**EPES INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL: LAUNCHED IN 2010, BACK IN 2011**

A long-time dream of EPES came true at the beginning of 2010 with the inauguration of its International Training Course on Popular Health. For two weeks in Santiago and Concepción, 20 participants from eight countries experienced first-hand the methodologies that EPES has pioneered over three decades of community work.

“An impressive collection of participatory tools for liberating action, alliance-building and everything we do to accompany our communities,” is how Rubi Flores, Lutheran Church of Honduras, described the course.

The 2011 course, entitled “Dignity, Empowerment and Equity: Participatory and Community-Based Health Strategies” will be held from January 4 to 14 and will focus on EPES’ response to community needs following the February earthquake.

For information, see [www.epes.cl](http://www.epes.cl)

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**FAITH COMMUNITIES AND HIV/AIDS**

How are Lutheran faith communities in Latin America addressing HIV/AIDS? How have HIV/AIDS-related issues changed the church?

Answers to these questions were culled from 26 in-depth interviews conducted by EPES at the request of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). EPES also “mapped” the HIV/AIDS programs of Lutheran churches and organizations in the region and presented findings to the ELCA “Transformed to Transform” consultation in Lima, Peru in late June.

“Our ‘plus’ as churches must be to emphasize radical inclusiveness, respect for all types of dignity, all types of people, irrespective of identity, since we see the image of God in each and every one,” said conference participant Rev. Lisandro Orlov, Regional Coordinator for Latin America of the Lutheran World Federation HIV/AIDS Campaign.

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**NEW ANTI-VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN LINKS CITY, COMMUNITY**

“For Me, For You, No + Violence” is the slogan of an EPES-led campaign that features an innovative partnership with the city of El Bosque, its health and social welfare services, and grassroots groups.

The campaign was launched in July at a popular neighborhood shopping mall with balloons, banners, music and massages for women. Activities will continue with workshops at clinics, mural painting and pamphlets on the streets, and conversations door-to-door, reaching thousands of El Bosque residents over four months.
Concepción and the surrounding area were dealt a devastating blow by the February 27 earthquake and tsunami: scores died; thousands lost homes and livelihoods; schools, clinics, roads, bridges, factories, stores and dreams collapsed.

No individual or community can really be prepared for a catastrophe of this magnitude. But in many ways, EPES was. Its work with the poorest communities — the ones hit hardest — meant it was already there to mobilize resources, support local leaders, link up and put into motion the tremendous outpouring of solidarity that the tragedy unleashed.

Once assured that the EPES staff and building were safe, the Santiago and Concepción teams worked unceasingly. Dr. Lautauro López, EPES Concepción director, got water pumps going within 24 hours. Health monitors canvassed their neighborhoods with first aid information. In Santiago, EPES helped create the Ecumenical Emergency Committee (CIECH), which sent aid caravans as soon as roads reopened. The EPES center that so many AHA supporters helped build was the main collection and distribution point for these seven churches and organizations.

The video on the EPES website captures why working with the community is so important in the recovery process. Volunteers, staff, health promoters and neighbors express their concerns over being pushed aside by top-down decision-making, and claim their right to voice and action in the reconstruction process.

Thanks to the generous solidarity of so many supporters, EPES is focusing on two programs to address material and emotional needs of earthquake and tsunami victims. The EPES team says THANK YOU to the organizations below and to scores of individuals who said: ¡PRESENTE! WE’RE WITH YOU!

1199/SEIU (Service Employees International Union), New York
A Mano, Takoma Park, Maryland
ACT International (Action by Churches Together)
ChileCAD (Chilean Cultural Association of Davis), California
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)
Global Ministries/Latin America-Caribbean/Disciples of Christ/UCC
First Lutheran Church, Albany
La Peña Cultural Center, Berkeley, California
Learning ZoneXpress, Owatonna, Minnesota
Lutheran World Federation
Mano a Mano con Chile, California
Mercy Corps
New Global Citizens Club, Shaker High, Latham, New York
St. John’s Lutheran Church, Albany, New York
St. Luke’s United Methodist Church, Indianapolis, Indiana
Streng Family Fund
Trinity Lutheran Church, Owatonna, Minnesota
Wheat Ridge Ministries
Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Minnesota
And...
Chileans in Lyon, France
Friends from Canada, through TIDES
Friends from San Francisco, California
Friends from around the world, through Action for Health in the Americas (AHA)
Community leaders and teachers are among the 60 facilitators trained to date to lead “Comfort 4 Kids” workshops. Recovering confidence and culture. Abagail Figueroa, 5, participates in a workshop organized by a neighborhood group in Talcahuano that combines emotional support with Mapuche language, songs and legends.

More than 1,000 youths in five cities are participating in workshops based on the Mercy Corps Comfort4Kids model (see reports by Karen Anderson at: www.mercycorps.org). Younger children write and draw their feelings in a “My Earthquake/Tsunami Story” notebook that comes in a backpack with pencils, eraser, a stuffed animal and a flashlight. Older children receive volleyball nets, soccer balls, T-shirts and other equipment for a program of games and team sports.

The Villa Bosque Mar resettlement camp is home to 50 families who once lived along the shore and depended on the sea. Independent people, low on schooling and income, they are now living in one-room government-issued wooden shelters that lack running water, sharing communal latrines and cold-water showers. But thanks to timely intervention, residents will face the winter dry and warm under repaired roofs, insulated walls, windows with glass, gas heaters, burners and real beds. EPES is also conducting emotional support workshops for women and training in health and first aid.

This “temporary” housing requires long-term commitment from EPES to help residents through the complicated process of obtaining permanent homes for new lives with health and dignity.
WOMEN AND TOBACCO: EPES TAKES THE LEAD

Chile has the highest rates of women smokers in the Americas. But until recently, women’s groups have ignored tobacco control as a public health issue they can influence.

EPES is taking a leadership role in tobacco control advocacy in Chile. In 2007, EPES surveyed women’s health leaders and tobacco control activists to identify synergies. The findings, discussed in a national meeting funded by the American Cancer Society, presented smoking as a social (not just medical) issue in which gender plays a determinant role. Since then, EPES’ tobacco work has proceeded along two tracks: smoking as a women’s issue, and coalition-building for more effective policies and legislation.

Its 2008 project “Food Without Cigarette Smoke” looked at tobacco-free workplaces from the perspective of low-income women who work in their homes to prepare food for sale.

EPES surveyed 2009 Presidential election candidates on their proposals for tobacco control and investigated campaign contributions and lobbying by the tobacco industry and its connections to the political elite.

Most recently, EPES has created the Tobacco Free Chile coalition, and in May addressed the Senate Finance Committee to support higher cigarette taxes.

HATS OFF TO VOLUNTEERS

Enriching EPES with their enthusiasm and energy, a new group of volunteers are spending the first part of 2010 as interns in the Santiago office. Following the paths of dozens of past volunteers who have left their mark, the current group includes Chileans completing social work degrees at Santiago universities and young women from Canada and the U.S. with diverse academic backgrounds but a common desire to learn first-hand about health and social justice in Latin America.

Meet: Wila Cidre, Harvard graduate from Puerto Rico, funded by a Michael C. Rockefeller Memorial Fellowship; Margaret Gamboa, public health graduate and yoga instructor; Gretchen Hoge, a social worker and marathon runner; Lia Koski, a science major who works with pre-schoolers; Canadian Kristy Baron; and US volunteers Claire Pluard and Sarah McDonald. Hailing from Chile are: Patricia Viñals (whose mother is an EPES health monitor); Natalia Vásquez; Camila Andrea Araya; Marcela Saa; and Isidora Almarza. EPES Concepción has received tremendous support from anthropology student Magno Leal.

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More about EPES at Action for Health in the Americas (AHA): www.actionforhealth.org

SUPPORT EPES

To give your support, send your tax-deductible contribution to:
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