

This series looks at the work of EPES in Chile.

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### BOOSTING IMMIGRANT ADVOCATES HELPS SUSTAIN THEIR MISSION

*“Migrar es florecer y no morir”* (To migrate is to flourish, not die) and *“Acojamos con amor y empatía la diversidad”* (Let’s receive diversity with love and empathy) were painted in bright colors on banners by immigrant rights advocates during a workshop EPES developed with them in Chile’s far northern city of Iquique on June 4.

The phrases represented much more than mere slogans for members of Tarapacá’s *Asamblea Abierta de Migrantes y Pro-migrantes* (AMPRO/Open Assembly of Migrants and Migrant Supporters), who participated in sessions on self-care and community work strategies run by psychologists Valeria García and Jorge Pantoja. The network of AMPRO volunteers is the first line of defense and aid for immigrants, mainly Venezuelans, who traverse the continent at great personal risk in hopes of finding a better, more peaceful life in Chile. AMPRO tirelessly provides new immigrants with basic needs—shelter, food, clothing, diapers—as well as psychological support, legal guidance and family reunification.

**“Neighbor is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept.”** — Rabbi Joachim Prinz



The work is stressful, however, exacting a toll on each volunteer’s own wellbeing. EPES’ workshop strengthened and emotionally supported the AMPRO team. It created a nurturing space for reflection, and equipped volunteers, mostly women, with psychosocial tools to help them carry out their mission.

The workshop was part of an emergency response project funded by the ELCA, in which EPES provided funds and technical assistance to AMPRO during much of 2022 to help the organization sustain its humanitarian work.

The EPES program facilitates AMPRO’s efforts to attain medical treatment and medication for immigrant women and children with special needs. It also seeks to improve access to information on immigrant health rights, while strengthening community organizations that serve them.

**Hebrews 13:2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.



Immigrants in El Bosque play games and discuss topics such as reproductive rights.

### SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: a Topic of Concern for Immigrant Women

On September 2, immigrant women engaged in a lively conversation about sexuality and rights, in a session organized by EPES, together with Health Administration, the Women and Gender Integral Development Center, and the Immigrant and Refugee Office, all El Bosque municipal offices.

The first question posed was: what do you understand by sexuality? This prompted a brainstorm. Participants then divided into small groups to delve deeper into the subject. The EPES educational board game was a helpful tool for this group, as it enabled the women to share their concerns. It also permitted them to question certain culturally ingrained beliefs.

The encounter was one of several EPES organized after a session at which immigrant women spoke of their need for a program focusing on content important to their daily lives.



## DAY-TO-DAY WORK OF EPES

### EMOTIONAL SUPPORT IN STRESSFUL TIMES

Chile's months of political uprising in 2019 were followed by more than two years of pandemic. Together, they have taken a heavy toll on women's emotional well-being. In mid October 2022, EPES set out to help women find some relief through workshops at its Santiago and Concepción centers. Haitian and Afghan immigrants participated alongside their Chilean neighbors, discovering that all women share so much.

On October 12, women gathered in the caring space EPES created at its Santiago offices, where they felt free to express feelings that sometimes overwhelmed them during extensive periods of tension and that persist today just below the surface. They also shared strategies for coping with emotional strain.

"We support you, we give you space and we walk together," chorused the women forming a circle for the closing ritual.

Two days later, a similar workshop was hosted by EPES' Hualpén community center in Concepción. The first part featured biodance to deepen self-awareness, release tension and improve emotional health. The group of women agreed that there is an urgent need to generate collective spaces for sharing feelings. And one of their most heartfelt wishes: to keep the connections built among them and no longer feel isolated or that they have to sustain others' lives alone and on their own.

### INTRO 101: HAITIAN CULTURE AND THE CREOLE LANGUAGE

An online course organized by EPES for staff, health promoters and other health professionals, was offered online on August 18 and 25. The course, delivered by professor Ralph Jean Baptiste, helped participants gain a deeper respect for Haitian political history and social reality.

Professor Baptiste described Haitian migratory processes, religion and history, dating from colonial times, continuing with the struggle for independence, dictatorships, and the 2010 earthquake. This spawned greater understanding of the cultural shock Haitian immigrants experience on arriving in Chile. Language, food, climate, and child care are only a few aspects that immigrants must adjust to.

The presentation shed new light on the limitations of the public health system, even with the incorporation of intercultural facilitators. Health care professionals' lack of knowledge of Haitian culture leads them to approach Haitian patients from Chilean cultural frameworks that are often inappropriate. The failure to respect the culture and customs of immigrant communities often leads to discriminatory practices.



*Workshops offer women emotional support in Santiago and Concepción.*



### SUPPORTING THE RIGHTS OF DOMESTIC EMPLOYEES AND CAREGIVERS

Large numbers of low-income Chilean women are employed as domestic workers in private homes where they are vulnerable to long work days, low pay and unpredictable conditions. Other women are obliged by circumstances to serve as principal caregiver for the elderly and family members in ill health, responsibilities that are undervalued and consequently, underpaid, if at all.

EPES, as a member of the San Ramón Network of Organizations for Violence-Free Lives, helps raise awareness of the exploitation domestic employees face and the need to protect their rights.

On July 22, International Domestic Workers' Day, stands were set up at an open-air street market in El Bosque and people were invited to talk about their work experiences. EPES had on hand a game it developed to encourage women to open up, express their hopes, and share the resources they employ to cope with work overload, as well as physical and emotional strain. The San Ramón Network also coordinates work that puts the spotlight on various forms of violence experienced by women, girls, and the LGBTQIA community. Municipal programs participated with their own information stands about the mental health services and support they offer the community.



### WORKSHOPS ON SELF CARE FOR CAREGIVERS

A cycle of workshops on self care for caregivers was held in EPES' Santiago and Concepción centers, culminating on June 29, 2022 with a roundtable on "The right to care."

The objectives of the workshops were to create a space of respect and fellowship for participants to connect with their bodies and daily experiences, as well as reflect on women's caregiving responsibilities and domestic overload, examining personal, collective and shared experiences. Participants also shared strategies for maintaining wellbeing.

All this in the context of continuing inequity suffered by women, expressed, for example, in the salary gap between men and women, the devaluing of unpaid work, and the feminization of domestic labor, with women bearing an excess share of domestic work.



## HOME ASSIGNMENT 2022: The joy of visiting congregations in person again



Immanuel Lutheran Church, Forest City, IA



St. John's Lutheran Church, Kasson, MN



First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Kenyon, MN



Trinity Lutheran Church, Owatonna, MN



First Lutheran Church, Lake City, MN



AHA Board



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Clifton Park, NY



On Becoming Conference, Chicago, IL

The Latin American and Caribbean team at the On Becoming conference wore black on Thursday in keeping with #ThursdaysInBlack campaign, a global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence.

It was great to be back visiting my supporting congregations in person this past summer for the first time since the pandemic began. Gracias to all of you for welcoming me into your congregations to share reflections and stories from our work in Chile. Our deepest gratitude for your ongoing support for the Global Mission of the ELCA and for accompanying EPES on our 40 year journey to promote health, justice, dignity and hope. And thank you all for wearing the colorful bandanas announcing our four decades of work!

It was also wonderful to have a joint in-person and online meeting of the board of Action for Health in the Americas, the U.S. counterpart to EPES.

Finally, the summer ended with the On Becoming conference of the ELCA. This was a stirring moment of reconnecting, reflection, worship, singing, renewal and learning about the strategic directions of the new area of the ELCA, Service and Justice, in which the former Global Mission unit is now located.

Blessings and heartfelt thanks,

*Karen Anderson*

Karen Anderson

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile





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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.

## SUPPORT EPES

To contribute to EPES, make a tax-deductible donation online at [www.actionforhealth.org](http://www.actionforhealth.org), or mail your 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" (AHA)  
a non-profit North American partner of EPES.

## USE THRIVENT CHOICE DOLLARS TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF EPES!

Go to [www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://www.thrivent.com/thriventchoice), or call 1-800-847-4836 to designate your Thrivent Choice Dollars to AHA.

## 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.



During this critical time, your generous donations will keep EPES' work going to support women and families and to fight for justice and equity in health.

**TO DONATE:** Mail your check in the enclosed remittance envelope, or donate online at: [www.actionforhealth.org](http://www.actionforhealth.org)



*EPES is celebrating 40 years of making a difference in people's lives and looking towards the future. Through dictatorships, earthquakes, devastating fires and pandemics, EPES has remained steadfast in standing with the poor and marginalized to build healthier communities. And we wouldn't be where we are today without your ongoing support and investment in our work.*



## Action for Health in the Americas

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# NEW TASTES AND LESS FOOD WASTE



Healthy eating took on an entirely new dimension for women who took part in an EPES workshop that concluded October 18. The social determinants focus put the simple act of preparing a meal into a whole new light, while participants also learned to make delicious concoctions, such as preserves from bell peppers and garlic.

EPES educator Paulina Rojas Pizarro opened the session with the "From a Seed to Your Plate" board game, spurring reflection about global, national, and local policies that affect our food choices. The concept of agroecology, which enhances interrelationships between communities and food sources, provides an alternative framework for examining such policies.

Organized by EPES in conjunction with the Sow and Harvest Health Group, the two-day workshop also imparted ways to reduce food waste in our kitchens through nutritional recipes that maximize use even of leftover vegetables.

# VEGGIE GARDENERS LEARN HOW TO COMPOST

In the southern hemisphere, August is the last month of winter, the perfect season for preparing the soil for planting and, in south Santiago, for inaugurating the Auco community garden's new composter. On August 8, EPES and the Vegetable Gardeners Group, guided by agronomist Rosa Herrera, sowed new interest in organic veggie plots, showing neighbors how easy it is to compost instead of tossing leftovers into the garbage bin.

Rosa also demonstrated how earthworms, with their ability to break down organic material, are a gardener's best friends. Neighbors brought dried leaves, thin branches from pruning, pieces of cardboard, and food scraps to fill the new composter together.

Towards the end of the month, the gardeners and healthy food advocates gathered again, this time under the traditional thatch-roofed premises of the Mahuidache First Nation's Ceremonial Park, also in El Bosque. Food sovereignty and the right to good nutrition as key elements for better living were the focus of the seminar, held by the Community Nutrition Coordinating Board.

