

Global Links NEWS

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One Year Later, Global Links Aid to Haiti Continues Efforts Center on Cholera Prevention, Establishment of Sustainable Health System

One year after a magnitude 7.0 earthquake ravaged the island nation of Haiti, killing 230,000, injuring 300,000 injured, and rendering 1.5 million men, women and children homeless, international medical relief and development organization Global Links continues its work there, with cholera prevention and the rebuilding of the nation's health care system as its chief priorities.

In the immediate aftermath of the quake, Global Links assumed a leadership role in developing and coordinating relief efforts by the Pittsburgh community, providing local first-responder medical personnel with key medical materials to hand-deliver to Haiti, and coordinating rapid shipment of desperately needed medications and medical supplies to Hôpital Albert Schweitzer (HAS). Two large shipments followed, with a special focus on orthopedic supplies, casting material, crutches, wheelchairs, and walkers, all desperately needed due to the thousands disabled by crushing injuries and amputations.

In late fall 2010, a particularly virulent strain of **cholera**, a disease not previously seen in Haiti, began spreading from the mountains into the capital. The lack of clean water and adequate sanitation created an epidemic, sickening more than 150,000 people and killing more than 3,300. At the request of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), Global Links sent four more containers of basic supplies – mattresses, IV poles, and rehydration materials essential for seriously ill patients to survive cholera.

More shipments are planned.

“The cholera outbreak is not expected to start declining until it reaches a peak of 400,000 people infected in the first 12 months,” says Kathleen Hower, Global Links co-founder and CEO. “Setting up more treatment centers and keeping them stocked is vital to keeping the death rate low and curtailing the spread of the disease. Cholera response will continue to be our primary focus over the next few months.”

In 2011, Global Links will continue to work closely with PAHO and other partners to provide needed supplies, equipment and medical furnishings. Carefully planned shipments – **a minimum of 15 sea containers over the next two years** -- will include materials and supplies that specifically address the needs presented by the cholera epidemic, provide for long-term rehabilitation of the seriously injured, and support the efforts of Haitian doctors working around the country. Global Links will also assist in the rebuilding of a decimated healthcare infrastructure.

“Despite the many challenges, progress is being made,” says Kathleen Hower, Global Links co-founder and CEO, who visited Haiti this past July to meet with PAHO and other partners. “The level of devastation required one of the largest relief operations in history, complicated by a fragile infrastructure, limited government capacity and soaring poverty levels. It is essential that governments, nongovernment organizations, and individuals remain committed to the concept of long-term recovery and reconstruction in Haiti.

“By working collaboratively with the Pan American and World Health Organizations, Global Links will help Haiti recover, and strengthen the health infrastructure throughout the country,” adds Hower. “We have been working in Haiti since 1996, and we are committed to creating a healthier future for Haiti and its people.”

To make a donation in support of Global Links efforts in Haiti, or for more information, call 412-361-3424, ext. 201 or visit globallinks.org.

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About Global Links:

Global Links is an international medical relief and development organization based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Founded in 1989, Global Links is dedicated to improving health and promoting health equity in developing countries. Programs include the provision of high quality medical supplies and equipment that have been systematically recovered from U.S. hospitals. These valuable surplus materials which would otherwise be disposed of in landfills are channeled to public health systems in targeted countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Because poorly planned and inappropriate donations can cause more problems than they were meant to address, each donation is carefully tailored to meet the needs of the recipient institution. Dedicated volunteers help Global Links to maintain high quality standards and low costs. Since its founding, Global Links has provided more than \$160 million in critical medical aid to developing nations, including Bolivia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica and Nicaragua. More information at:

www.globallinks.org