

How You Can Help

Make a financial contribution

through our website, or by sending a check.

Volunteer to help sort and pack supplies or prepare furnishings. Email glvolunteer@globallinks.org for details, or register on our website, www.globallinks.org.

Organize a fundraiser to support our International Medical Aid program.

Make a baby bag that will be filled with new baby items appropriate in the countries where we work. For details, go to Get Involved/Community Collections at www.globallinks.org.

Invite us to speak at your next event and introduce your friends and colleagues to Global Links.

Attend a Tour

Global Links invites you to attend an introductory session to learn more about our work and mission, and meet key staff members. We are also looking for current volunteers and supporters to "host" a tour and invite friends and/or colleagues. Please sign up for an hour-long session on our website, www.globallinks.org, or by emailing community outreach manager Jennifer Novelli at jnovelli@globallinks.org or by calling 412-361-3424 ext. 204. Additional dates/times can be arranged.

Bolivia

Overcoming Obstacles to Healthcare

Cuatro de Junio is a rural community in the municipality of El Sena, in the heart of the Bolivian Amazon. In Latin American countries, areas that are far from the large cities, such as this one, often suffer the worst deprivation of healthcare resources. This is the situation that Global Links Program Officer José Henríquez found when he visited the area earlier this year.

In Bolivia, the terrain and poor infrastructure present as many obstacles to healthcare as poverty does. Simply getting to the doctor can be an all-day affair, expensive and impractical for many.

When a medical emergency arises, residents of Cuatro de Junio have to go to El Sena, about three hours away. Unfor-

tunately, when they do reach the health center at El Sena, it is not well equipped. "We lack many resources and we are not really able to attend emergencies," one of the staff members at El Sena told José.



To reach the hospital at Riberalta from El Sena, one must cross the Beni River.



The health center at El Sena

The closest hospital for the residents of Cuatro de Junio is at Riberalta, across a river and 125 miles away, or four hours on an unpaved road.

Seven hours – for unexpected c-sections, fulminating infections, chest pain The ride alone can be lethal.

Global Links' upcoming projects in Bolivia will concentrate on the border regions such as El Sena, where a new

development agency is focusing on directing more resources to areas far from La Paz. According to a study by the Pan American Health Organization/ World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO), infant mortality is higher in rural areas (96 per 1000 live births) than in urban areas (59 per 1000 live births), and higher among indigenous populations (87 per

(continued on page 4)

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International Medical Aid Projects

Haiti

Bernard Petit-Phard, like surgeons all over the world, can't operate without instruments, sutures, gloves and other supplies. For proper care, his patients may also require an ICU bed instead of a regular bed after major surgery, or a stretcher for transport to the OR or to their room.

After the earthquake in Haiti, and the subsequent outbreak of cholera, the world became aware of just how inadequate the healthcare system was in this nation of 9.4 million. While emergency efforts focused on treating the wounded and halting the spread of disease, organizations such as Global Links, Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC), and PAHO/WHO also looked at ways to build and support a sustainable public health system. MEDICC's most recent gift of \$30,000, added to their earlier support of \$50,000, is contributing to that ongoing effort.

Global Links' May shipment to Hôpital de la Paix, in the Delmas neighborhood of Port-au-Prince, is providing critically needed ICU beds, stretchers, medical storage units, and physical therapy tables, as well as surgical instruments, and surgical, orthopedic and medical supplies. The donation is part of a larger project supported by MEDICC, foundations such as The Atlantic Philanthropies, and other donors. With the recent donation from MEDICC, and from other support that will follow, physicians such as Dr. Petit-Phard, currently a third-year surgery resident at La Paix, will be able to provide better care for their patients.

One of the strengths of Global Links' approach to rebuilding and improving Haiti's healthcare system is that it relies on those familiar with the territory, including a network of over 400 Haitian physicians and their colleagues from the Americas working in public hospitals and clinics across Haiti. These graduates of the Latin American Medical School in Havana work with the Cuban-led team serving long term in the country to contain the cholera epidemic and staff post-earthquake health facilities.

Global Links also has long-term experience in Haiti. "Global Links has been providing critically needed medical materials and equipment to hospitals and healthcare facilities in the cities and rural areas of Haiti since 1996," says Global Links co-founder and CEO, Kathleen Hower. "We value the collaboration of PAHO/WHO and MEDICC in our efforts, and the thousands of volunteers and supporters who care deeply about Haiti's people."

Natural disasters are unpreventable, but their effects can be mitigated. An efficient and widespread healthcare infrastructure can support Haitians' efforts to rebuild their lives.

"Together we are working toward a time in which everyone in Haiti has full access to healthcare, regardless of their economic status or where they are living," says Hower.



Lynn Johnson Photo
Dr. Petit-Phard talks to the mother of a young patient at Hôpital de la Paix.

Cuba



Improved pediatric wards are one result of Global Links' relationship with Hospital Armando Cardoso.

Global Links began 2011 with its 100th large shipment of medical material aid to Cuba. Our relationship with Cuba epitomizes the way Global Links works – forging ongoing relationships with partners that will result in a genuine improvement in the health of the population.

One of the recipients of this shipment, Hospital Armando Cardoso, has received materials from Global Links in the past, and as Global Links staff toured the hospital last summer, they were gratified to see the impact Global Links donations have had on the hospital. Improvements in the operating and delivery rooms, as well as maternity and pediatric wards, have enhanced the hospital's ability to provide care and raised the level of patient comfort and dignity.

This donation provided Armando Cardoso with exam tables – regular, gynecologic and pediatric – as well as surgical lights, office furnishings, surgical instruments, and many other items.

Carefully planning each individual donation based on specific needs, as in this landmark 100th Cuban shipment, has brought about meaningful, measurable upgrades to healthcare facilities throughout the country.

Guyana

Global Links' most recent project in Guyana was designed to relieve some of the stress on Georgetown Public Hospital, the national referral hospital and the largest in the country. This project provided clinical furnishings, equipment and supplies to seven hospitals located in four health regions in Guyana.

Suture Program: Repairing Obstetric Fistulas

The young woman pictured here, in Democratic Republic of Congo, suffered an obstetric fistula at age 14. According to WHO estimates, more than 2 million young women in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa live with untreated obstetric fistulas – a hole between the vagina and the bladder, or the vagina and the rectum.

A number of factors contribute to this complex problem, which is caused by obstructed, unassisted labor but has roots in female malnutrition, pregnancy at an early age, and cultural bias. Whatever the cause, this young woman, and many like her, suffered for years, enduring the discomfort, social stigma, and harmful side effects of perpetual incontinence.

The problem can be straightforward to repair, but the obstacles to treatment are many, and one of them is an inadequate supply of suture. Adequate healthcare can prevent the condition entirely, and explains why fistulas no longer occur in Europe and North America.

This young woman was, luckily, a patient of Dr. Leon Mubikayi, shown with her, who has been repairing fistulas as well as training other physicians in this procedure in Kinshasa. Dr. Mubikayi sent this photo after using sutures from Global Links in his procedures.

We look forward to the day when obstetric fistulas are as rare in Africa as they are in the US. Until then, we are glad that we can provide sutures to Dr. Mubikayi and other doctors performing this important surgery and helping women to regain their health, comfort, and dignity. If you would like to support the work of the suture donation program, contact suture@globallinks.org or 412. 361.3424, ext. 203.



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(continued from page 1)

1000 live births) than among the non-indigenous (45 per 1000 live births).

"Higher infant mortality rates are directly attributable to lack of access to medical care," says Global Links CEO and co-founder Kathleen Hower. "It's very straightforward. If you can't monitor a pregnant woman's blood pressure, you can't know whether or not she's having a healthy pregnancy, or is pre-eclamptic. And most people simply can't travel several hours for routine prenatal care – or any type of routine medical care."

Many additional complications arise from the sheer inaccessibility of these small communities. Last year, when Global Links sent a donation of medical material aid to Cobija, in the department of Pando, the boxes and furnishings all had to be flown in after the 40-foot container arrived in La Paz. The staff at Dr. Roberto Galindo Terán Hospital emphasized how happy they were with the donation when they met with José. The OR table, stretchers, surgical instruments, and ICU beds measurably increased the hospital's capacity for care. In addition, "they were amazed at the way Global Links packs materials, everything properly labeled, carefully wrapped," says José. "Our volunteers should be proud." But the difficulty of delivering to these areas adds to the expense.

In 1938, the Bolivian constitution established an individual's right to health, and subsequent amendments have reaffirmed that. In addition, José explains, "the Ministry of Health is preparing to implement a reformed health system which, according to the constitution sanctioned in 2009, must have these characteristics: universal, free, equitable, intracultural, intercultural, participative, high quality, welcoming, and accountable."

Communication and respect for varying cultural expectations is the Global Links approach. We are ready to work toward these goals through our partnerships with local agencies and with PAHO/WHO, which has prioritized Bolivia for improvements in healthcare. Overcoming geographic obstacles will be challenging, but Bolivia's willingness to promote access for all should greatly help pave the way.



A pharmacy cart from Global Links in use in the emergency room in Cobija.



Volunteer Update: Wheelchair Repair Team



Volunteers Randy Statler and Chris Meyer with a couple of refurbished wheelchairs ready for donation.

On most Fridays, a group of mechanically inclined volunteers meets at our warehouse to refurbish wheelchairs. John Miller, Randy Statler, and Chris Meyer work with Warehouse Assistant Robin Checkley to repair brakes, replace arm pads, match up foot rests, and ensure that the donated wheelchairs are fully functional and ready for donation.

"It's actually quite complicated," says Volunteer Program Manager Christina Gerstel. "There are so many varieties of wheelchairs, and we get them in such varying conditions. We have groups of volunteers who come in to clean them, but that's just the first step."

Wheelchairs are included on most Global Links shipments, and last

year nearly 300 were provided to hospitals in our programs. These figures represent a lot of work, as it takes a volunteer about an hour to bring one wheelchair up to Global Links standards.

Global Links is looking for more volunteers who are handy with tools and ready for a challenge like rehabilitating wheelchairs. Please contact Christina at glvolunteer@globallinks.org if you are interested.



A Global Links wheelchair in use in Cobija, Bolivia.

Helping at Home

We are often asked how Global Links helps our local community. In addition to the environmental benefit of keeping useful materials out of local landfills, Global Links currently works with approximately a dozen partners who provide local services to disadvantaged people. This spring, we donated asthma medications to Catholic Charities Health Care Center, which provides free medical and dental care to uninsured individuals. We also donated linens and microwaves to Operation Safety Net's program to help Pittsburgh's homeless find affordable shelter. Visit our website, www.globallinks.org, for a complete list of our community partners.

A New Incentive to Give

Congress recently approved the reinstatement of the IRA Charitable Rollover giving incentive. Donors age 70 1/2 and older are permitted to make charitable gifts directly from their IRA that are tax-free; qualifying gifts are capped at \$100,000 annually. The rollover expires on December 31, 2011.

To make a charitable contribution to Global Links through your IRA, please contact your financial advisor. For more information, call Eileen Weiner, Global Links Director of Organizational Initiatives, at 412.361.3424, ext. 212.

Global Links Wins Environmental Award

Global Links is proud to once again be a winner of the Champion for Change award from Practice Greenhealth, the nation's only national membership organization for health care facilities and related businesses committed to environmentally responsible operations. The Environmental Excellence Awards are meant to recognize health care facilities and organizations that have made a commitment to health care and the environment. These prestigious awards are made on behalf of the entire health care sector.





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When a Hospital Closes, an Opportunity Arises



When healthcare systems close a department or a facility, Global Links can provide a positive option by gathering still-useful furnishings and equipment for use in other settings. In January, Global Links removed three truckloads of stretchers, waiting room furnishings, nightstands, medical supply cabinets and surgical supplies from the former Aliquippa Community Hospital. All these materials will go to humanitarian medical aid projects in Latin America and the Caribbean, rather than into a landfill. Here, Warehouse Assistant Mike Smith moves a gynecologic exam table into the truck.