

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile

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Participants came from 6 countries to attend the 2-week annual EPES International Training Course in January.



Global health advocate Lisa Russell (seated 3rd from left) talks at the International Training Course about her documentary film **Poder!**, a case study on how video production can help young women exercise empowerment.

## “UNFORGETTABLE AND TRANSFORMATIONAL:” SIXTH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE on Participatory and Community Strategies for Health

For the sixth consecutive year, EPES’ International Training Course drew a special group of participants, united by a commitment and determination to transform their communities.

From Canada, Puerto Rico, Mexico, the U.S., Bolivia and Chile, the group that converged in Santiago in early January 2015 included public health workers and graduate students, a dental student, several college professors, pastors and church workers. They bring the total number of graduates to 110 people from 15 countries.

The two intense weeks included workshops, community health actions and hands-on learning. The participants worked with local health groups to develop community actions on dental health, children’s rights and raising awareness on the health impact of local garbage dumps. On arrival in the south of Chile for three days at the EPES Concepción Center, group members participated in a church service at the Boca Sur Renacer congregation that was led by Pastor Oscar Sanhueza and Pastor Luis Alvarez, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH).

The sixth version of the annual course featured Emmy Award-winning documentary filmmaker and global health advocate Lisa Russell, who spoke at the University of Chile School of Public Health on narrative justice and the need to involve communities in telling their own stories. Russell also conducted a workshop for course participants on the basics of documentary filmmaking, as a creative and potentially powerful medium in galvanizing people for health rights.

“This has been an unforgettable, transformational and inspiring experience,” remarked one enthusiastic participant.



Participants in the International Training Course take to the streets at a local market to speak out against child abuse, displaying signs and ribbons that read “Abuse is not a game” and “We can always choose.”

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*Top left: In a neighborhood clinic waiting room, course participants and Grupo Llaretta members conduct a public awareness action about keeping the community free of litter. Top right:*

*Participants develop a community dental health education program. Bottom left: During a visit to the industrial sector in Hualpén, Dr. Lautaro Lopez of EPES Concepción explains to participants how the industrialization of the area has socially and environmentally impacted the community. Center: Participants at the Boca Sur Renacer congregation with Pastor Luis Alvarez, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH) and Pastor Oscar Sanhueza.*

## VALPARAISO NEIGHBORHOOD RAISES ITSELF UP AGAIN



*Left: Children from the Las Cañas hillside neighborhood that was destroyed by fire receive gifts at the conclusion of the Comfort for Kids program. Above: EPES Executive Committee member María Eugenia Calvin (Valparaiso project coordinator) and health promoter Monica Arancibia (Valparaiso project staff), outside the Las Cañas Community Center during the closing ceremony.*

A year after fire devastated low-income neighborhoods of hilly Valparaiso, leaving thousands homeless, communities are starting to heal and the Las Cañas Community Center, with support from EPES, played a major role in that process. In January 2015, the project EPES carried out with support of ELCA Global Mission and ACT Alliance in Geneva drew to a close.

Initial activities included a participatory community assessment, in which 100 people set priorities and determined the steps they would take to recover neighborhoods. As the most vulnerable physically and emotionally in the emergency situation, children became the major focus via the Comfort for Kids program, coordinated by EPES staff. Sessions employing the "My Valparaiso Fire Story" coloring book motivated girls and boys to speak about and draw the emotions they experienced.

The children's resilience was evident at the project's closing celebration, when they performed in a recently formed Brazilian percussion group and enjoyed homemade pizza baked by community center volunteers.



*"Thanks to this we recovered the strength to raise ourselves up and our children overcame their fears," expressed one parent when asked to evaluate the 10-month program.*

*"Thank you for having appeared in our lives," added another parent.*

# BUILDING STRONGER, HEALTHIER LIVES IN CONCEPCIÓN

Women in the southern Chilean city of Concepción are gaining knowledge and skills to build stronger, healthier lives.

From June to November 2014, 20 primary health care employees of various neighborhood clinics acquired in-depth understanding of the relation between nutrition and health in a course taught by EPES staffperson Virginia Norambuena. Group activities in the weekly course fostered reflection on the economic, political, social and cultural factors that influence eating habits and health.

The course equipped participants to actively engage in shaping local nutrition and health policies through a social determinants focus that emphasized gender and human rights. The enthusiastic response to the course has spurred EPES Concepción to repeat the experience this year with women from the nearby towns of Penco, Tomé, Hualpen and Talcahuano.

EPES Concepción was a busy place last year, as the Zenobia Cerda Zapata Health Educators Organization participated in a six-session course on senior citizen health, combining theory and practice. Andres Bello University occupational therapy students held one session on arthritis and osteoarthritis prevention and treatment. Zenobia Cerda Zapata community educators then proceeded to put into practice what they had learned by organizing a workshop for neighbors.

At the course closure, each participant received a rubber stamp inscribed with statesman George Clemenceau's famous adage: "You are only as old as you act!"



*Nutrition and health workshop participants use different participatory methodologies to analyze the impact of underlying causes—lifestyle, economic and social environment, access to adequate health care services, genetics and biology—on people's health.*

## LLARETA REACHES 30!



In 1984, in the south Santiago shantytown known as Poblacion La Bandera, a group of women and men came together, with support from EPES, to address the neighborhood's dire needs. In November 2014, that organization, called Health Team "Llareta"—for a hardy desert medicinal plant—celebrated 30 years transforming lives. Our congratulations to them as an example to people striving everywhere for change!



*"Llareta is a tenacious plant that resists the harsh desert climate. It is a fitting name for the energy and persistence that characterized the women and men who built this organization."*

*Excerpt of a speech by the "Llareta" health team leader Valeria Garcia at the anniversary celebration.*



*EPES founding team: standing Maria Eugenia Calvin and Karen Anderson, seated Christina Mills and Rosario Castillo (to the left with Pancho Ramos, Chilean artist who has worked with EPES for 33 years).*

## AND EPES TURNS 33

On March 10 EPES marked 33 years educating and empowering women and their children, changing lives and building healthier communities. On that date in 1982, four young women who shared a deep social commitment and collective vision introduced a participatory approach to solving rampant problems related to poverty and governmental neglect under the shadow of dictatorship. Karen Anderson, Rosario Castillo, Maria Eugenia Calvin and Christina Mills were the pioneers who forged groundbreaking community education in health strategies. Three decades later EPES is an exemplary model for public health, and on three continents its methodology helps people and communities dignify their own lives. With your support, EPES will march on for many decades more.

## NO SMOKING IN ABU DHABI

Sonia Covarrubias, EPES staff and coordinator of the Tobacco-Free Chile coalition that achieved passage of the historic law last year, participated in the 16th World Congress on Tobacco and Health, held this past March in Abu Dhabi. Sonia presented on communication strategy, a key aspect of the successful tobacco control advocacy initiative she helped design.

## BREAKING THE SILENCE

The murder of women by male aggressors has reached epidemic proportions worldwide, giving rise to the term femicide. On November 25, when the toll of women murdered in Chile had reached 56 in 2014, EPES staff and health promoters marched through the streets of El Bosque, calling for "Not a single woman more, not a single death more!" Many women died despite having reported the threats and desperate situation in which they were living. It was the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and as EPES does each year on that date, it joined the swell of national and international voices demanding women's right to a life free of violence. The march culminated with a rally at which the winners were announced



The march for women's right to violence-free lives on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

of the third local Writing Competition on Women's Stories "When we stop shouting in silence," convened by the local Network for No Violence to Women. The writing competition is part of a series of diverse actions to raise public awareness on the issue of violence against women.



Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) representatives met with EPES staff and health groups trained by EPES, learning about their fight for health and to dignify lives in their communities. Visiting CLAI Board Members were Damian Quispe, Andean Region; Darli Alves, Brazil Region; Alfredo Joiner, Meso-America and Black Pastoral Service; Claudia Tron, River Plate Region; Miguel Salanic, Indigenous Pastoral; Jessica Mora, Youth Pastoral; Cecilia Castillo Nanjari, Women and Gender Justice; and Milton Mejía of the Faith, Economy, Ecology and Society Program.

## LATIN AMERICAN CLERGY LEARN FROM EPES

Eight Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI, in Spanish) board directors, in Santiago for a regional assembly in late March, spent a day with EPES and community health educators. CLAI members had been studying the social situation of Chile and the region, and the visit to EPES provided a first-hand experience. EPES had prepared a display of education materials used in its various areas of work, such as gender violence, smoking, and nutrition. The church leaders also met with health groups trained by EPES, learning about their efforts to gain the right to health and dignified life.

**Attention Thrivent Members!** (formerly Thrivent Financial for Lutherans)

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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; Hanni Grunpeter, public health specialist; Rev. Oscar Sanhueza, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile; María del Carmen Cortés, director IES Santiago, international exchange program; Adriana Gomez, journalist and women's health advocate; 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; Susana Jiles, educator; Jorge Olivares, librarian; Héctor Reyes, office manager; Isabel Diaz, communications coordinator; **CONCEPCIÓN:** Sandra Castañeda, educator, Maritza Provoste, administration.

### 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.



## 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  
4 Northcrest Drive  
Clifton Park, NY 12065-2744 USA

Make checks payable to: "Action for Health in the Americas"

Action for Health in the Americas (AHA) is the non-profit North American partner of EPES.