

Working for Health and Dignity in Chile: Educación Popular en Salud–EPES/Popular Education for Health

July / August 2018



Health is a Right Not a Privilege | Mural at the EPES center in Santiago

An occasional update from Chile (January, March/April, July and September)– sharing brief highlights from our work, sometimes a story, reflection or writings that have been meaningful to me in this long journey working for health, hope and healing.

Regular comprehensive EPES Updates in May and November.

EPES in Puerto Rico: collaborative efforts for post-hurricane recovery

Dear Friends,

As you may remember from the May EPES Update, the presence of three Puerto Rican women enriched this year's International Training Program (the "Escuela") in January: environmental health education teacher Elda Guadalupe Carrasquillo from Vieques; community leader and health promoter Aida Edward from Loiza; and Puerto Rico University Medical School professor Aurinés Torres-Sánchez, who also took part in the second International Course of 2011. Elda Guadalupe and Aida Edward traveled to Chile thanks to a scholarship from EPES funded by Action for Health in the Americas – NYC and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Clifton Park, NY.



As we reported in the Update, Elda, Aida and Aurinés met, they say, "thanks to Maria," the category 5 hurricane that devastated the island September 19-20, 2017. The three helped generate community-based organizations drawing from the EPES popular education for health model.

In a thank-you letter written by Aurines after the International Training, she said: *It is in this respect that the EPES Escuela is so important, since this is the time when we most need to invest funds and energy in sustainable projects that will allow us to find more just solutions. The popular education methodology allows us to strengthen the projects where Elda and Aida work, especially to foster local empowerment from the community bases where the social transformations of dignity are born. It is beautiful to see and feel that solidarity transcends geographic borders, language and culture. Thank you!*



Now, six months after the International Training, we are happy to continue transcending geographic borders and working with communities in Puerto Rico directly through the visit of Lautaro and Vicky from our team in Concepción from August 6–12 for a program jointly sponsored by EPES and community-based partners in Puerto Rico, *Taller Salud*, *El Panal* and the Community Pediatrics rotation of the School of Medicine of the University of Puerto Rico. The purpose of the visit will be to share the experience of EPES in post-disaster community work and to train community facilitators for the implementation of the *Comfort for Kids* program as part of collaborative efforts for post-hurricane recovery in Puerto Rico.

In Chile, after the devastating 8.8 earthquake in February 2010, Lautaro and Vicky led EPES' immediate and long-term response in Concepción, just 55 miles from the epicenter. With support from the international humanitarian organization Mercy Corps, EPES staff trained 70 facilitators to implement *Comfort for Kids*, a program that focuses on helping children process trauma after natural disasters and conflict. The program was launched after the earthquake with 1800 children from the Bío Bío region. And, in 2014, when fire left thousands homeless in a poor hilltop community of Valparaiso, EPES trained facilitators to implement the program there as well.



Now members of the Lutheran Church, community health promoters and health activists will receive *Comfort for Kids* training and materials to help them continue their important work with children and families recovering from the devastating effects of Hurricane Maria.

The long-term work of recovery will take years – nine months since the hurricane made landfill, thousands remain without power and many still don't have access to clean water.

EPES is honored to play a small role in supporting local health promoters and churches as they work to rebuild their communities.

Blessings and thanks to all of you for your love and support.

Karen

ELCA Global Mission Personnel in Chile
EPES Foundation

Online giving: <https://community.elca.org/chile>



What is EPES?

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.