

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile

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TODAS LAS VOCES / ALL VOICES

Escuela 2016 participant Bethany M. Waggoner shares her impressions.

On a warm summer afternoon in January, breezes filled the air with the sweet aromas of the nearby sea. Six women stood up to sing before a full house at the Lutheran congregation of Comunidad Renacer, in Boca Sur. The tune was simple; its lyrics about giving thanks. One could be excused for seeing this as a simplistic expression of sentiment for this occasion. This Sunday, the small church was hosting a score of visitors from nine different countries who were attending the EPES Escuela. But by the end, this humble song inspired a moment of deep connection among all those in attendance. The women shared their gratitude in the languages of their people — in Shona (Zimbabwe), Kisii (Kenya), Swahili (Kenya), Twi (Ghana), English and Spanish.

This moment offers a glimpse into what made the Escuela so special to me. The diversity of the singers infused the notes, the words, and the spaces in-between with a richness uncovered only through contrasts. I felt that we were together in the presence of “the elements that pass through the spaces that exist between us.” Popular education defines these as dialogue; the Christian tradition views them as the movement of the Holy Spirit. In this simple ceremony, they brought us a deeper appreciation of the things that make us different — language, birthplace, culture — and, at the same time, a renewed recognition of the things that bind us together — a shared tune, gratitude, the human experience.

What united the group was our shared calling to build a more just world, guarantee the human right to health, and enact equity in the systems and institutions that influence the human experience.

This year, the Escuela was held simultaneously in English and Spanish — quite an organizing challenge for the EPES team, which prepared all materials in both languages and provided simultaneous translation for two weeks of lectures, activities and conversations. But the effort was worth it, as it proved the adaptability of the foundational model of popular education nearly 50 years after Brazilian educator Paolo Freire first presented it as a platform for liberation.

All of us attending appreciate popular education as a powerful tool. Its flexibility is illustrated by the many ways that participants are already bringing it back home. Before we had packed our bags, people had laid plans to use this methodology to educate undocumented farm workers in Arizona about their rights, and to transform the way HIV/AIDS patients are viewed in Guatemala. (See profiles of 2016 participants).

For me, the course provided a methodological and philosophical anchor from which many bridges can be built. The knowledge that this foundation will continue to connect us to EPES and to each other is a meaningful takeaway from the transformative time we spent together.

Bethany Waggoner is a Global Mission Intern with Global Ministries (Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ) and has spent the past year working with EPES Concepción.



Participants share a group hug.

Attending from Chile, the US, Latin American and Africa, participants in EPES' 2016 International Training Course strike a pose in front of the Santiago auditorium where international expert Alejandro Calvillo of Mexico gave a public presentation on obesity.



2016 Escuela participants singing a song of thanks in their own languages to a congregation in Boca Sur.

LETTER FROM *ESCUELA* DIRECTOR KAREN ANDERSON



Above: Grace Mose and Karen Anderson at the 2016 Escuela graduation ceremony.
Center: Celebrating with EPES staff the end of two intense weeks together.

by Karen Anderson, Director of EPES International Training Program, founder of EPES and ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile

For years, the EPES team dreamt of creating an international training program to share our three decades of experience with participatory and community-based methodologies to help poor communities gain more control over their lives and health. In 2010, with support from ELCA Global Mission, our dream came to life: we launched the first session of “la Escuela” (“school”), our shorthand for EPES International Training Course in Popular Education in Health.

The enthusiasm and response to learning this methodology has been overwhelming and to date, 130 people from 18 countries have attended.

In this issue of the *EPES Update*, we’re taking a closer look at the course, which has been held annually for the past seven years in January, during the balmy days of the Chilean summer.

The course takes place near EPES’ office on the south side of Santiago, in a modest retreat center that serves as classroom, dorms and dining hall. The first activity is always a diagnostic walk through neighboring streets to assess community health, looking at housing, garbage, green areas, etc. Then the normally quiet retreat center becomes a hive of activity, as teams are formed, sign-painting and poster-making materials rolled out, and wall space transformed into a planning tool.

By the end of the first week, the teams have designed and carried out a public activity—in an outdoor market or health clinic—focused on their observations and exchanges.

Each *Escuela* also features a public presentation by an international expert of commanding global vision. And there are workshops: 14 of them, covering topics like gender, public policy, faith-based responses to AIDS, communications, and strategies to create and sustain community health promotion teams, delivered by EPES staff and mentors.

The second week includes a stay at the EPES center in Concepción (500 km/310 miles south of Santiago), field visits to its health teams and environmental work, plus cultural and human rights-related outings.

The final assignment is for each participant (or groups of participants, many of whom have now bonded and want to continue to work together) to design a work plan or activity to bring these new experiences and learning back home.

One of the outcomes of the *Escuela* that I am most excited about is how EPES has been able to provide support for special projects designed during the training. Two projects stand out: EPES’ technical and financial support of the Hope Foundation



Above: Escuela participants in front of mural celebrating the Circulo team. Right: Escuela director Karen Anderson points to the message on Pastor Alvaro’s T-shirt: “God’s Work, Our Hands.”



for African Women to create its health promoter training program in rural Kenya; and *Escuela* scholarships and mentoring of youth leaders from Valparaíso’s Las Cañas Community Center, as they stepped up to deal with the aftermath of the firestorm that destroyed their neighborhoods in 2014.

A request from the Chilean National Office of Disability for a shorter course on popular education and community participation led EPES to develop the version we call the “spin-off.” EPES has given this one-week course seven times over the past two years, training hundreds of public health service workers around Chile. Later this year, EPES trainers will head to the remote island communities of Chiloe to give the course for community health workers there.

The International Training Course has been an enormous challenge for our staff, but we’ve learned and grown so much over these past seven years. We’ve been enriched both as an organization and as individuals by working with people from all over the world who are committed to social justice in community health contexts so different from our own.

Looking ahead, EPES may conduct the 2017 *Escuela* in Nairobi (Kenya), in collaboration with the Hope Foundation for African Women. HFAW director Grace Mose was a participant in the first *Escuela*, and returned five years later with a team of HFAW collaborators who have since created health teams in rural Kenya. This year, Grace joined us as a guest workshop leader and gave a presentation at the University of Chile School of Public Health on HFAW’s popular education work to end female genital mutilation.

So many of you have supported our efforts to expand the *Escuela* through scholarships and donations. We thank you all, and hope we’ve made you proud. And we hope you’ll be as excited as we are about the ways we’ll continue to expand over the years to come, here in Chile, around the Americas, and across the world. **Because health is a right, not a privilege.**

PROFILES OF 2016 INTERNATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



Working in: Nairobi, Kenya
Organization: Hope Foundation for African Women (HFAW)
Role: Founder and Executive Director

GRACE MOSE

Key Takeaways:

- Popular education as a theory for social empowerment & a model for organizational formation
- Participatory methodologies for all aspects of programmatic work

How HFAW Uses Popular Education: A major goal of our organization is to spread the EPES model from our work in Nairobi out to other areas of Kenya and further into East and Central Africa. We believe this approach is the key to transforming communities and helping them move from colonial indoctrination and into self-determination. We use the critical consciousness-raising aspect of popular education to help participants question the status quo of many things.

2016 Memorable Moment: Alejandro Cavillo's presentation on the diabetes epidemic in Mexico and especially the effects of Coca-Cola and soft drinks on health. I have always known that Coca Cola isn't "good," but didn't have the full story about the drastic health impacts.

Organizational Mission: HFAW is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that strives for gender equality through economic empowerment, promotion of sexual and reproductive health, eradication of gender based violence and advancement of human rights through the popular education model.



Working in: Kingstree, South Carolina, US
Organization: United Methodist Women
Role: Board Member

MICHELLINE "MIKKI" COOPER WILLIAMS

Key Takeaways:

- Creating an atmosphere of trust is essential by building relationships with individuals, seeking their input and understanding what drives them.
- With popular education, power is equally distributed between leaders and the community members, promoting respect for everyone. Power-sharing increases education opportunities.
- Realizing as a global society that we have more commonalities than differences in our homelands. I felt a sense of belonging during conversations with *Escuela* participants because there were so many similarities to my experience in the United States.

How United Methodist Women Is Using Popular Education: As a framework for workshops that connect to our mission and current programming goals. Such as mentoring young women who attended an all-day Ambassador of Women's Health Training in New York City on the facets of health promotion and addressing local issues with local solutions, using games and a participatory assessment to build bonds and trust for making socially conscious decisions.

2016 Memorable Moment: The *Círculo de Mujeres por la Salud*, a wonderful group of people committed and engaged with their community for 30 years. The *Círculo* has a strong sense of community and self awareness and quickly advocated for what works best in the community. Their exuberance during our time together was heartwarming and encouraging.

Organizational Mission: United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.



Working In: Tulsa, Oklahoma, US
From: Bucaramanga, Colombia
Organization: Comunidad de Esperanza (Community of Hope), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Role: Pastor

ALVARO NOVA OCHOA

Key Takeaways:

- A new methodology for working in our communities
- The work we engaged in with the community groups served as real-life models for how to apply EPES model of popular education
- The knowledge that this methodology can be applied to various projects. That we all can take it back to our own communities and without a doubt it will work for us all.

How Comunidad de Esperanza Uses Popular Education: We are using popular education as an overall framework for workshops and the planning of activities. The games and group activities we learned are also a key aspect we are using. We are also using the methodology to develop a series of workshops for training local health promoters to be held in partnership with United Methodist Women and Integral Health Promoters in Arizona. The most important aspects are the empowerment of communities and techniques for doing group work.

2016 Memorable Moment: Learning about the experience of the women from Kenya and seeing how popular education is working for them, especially regarding gender-based violence and female genital mutilation/cutting.

Organizational Mission: Accompany the Latino community of Tulsa, Oklahoma on their faith journey, through the seeking of social justice and the celebration of the Eucharist.



Key Takeaways:

- Through the process of popular education, health professionals and the community can work as equals.
- Through having more training, the community is empowered to achieve better health.
- Health is a result of social forces — economic and cultural. We must not reduce it to a medical product.

How Central Metropolitan Health Service Uses Popular Education: I am using these principles to develop the intervention strategies I am creating for health teams working with the local Family Health Centers (CESFAM) that I advise. One of the most important tools I'm using is the community diagnosis. This methodological tool allows me to support the development of knowledge in our communities. The health teams have also been encouraged by the application of popular education as a working strategy. What has changed in my own work, is how I view and evaluate the work plans of the CESFAM health teams I work with.

Since the course, I've been able to employ the EPES methodology in educational sessions with the local Council of Health Development to help them approach their work.

2016 Memorable Moment: The moment which impacted me most was learning the social determinants behind the obesity epidemic in the presentation by Alejandro Calvillo.

Working in: Santiago, Chile
Organization: Primary Care Department, Central Metropolitan Health Service
Role: Technical Consultant

Organizational Mission: Construct, manage and coordinate the health care network; deliver comprehensive care and accessible, timely, efficient and quality health service that promote prevention, recovery and rehabilitation in the community.

MEXICAN ACTIVIST SOUNDS OBESITY ALARM

Our guest speaker this year, Alejandro Calvillo of Mexico, put obesity and social determinants on the table and brought his insights to EPES' work on this issue.

Founder of Mexico's *El Poder del Consumidor* (Consumer Power) advocacy group, Calvillo has played a leading role in convincing the Mexican government to take action against diabetes by standing up to false marketing and corporate interests.

In a well-attended presentation open to the general public, Calvillo analyzed the role of social conditions in Latin America's obesity crisis.

"People need to be aware of the dimensions of the obesity epidemic, its consequences, and its main causes," he stated. "People need to view policy changes as something positive, urgent, and unavoidable: only then can we count on popular support to stand up to industry pressure."

Calvillo brought his message home with two videos: a documentary (*Dulce Agonia*) about junk food and diabetes in Mexico; and an "anti-commercial" by indigenous Mixe youth denouncing a TV ad by Coca Cola denigrating their community. (Both videos are posted on YouTube.)

In 10 years, *El Poder del Consumidor* has led actions to regulate junk food advertising to children, establish nutritional standards, and raise taxes on sugary drinks.

Calvillo led two workshops exclusively for *Escuela* participants: one on the social factors behind the obesity epidemic across Latin America; and the other on alternatives for changing the food environment and recovering nutritional health.

EPES also coordinated Calvillo's meetings with the *Frente por un Chile Saludable* (a civil society alliance in which EPES participates) and the Chilean Health Ministry, where he discussed the outcomes of Mexico's soda tax legislation.



Above left: Mexican sociologist and consumer health activist Alejandro Calvillo, guest speaker. Above right: Escuela participants join Calvillo at his workshop on the social factors behind Latin America's obesity epidemic. Right: Agnes Bosibori and Grace Mose of the Hope Foundation for African Women present Calvillo with a batik from Kenya. Learning about the impact of Coca-Cola and other soft drinks on the health in Mexico was a powerful moment for them.



NUTRITION IN CHILE: THE VIEW FROM EPES

EPES' program in nutrition, gender and society just started a new cycle of workshops, training mothers of students in eight local elementary schools to become healthy nutrition promoters. Chile, like Mexico, has seen an increase over the past 20 years in obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases linked to poor nutrition.

The course provides practical skills (cooking lessons, recipes and low-cost menus) and analysis of the multiple social factors (gender roles, advertising, international trade agreements, etc.) that influence family nutrition and national food policies.

COMMUNITY ACTIONS WITH SANTIAGO HEALTH TEAMS



From left to right: 1) Show, don't tell: Participants from the Escuela demonstrate to shoppers in the vegetable market just how much sugar there is in a bottle of Coke; Photos 2) and 3) Health teams and Escuela partners pose with banners they made for the local market action. 4) Grupo Llaretta took street theater tactics to the waiting room of a local health clinic, surprising patients with a skit on the problem of people dumping garbage in the streets.

Each year, EPES-trained health teams incorporate *Escuela* participants in actions that take health awareness to the streets.

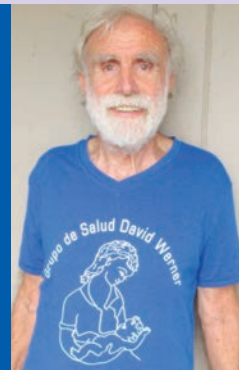
Pastor Alvaro Nova Ochoa, from the ELCA Latino Mission, spoke for his *Escuela* colleagues when he noted that "working with local community groups is a real-life model of how to apply EPES popular education methodology at home."

This year, *Grupo Llaretta* took street theater tactics to the waiting room of a local health clinic, surprising patients there with a skit on the problem of garbage dumped in the community.

The *David Werner* and *Círculo de Mujeres por la Salud* teams used local fruit and vegetable markets as their staging ground, distributing handouts and speaking to housewives about the dangers of too much soda and junk food, especially for children.

"WHERE THERE IS NO DOCTOR" CELEBRATES HIS CHILEAN NAMESAKE

Ever wonder where Santiago's Grupo de Salud David Werner got its name? Two decades ago, the author of "Where There Is No Doctor," David Werner, visited EPES to learn about its health promotion teams. His visit coincided with the creation of a new team, whose members adopted his name in celebration of his pioneering work. Last November, when the Grupo de Salud David Werner celebrated its 20th anniversary, they received "muchas felicidades" from the health educator, accompanied by this photo.

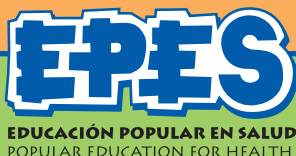


David Werner in the T-shirt sent to him by the health promoters.

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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.

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THE EPES TEAM

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