

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile

No 10: June 2014



*EPES staff members with volunteers from the Las Cañas Community Center after a day of working together at the center.*

## RIISING UP FROM THE ASHES

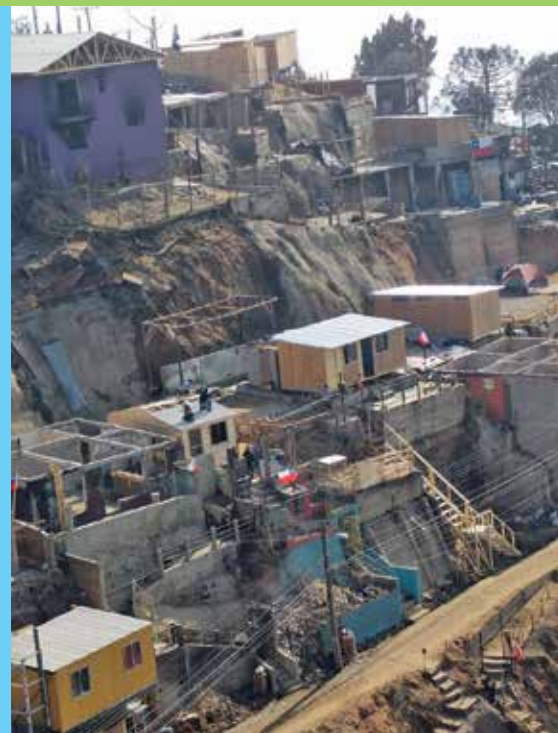
What began April 12 as a forest fire at the edge of the city quickly raced down the slopes of low-income sectors of Valparaíso, reducing 3,000 houses to ashes and leaving 12,000 people homeless. Today, in the aftermath of that devastating blaze, community organizations are intent on turning tragedy into an opportunity for transforming their neighborhood.

One of few buildings left standing on Cerro Las Cañas, the area most affected by the blaze, is the community center, whose director Mauricio Salazar graduated from EPES 3rd International Training Course on Popular Education in Health two years ago. The center has become the hub of emergency response activity, serving lunches to 300 people daily, distributing aid, coordinating volunteers and providing a site for neighborhood meetings.

The Las Cañas Community Center will be key to setting in motion the Comfort for Kids post-disaster psychosocial support program for children and women that EPES adapted in Concepción after the earthquake four years ago. EPES also will help neighbors winterize and improve the flimsy emergency dwellings the government is issuing, while also empowering women as leaders.

First, however, the community center's windows must be installed, the bathrooms and kitchen repaired, and basic furnishings acquired to enable the building to be used to carry out the programs.

The disaster exposed substandard living conditions and rampant poverty, while tragically confirming experts' warnings less than a year ago that the area was susceptible to a major fire. Residents don't want to rebuild their former precarious housing. With support from EPES, neighbors hope to seize the opportunity to build a more dignified community that projects their lives into a new and brighter future.



*EPES staff and health promoters prepare emergency aid kits, for distribution at the Las Cañas Community Center to residents of Valparaíso devastated by the fire in April.*





Left: Women from Kenya and Uganda attended the service at the Good Samaritan congregation in Chile. Right: Chilean health promoters and the course participants showing posters they made about violence against women to use in an educational activity in the open markets. The women from Kenya and Uganda were enthusiastic about these educational techniques. They shop in similar markets but had not imagined their potential for health education.

## CROSSING CONTINENTS: KENYAN WOMEN LAUNCH EPES MODEL IN AFRICA

Six women from Kenya who traveled to Chile to participate in EPES 5th International Training Course on Popular Education in Health (January 10-25, 2014) have taken decisive steps to begin applying the EPES model of empowerment to bring positive change to their communities. Since 2010, thanks to ELCA World Hunger Funds, 90 participants from 14 countries have participated in the annual training course, gaining skills to run participatory preventive health programs.

EPES partnered with the Hope Foundation for African Women (HFAW), a Nairobi-based non-profit headed by Dr. Grace Mose-Okong'o that works with Maasai and Kisii women, to coordinate its 5th international school. In Santiago and in southern Concepción, the African women attended workshops on participatory community assessments, learn-by-playing techniques, strategic planning and creative evaluation methods, developed by EPES in its three decades of work.

The HFAW action plan calls for a 6-month pilot project to train community health promoters to address urgent social and health issues such as violence against women, HIV/AIDS and female genital mutilation (FGM).

In the first two months after returning to Kenya, HFAW set about adapting EPES material and planning the training sessions. The response to the first training session, held April 2-4 in a Kisii village, was overwhelming. Some 300 people arrived for the launch, where, in a festive ambience HFAW staff gave testimony to their powerful experience in Chile, and the capacity for change of the EPES popular education model. A second training session was held April 21-23.

In launching the project, HFAW faces difficult logistical challenges, such as the exhausting and expensive five hours of travel to Kisii. Dr. Mose gave voice to the organization's determination: "We have encountered many challenges which could have discouraged any major organization from moving forward, but [...] every one of these challenges has provided many learning opportunities. Rather than get discouraged, our resolve has been strengthened and our vision is much clearer."



EPES founder Karen Anderson and HFAW founder Dr. Grace Mose. Since participating in the EPES International Training Program in 2010, Grace has nurtured a dream to bring the EPES model to her communities in Kenya.



HFAW team Dr. Mary Nasibi, Dr. Grace Mose, Hellen Njoroge and Lisper Bundi spoke about their work at the University of Chile School of Public Health while in Chile.







HOPE FOUNDATION FOR  
AFRICAN WOMEN

Eliminating Gender Disparities  
to Create Strong Communities

Training sessions on the EPES popular education model in a Kenyan Kisii village had an overwhelming response. The HFAW action plan calls for a 6-month pilot project.



## ANTI-SMOKING EFFORTS EARN INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADES



Chile Libre de Tabaco (Tobacco-Free Chile) received an award in San Jose, Costa Rica, for contributing to the passage of the law to help reduce tobacco addiction and smoke-related disease in Chile.

At the 4th Latin American and Caribbean Congress on Tobacco or Health, held in San José, Costa Rica, March 26-28, Chile Libre de Tobacco (Tobacco-Free Chile), a coalition spearheaded by EPES, was applauded alongside the Chilean Health Ministry for contributing to the passage of landmark legislation that transformed Chile into a smoke-free country as of March 1 of last year.

Sonia Covarrubias, Chile Libre de Tabaco coordinator, and Isabel Diaz Medina, communications director, traveled to Costa Rica to accept the award from the Inter American Heart Foundation and participate in this important international forum, which brought together more than 400 people from 20 countries.

"The award renews our commitment to keep working to obtain public policy

that will prevent more Chileans from becoming ill and dying as a result of tobacco", affirmed Covarrubias.

Prohibiting additives such as menthol and enacting a tobacco tax are measures that should follow passage of anti-smoking legislation like the Chilean law. In Chile, where debate on tax reform is underway in Congress, Covarrubias indicated that the immediate focus would be enactment of a tobacco tax.

The World Health Organization regards taxes as the most cost-effective way to improve public health, and President Michelle Bachelet, who took office in March, included a tobacco tax as part of her platform.





Sticker designed by EPES for the campaign to increase the tax on tobacco. It says:  
**In Chile, 39.9% of girls between 13 and 15 years old smoke cigarettes.**

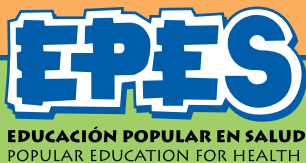


## CITIZENS KEEP TRACK OF TOBACCO LAW COMPLIANCE

In Talcahuano, a municipality in the Bio Bio Region, EPES coordinated the first citizen monitoring of the 2013 tobacco law. After inspecting 27 public places including restaurants, pubs and clubs, the group reported 75% compliance with anti-smoking measures that call for display of no-smoking signs and removal of ashtrays, among others. Prior to the activity, 100 people attended a seminar, with speakers from the regional health ministry, Chile Libre de Tabaco/EPES, and a bronchopulmonary specialist. To raise awareness among teenagers, artist Cristian Carrasco helped students paint a mural on school walls, depicting the risks from smoking and promoting a healthy lifestyle. In a district of southern Santiago, citizens also monitored tobacco law compliance, presenting their findings to the mayor in a May 27th meeting.

## Attention Thrivent Members! (formerly Thrivent Financial for Lutherans) USE THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF EPES!

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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.

### THE EPES TEAM

**Founder:** Karen Anderson, Director, EPES International Training Course (ELCA Global Mission). **Board of Directors:** Ricardo Barra, University of Concepción; Jaime Bravo, GESTRA Consultores; Pamela Eguiguren, University of Chile; Hanni Grunpeter, public health specialist; Rev. Oscar Sanhueza, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile; Jorge Olivares, EPES staff representative. **Executive Committee:** Rosario Castillo, Executive Director; Dr. Lautaro López, Director, EPES Concepción; María Eugenia Calvin, Director of Planning; Virginia Norambuena, Education team, EPES Concepción; Sonia Covarrubias, Education team, EPES Santiago. **Administration/Education: SANTIAGO:** Marta Acuña, accountant; María Teresa Fuentealba, secretary; Angelina Jara, educator; Jorge Olivares, librarian; Héctor Reyes, office manager; Isabel Diaz, communications coordinator; **CONCEPCIÓN:** Sandra Castañeda, educator, Maritza Provoste, administration. EPES Update is written by Maxine Lowy.

### 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 and Panoramas Sin Humo de Tabaco



Pastor Felipe Adolf, President of the Latin American Council of Churches, and Pedro Zavala, pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile, visited EPES in March.

In the photo, the pastors pose with Sonia Covarrubias, Karen Anderson and Rosario Castillo, in front of the mural "30 years weaving dreams", celebrating the EPES work for the right to health and dignified life. The mural portrays acclaimed human rights defenders, including Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz (1933-2011).

Health promoters discuss health issues facing seniors.



## AGING GRACEFULLY

Thirteen community health promoters of the Zenobia Cerda Zapata Health Group in Hualpen participated in the first unit of a seminar on senior citizen health, held by EPES May 19. The session addressed issues associated with biological, social, psychological and sexual changes common to women and men as they age. The health promoters had the chance to converse frankly about their own experiences and for learning ways to assist neighbors and other peers grappling with similar problems.

## SUPPORT EPES

To give to EPES, **donate online at [www.actionforhealth.org](http://www.actionforhealth.org)**, or send your tax-deductible contribution to:

**Action for Health in the Americas**  
c/o Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
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Clifton Park, NY 12065-2744 USA

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