

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile

No 4: NEWS ROUND UP

ACTION FOR HEALTH DIRECTORS VISIT CHILE, RENEW TIES AND INSPIRATION

An energizing, inspiring and eye-opening opportunity to renew their ties, knowledge and commitments to EPES was how members of the Action for Health in the Americas (AHA) board of directors summed up their recent trip to Chile.

Four directors spent five days in Santiago and Concepción visiting EPES and its local partners. The delegation, made up of Sheila Dauer (New York), Melanie Nelson (Minnesota), Meghan Ochal (Washington, DC), and Rev. Dale Young (Miami), reacquainted themselves with EPES' activities in Santiago, met the communities devastated by the earthquake/tsunami, and "made a soul connection with the EPES staff and those they work with," in the Nelson's words.



Long-term collaborator Lisa Fuentes returns to EPES.

WORKSHOPS EXPLORE EDUCATING CHILDREN WITHOUT VIOLENCE

Exercising discipline without resorting to physical punishment is a challenge that many parents and teachers are eager to perform but unequipped to carry out. In a visit to Chile sponsored by EPES, expert Lisa Fuentes, Ph.D., shared the results of her research and taught training skills to parents and service providers in Santiago.

More than 70 people attended the workshop in the EPES Santiago community center. Fuentes also visited EPES Concepción and met with community leaders in Penco.

Fuentes' links to EPES go back 20 years, when she first conducted workshops on preventing child sexual abuse in Santiago shantytowns and worked with EPES to incorporate this issue into its health promotion training.

— Lisa Fuentes reflects on her visit and EPES' work, page 3.



AHA board members Melanie Nelson, Sheila Dauer and Meghan Ochal dance with community health promoters Sonia Martinez and Sara Donoso in front of mural painted by the health teams promoting healthy eating and physical activity.

"It was thrilling to meet women who have become leaders in rebuilding their communities and livelihoods," says Dauer. "They use the EPES approach of building on their own knowledge, ideas and efforts, then learning new skills and leadership. Much has been accomplished. But it was clear to us that full recovery is many years away."

The trip also gave the AHA directors the opportunity to interact with each other and the EPES board and staff in Santiago and Concepción. "We forged strong bonds that will help us communicate, collaborate and go forward," says Nelson. "Our discussions for fundraising and exciting ideas for celebrating EPES' 30th anniversary next year have energized us for the future."



Murals and flyers get the message across in the "For Me, For You... No More Violence" campaign, launched last year and going strong in the El Bosque district where EPES Santiago is located.



EPES is a non-profit Chilean foundation created in 1982 to promote health with dignity for the poor through empowerment, mobilization and collective action.

THE VIEW FROM PENCO

The first year anniversary of the Feb. 27, 2010, earthquake has come and gone, but not its aftermaths. In Penco, the coastal community where EPES has concentrated its relief and rebuilding efforts, so much remains to be done.

Nonetheless, much has been accomplished with the help of many individuals and organizations. A major funder of this work has been the ACT (Action by Churches Together) Alliance, through its support of the Chile Ecumenical Emergency Committee (CIECH), to which EPES belongs.

At the end of March, partners and beneficiaries met to mark the end of this grant. With women from the affected communities and visiting AHA board members in attendance, EPES directors Dr. Lautaro López and Rosario Castillo presented the achievements of its "Solidarity with Penco Coastal Communities" project.

Focused in three communities – the Bosque Mar and Eben Ezer emergency housing camps, and Gente de Mar – some 150 families have received material support within a broader program of community empowerment. This included last year's drive to winterize emergency shelters with sidings, new roofs and insulation, and provide basic household items and food for individual families. In Gente de Mar, (People of the Sea), where some 30 fishing families have refused to leave their shoreline homes despite the damage sustained, EPES also built two community washrooms.



Like her neighbors in Gente de Mar, Elizabeth earns a meager living gathering seaweed, setting it out to dry, and selling it to a local agent for shipment to Japan. But the seaweed she had recently harvested was rotting because of the weather. And after the earthquake in Japan, she wondered whether anyone would still be interested in buying it.



Tamara, Elizabeth's daughter, plays in the washroom built by EPES.



Rebuilding communities in Penco.



For Mother's Day, women celebrated their accomplishments with EPES.



"EPES has come through with the support that the government has failed to provide," says Eben Ezer leader Juan Correa (in front, with camp residents, EPES staff and AHA board members).

TRAINING FOR COMMUNITIES

Just as important as material support, EPES is providing training and organizational help to Penco residents and community leaders.

- Conflict mediation workshops have helped reduce tensions and smooth the way through the process of negotiating permanent housing. The first was led by professional mediator Ernesto Castillo (Chilean, based in New York City), with follow-up sessions in camps led by EPES staff.
- Dealing with the emotional repercussions of trauma and loss was the focus of workshops on "Surviving Grief" led by Rev. Dale Young, chaplain at the Miami (USA) Hospital and AHA board member. Some 30 mental health professionals and religious leaders (including Rev. Oscar Sanhueza, an EPES board member) participated in the sessions, co-sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile (IELCH).
- Healthy eating and physical activity workshops with women and children in the Penco camps were both educational and lots of fun. These were organized by Jules Decker, MPH student from the University of Illinois at



Women and children from the Eben Ezer camp enjoy a beach outing with Jules Decker, who led exercise classes as part of her research project.

Chicago, who spent three months at EPES Concepción researching the mental health needs of emergency camp residents.

EPES currently has 14 student interns and volunteers (seven from Chile and six from the U.S.) working on projects ranging from tobacco control to assessments of nutritional status and programs in urban poor communities, and more.

HEALTH TEAMS TACKLE PREVENTION AS WINTER APPROACHES

"People are fragile, but the body has its own intelligence to survive," says Pamela Monsalve, one of 17 women who completed the first aid and health promotion training course given by EPES in the Eben Ezer and Bosque Mar camps.

The graduates of the 13-session course have already put their skills into practice, including a life-saving intervention due to gas fumes. But they are most excited about the new Health and Environment Committees they've created in both camps. This year, as the 100 families approached their second winter in temporary shelters, sharing outdoor showers and latrines, preventative measures are in place based on surveys conducted by the health teams. Among the problems to be tackled are garbage and fire hazards, plus family health care.

For EPES, training health teams in precarious communities is a return to its origins, as noted by visiting AHA board member Rev. Dale Young, whose Lutheran church in Lo Rojas, outside of Concepción, was home to one of the first health teams nearly 30 years ago.



EPES founder Karen Anderson (center) presents diplomas to health committee delegates Kimberly and Pamela Monsalve (Eben Ezer) and Sara Gayozo and Jacqueline Urra (Bosque Mar) at the ACT closing ceremony.

COLIUMO: SURVEY HELPS WOMEN IDENTIFY FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Further up the coast, in the fishing village of Coliumo, EPES is helping the all-women's Seaweed Gatherers Syndicate survey members' needs, identify alternatives and channel funding. The tidal wave destroyed the sea beds they have harvested for years (often generations), forcing them to develop new options for sustainable livelihoods.



Coliumo: Women's Seaweed Gatherers Syndicate with EPES/AHA delegation.

A COLLECTIVE VISION

EPES' relief work is also part of a larger movement in southern Chile to rebuild with greater social justice and dignity. Several networks are mobilizing around the defense of the rights to information and full participation in the planning process for permanent housing and employment. By organizing dialogues with community leaders and encouraging local leadership, EPES encourages a collective vision and tools for empowerment that serve these communities in the future.

REFLECTION ON LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

Lisa Fontes, University of Massachusetts, internationally recognized expert on prevention of child abuse, shared this reflection following her recent visit to Chile.

"In Penco, I met Elizabeth Ramirez, who lost her home in last year's tsunami. She was excited about attending EPES' mediation program the next day. Although she did not finish elementary school, she is emerging as a community leader, eager to do more with her life.

EPES was right there after the earthquake providing direct aid and supporting the relief efforts of other organizations. But just as importantly, more than a year later, when most of the others have pulled out and moved on to the next emergency, EPES remains, helping Elizabeth and her neighbors build for the future.

"There's so much more we could do," says Dr. Lautaro López, EPES Concepción director. We were leaving yet another camp, where women had eagerly sought him out to share their dreams. One wants to continue her training in first aid; others have revived their hopes of finishing middle school. Their experiences with EPES have given them hope and tools that spark their ambition.

The amount of money needed by EPES is relatively little by U.S. standards. Several thousand dollars can bring a tutor to the camps or build a community laundry station. Just a few dollars a week invested in EPES can go such a long way. EPES is committed to women like Elizabeth; I am committed to EPES. Won't you join me?"

"EPES is here for the long haul because the marginalized people of Chile suffer as they always have—even if, in the eyes of some, Chile is now considered more of a developed country."

PARTICIPANTS PRAISE 2ND INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE

Like a "process of conversion" is how enthusiastic participants from eight countries (Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, Chile and the U.S.) described their two weeks at EPES learning about popular education.

Nineteen students spent the first half of January attending EPES' second International Training Course. Among them were U.S. graduate students, a Peruvian physician, Mexican HIV/AIDS activists and several Lutheran community workers. To participate, they took time off from a wide range of activities, including migrant education in the U.S., resettlement camps in Guatemala, HIV/AIDS work in Peru and earthquake relief in Haiti and in southern Chile.

Entitled "Dignity, Empowerment and Equity: Rebuilding Dreams with Dignity," the 2011 course focused on psychosocial and material support for rebuilding lives and communities destroyed by last year's quake. The course takes a hands-on approach, exploring the local community, working with grassroots health promoters and conducting community health actions with them.

Course participants put their new tools to work immediately, creating new courses and programs (in Puerto Rico and Mexico), and introducing the EPES model of community intervention to health services in northern Chile.

EPES International Training Program was featured in an article entitled "Accompany & Empower" in the June 2011 issue of "The Lutheran" at www.thelutheran.org. A video is also available about the training course, in English and Spanish, on EPES' website at www.epes.cl.



Making the streets into a classroom.



EDUCACIÓN POPULAR EN SALUD
POPULAR EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

THE EPES TEAM

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Karen Anderson, Director of the EPES International Training Course, ELCA Global Mission in Chile

Board of Directors

Ricardo Barra, biochemist, Director of the Environmental Science Department, University of Concepción

Jaime Bravo, economist, GESTRA Consultores Ltda.

Pamela Eguiguren, midwife, faculty member, University of Chile, School of Public Health

Hanni Grunpeter, nurse, public health specialist, formerly with the Ministry of Health.

Rev. Oscar Sanhueza, Lutheran pastor Comunidad San Pedro, Coronel and Comunidad Vida Nueva, Chiguayante, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chile Synod Council

Jorge Olivares, librarian. EPES staff representative.

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María Eugenia Calvin, social worker, University of Chile; EPES Director of Planning

Virginia Norambuena, sociologist/historian, University of Concepción; health educator, EPES Concepción Center

Sonia Covarrubias, social worker, Catholic University; health educator, EPES Santiago

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Maritza Provoste, administrative assistant

Katherine Remaggi, psychologist



EPES' Sonia Covarrubias shows posters to Congressmen.

TOBACCO CONTROL GOES TO CONGRESS, WINS PRIZE

In a first for EPES, its Tobacco Free Chile project (launched last October with a grant from Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids) took its message straight to the halls of Congress. Allied with parliamentarians who literally opened the door to halls, cafeterias and lunch rooms, EPES spent the month of May distributing posters, stickers, no-smoking signs and lapel buttons asking Chilean legislators to set the example and refrain from smoking in their offices and common areas.

The campaign culminated on May 31, World No Tobacco Day, when a new draft bill for Smokefree Chile was presented to Congress for debate and EPES joined the Pan American Health Organization in a ceremony to honor the 34 legislators who adhered to the campaign. The next day, EPES itself was the subject of honors when PAHO bestowed its 2011 World No Tobacco Day award to the Tobacco Free Chile project, one of three organizations in the Americas to be recognized.

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