

BUILDING INCLUSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES WITH MIGRANT POPULATIONS IN SANTIAGO AND NORTHERN CHILE

Haitians represent 9.8% of the almost two million foreign residents in Chile, making them the fourth largest immigrant community in the country. Nearly half of the migrant population are women (48.9%).

A recent study highlights that immigrant women face multiple barriers. For Haitian women, one of the most significant is language. Not speaking Spanish makes them vulnerable in different aspects of their daily lives.

In a complex context for the migrant population in Chile, EPES held the second edition of its Spanish Course for Haitian Women, led by staff member Macarena Villarroel and intercultural facilitator Pharayou Borgella; 24 women graduated from the program.

To enable the women to participate, EPES provided a transportation stipend, breakfast, and childcare. The course offered a space for dialogue and reflection on issues such as self-care, sexuality and the daily burdens immigrant women face. It included visits to municipal government offices and to one of the community gardens led by health promoters trained by EPES, as well as the creation of a community mural, designed and painted collectively, highlighting the need for migration regularization.

On Chile's northern border, EPES, in partnership with the Assembly of Migrants and Pro-Migrants of Tarapacá, has been developing humanitarian aid initiatives for migrants since 2023. These include the distribution of food and water kits, funding for transportation, migration counselling, and workshops. In 2025, some 1250 people benefited from this program.



Stephen Deal visiting immigrant communities in Northern Chile.

“The course helped me a great deal, especially in communicating with my coworkers. I now feel more confident engaging in conversations, both at work and in daily life. I learned much more than Spanish... all of this will serve me throughout my life.”

— Marie Danielle Durandisse

ELCA REPRESENTATIVE VISITS IQUIQUE AND ALTO HOSPICIO

In August, Stephen Deal, Regional Representative of the AMMPARO Network (Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), visited EPES. He met with migrants and partner organizations, while also becoming acquainted with EPES' initiatives in Santiago and the northern city of Iquique, including its Alto Hospicio neighborhood, home to a vast immigrant population.

“The EPES team demonstrates an extraordinary ability to build alliances with a wide range of community actors, including local governments, higher education institutions, and grassroots organizations—all united by their commitment to defending the human rights of immigrants in Chile, regardless of their nationality or migration status.”

— Stephen Deal, Regional Representative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's network, Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities

MOVING TOWARD A COMMUNITY POLICY ON HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD

Since 2018, EPES has coordinated and led the Food Task Force in the municipality of El Bosque, where 22 municipal programs currently collaborate to promote a community policy on healthy and sustainable food. This policy seeks to ensure equitable access to nutritious food, strengthen local and community production, and contribute to well-being and the right to food for all residents of the municipality.

The Food Task Force organizes an annual Community School of Food and Agroecology, which has trained 90 people over the past 3 years. School participants critically analyze the effects of the food system on health, ecosystems, and local cultures.

One of the School's key sessions is the Community Gathering. This year, 84 people participated, exchanging seeds, and sharing knowledge, experiences, and reflections on the right to food.

As a way to promote and expand community gardens in the municipality, the Food Task Force held two workshops on soil use and management, where participants also learned how to make compost. A total of 37 people linked to 2 local health centers took part. The gardens have inspired a reflective and critical perspective on eating practices and access to food, with contact with the soil becoming a space of healing that has transformed the lives of many women and their families.



In addition, EPES developed a 4-session food course for 21 municipal officials of El Bosque, aimed at strengthening their knowledge and skills around the right to food. In the workshop, they cooked and tasted dishes, and learned to prepare meals using parts of food that are often discarded. The workshop requires participants to replicate the content learned in an educational session within their own community. So far, 4 replications have been carried out, reaching 65 people.

Susana Jiles, coordinator of EPES' Food, Justice, and Health project, notes: "Through training activities and community gatherings, we have been building awareness about the food system and the climate crisis, both from theoretical and practical perspectives. These spaces have allowed us to reflect critically and collectively on how food is connected to human and planetary health, while also promoting the creation of community-based and institutional alternatives that help ensure the human right to food."



JULY 4TH BECOMES NATIONAL DAY FOR DIGNIFIED HEALTH

Amelia Salazar died of medical negligence on July 4, 2018, at the Carlos Van Buren Hospital in Valparaíso. She was just 21 months old. After years of organizing and advocacy, Amelia's parents, Camila Jorquera and Mauricio Salazar, close friends of EPES and graduates of our International Training Program, successfully fought for Law 21.696, which officially establishes July 4 as the *National Day for Dignified Health*.

The law came into effect this year with commemorations in Santiago and Valparaíso. As we have every year, EPES joined the event in Valparaíso, alongside other community and cultural organizations and local government officials. The activity included a march, a press conference, and a comprehensive health fair, where EPES set up an information booth.

We are so proud of Camila and Mauricio and moved by their amazing strength to honor their daughter with this law, as they continue to fight for justice for Amelia.



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, or mail your contribution to:

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Action for Health in the Americas



EPES and community organizations paying tribute to Ana González, human rights defender and cofounder of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared, on the centenary of her birth.



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EPES AND AHA BOLSTER THEIR JOINT WORK

In September, the meeting of the Board of Action for Health in the Americas (AHA), EPES's counterpart in the United States, was held via Zoom. In 2025, AHA was strengthened with the incorporation of two new members, Celia Higuera and Alina Stevenson, whom we welcome and thank for their commitment to EPES' work in Chile.

During the meeting, the Board reviewed the progress of projects undertaken by EPES throughout the year and discussed new strategies to support the Foundation's sustainability. They also shared reflections on the current

situation in Chile and the United States, reaffirming the joint commitment to social justice and the right to health.

We thank AHA for its support, commitment, and solidarity, which makes possible the continuity and strengthening of EPES' work in communities.

SEXUALITY, AGING, AND RIGHTS OF OLDER WOMEN REPORT RELEASED

EPES drafted the report, *Sexuality, Aging, and Rights of Older Women*, which highlights the experiences and needs of older women regarding health and sexuality. Based on group interviews with 50 participants from organizations in the municipality of El Bosque, the document addresses myths, stigmas, and shortcomings of the health system, emphasizing the importance of promoting public policies that recognize and guarantee older women's right to a full, informed, and violence-free life.

