contribution to:
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Make checks payable to: *Action for Health in the Americas*
(AHA) a non-profit North American partner of EPES.



Representatives of Action for Health in the Americas (AHA) visit Chile to support the work of EPES



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) representatives visit EPES partners in Valparaíso

Throughout its 36 year-old history, EPES has helped:

- **Improve** quality-of-life for underserved, low-income individuals and communities.
- **Help** women develop leadership skills.
- **Support** organized community responses to natural disasters and emergencies.
- **Promote** the right to quality health care, guaranteed by the State.
- **Generate** legislation, through advocacy, to lower tobacco consumption.
- **Train** volunteers, students, church workers, health professionals and social activists in effective health promotion strategies by providing educational experiences rooted in the activities of grassroots organizations.

EPES receives funding and financial support from international cooperation agencies, churches and faith-based groups, from consulting work with Chilean governmental agencies and institutions, and from individual donors.

EPES continues to believe that justice and dignity in health are possible through social organization and mobilization based in democratic leadership and built from the community itself.