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POPULAR EDUCATION FOR HEALTH

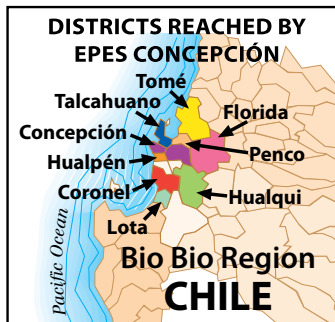
EMERGENCY APPEAL

EARTHQUAKE 2010: EPES RESPONDS

TREATING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

EPES CENTER CONCEPCION: IN PLACE AND IN ACTION

With its three-decade history of community mobilization in Concepción, at the center of the earthquake, EPES is well-positioned to respond to the emergency in a country whose deceptively modern facade is crumbling along social, as well as geographical, fault lines.



EPES was already there when the earthquake and tsunami hit Hualpén, the neighborhood between Concepción and Talcahuano where its Center is located. Fortunately, the new EPES Center – built in 2005 – sustained only minor damages and was able to function as a hub of emergency relief efforts within hours of the tragedy.

Within 24 hours, EPES Concepción director Dr. Lautaro López had located an emergency electrical generator, opened the well in EPES patio, and started pumping and distributing water to 300 neighborhood families (nearly 1,200 people).

As EPES health teams diagnosed community needs to determine the most urgent situations, Dr. López provided immediate medical care.

A team from EPES Santiago reached Concepción in a borrowed truck and government-issued safe-conduct pass, to lend support as soon as roads were opened. In addition to the catastrophic physical destruction they saw along the way and in the areas where EPES works, they encountered tremendous emotional damage among people shaken by the sequence of earthquake, tsunami, aftershocks, looting, military occupation, 18-hour curfews, neighborhood patrols and barricaded streets.

Building on long-standing relationships with individuals, families and local organizations in the stricken communities, EPES health promoters worked around-the-clock to address both immediate material and emotional needs.

Health teams put together and distributed emergency health kits, including thousands of fliers on how to access clean water and prevent disease.

EPES also distributed boxes of food supplies and other aid in conjunction with the new Inter-Church Committee Chile 2010, an ad hoc group of local churches and ecumenical organizations (including EPES) that EPES helped create in order to coordinate emergency relief efforts. EPES took charge of operations in Sector 2 (the Concepción and Hualpén districts where EPES is based) and is participating with the Committee in an in-



Undamaged by the quake, the EPES Center became the hub of community organizing and relief.



Distributing food boxes.



Dr. Lautaro López, director of the EPES Concepción Center, delivers an emergency health kit.

depth assessment of longer-term community needs.

“We knew EPES would be here,” a distraught Hualpén woman told the EPES staff in the chaos of the first days. EPES was there – and continues to be there – providing material aid and helping to rebuild spaces for participation and collective action.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS: HELPING CHILDREN TO HEAL

Children in particular have been traumatized by the quake and its continuing aftershocks. EPES has identified the urgent need for post-traumatic stress counseling for children and other members of quake-stricken communities in this climate of tremendous vulnerability.

EPES must act now to train a network of community health teams, church leaders and other adult mentors to help children, teens and women deal with earthquake trauma and other psychosocial distress.

Time is of the essence. Providing psychosocial support to traumatized children within the first four-to-eight weeks following a disaster is critical to preventing symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from evolving into chronic PTSD or worse.

See the reverse side of this flier for the details of this emergency initiative – to be launched in mid-April – and how you can help EPES to bring it to the people who need it now.

While nervous parents lined up to get water from the EPES well, accompanied by children too frightened to stay behind at home, the EPES staff produced crayons and paper from office supplies recovered from the disarray, and encouraged the children to draw. "All the drawings and all the talk is about the earthquake," reports Maria Stella Toro Santiago-based EPES educator who traveled to Concepción to support the local staff. "The level of trauma is high."

In the street, children are taking turns tossing one another about in an old handcart in their newly invented game of "Earthquake and Aftershocks."

"How strong was that?" someone asks.

"That was a 9!" the young girl vigorously shaking the cart announces, as a little boy relinquishes his space in the hot seat to the next comer.

As the shaking gets more energetic ("That's an 11!" an onlooker announces), the little girl's bravado crumbles. "That's enough, Karina," she pleads, "not so strong."

Bravado, acting out and game-playing are all coping mechanisms that children adopt in the aftermath of traumatic experiences like Chile's 8.8 quake.



A video of Karina and her friends playing their improvised game is posted on the EPES website.

HELPING TO HEAL

This emergency program will treat children, teens and women suffering from psychosocial distress in Concepción, Talcahuano and Penco. This will be achieved by training adult mentors to use sports and games-based activities to alleviate the anxiety, loss and despair caused or exacerbated by the earthquake and its aftermaths.

Mercy Corps, an Oregon-based charity (www.mercycorps.org) will provide EPES with its *Comfort for Kids* methodology (used after 9/11 in New York City and earthquakes in Peru and Haiti) to help public and community health workers, teachers, parents and other caregivers understand and address post-traumatic stress in children and adults. Mercy Corps will fund the training of the first 30 adult mentors who will then work with 600 children (in groups of 25 kids each) over a period of 3 months. Mercy Corps will also fund the adaptation and the printing of the workbooks and materials used for the first training.

The initial three-day training will be held April 14 to 16 in the EPES Center in Concepción. Emergency funds donated by the New York State Health Workers' Union 1199/SEIU will allow EPES to hire a psychologist experienced in post-traumatic stress situations to lead workshops in schools and with community groups.

Each training program includes:

- 3-Day Training Program for 25 adult mentors
- 25, 2-Hour Training Session for parents of 600 children
- Workbooks for 600 children
- Implementation of 3-month program with 600 children led by mentors
- Honorariums and travel support for adult mentors
- EPES professional staff support for training, supervision and evaluation of the program over 4-month period

EPES seeks your support to expand this program to other earthquake-shattered communities where help for healing is needed.



SUMMARY OF FUNDS NEEDED (in US\$)

Three day workshop	\$2,000
600 Workbooks	\$3,000
600 Backpacks w/pens, etc.	\$12,000
Honorariums/transportation for adult mentors	\$6,000
Salaries EPES professional team (4 months)	\$14,000

Total Budget \$37,000

YOU CAN HELP!



For more information about EPES' response to the earthquake see: www.epes.cl or <http://www.mercycorps.org/karenanderson/blog>

To support this work checks can be made out to AHA and mailed to EPES' US tax exempt counterpart:

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