What bothered Dr. Patrick Dely so much was that the young boy’s blindness would have been preventable. But because this boy lived in a resource-poor community in the poorest country in this hemisphere, the very simple treatment that might have saved his sight was not available to him. Result: a five year old blind in one eye for the rest of his life.

In Haiti – in many countries – vision can mean life. When there are few resources available for the social safety nets present in wealthier societies, a disability of almost any kind can not only cause social isolation, it can extend the cycle of poverty by keeping someone from working or taking advantage of opportunities their community offers.

Projects that address those problems – that help someone integrate into society or prevent a disability in the first place – are, for Global Links, great opportunities. Two new projects in Haiti do just that.

Caribbean Journal and other sources estimate that at least 10% of the Haitian population suffers from a physical disability. Since 2007, Haiti’s Office of the Secretary of State for the Integration of Persons with Disabilities (BSEIPH – Bureau du Secrétaire d’État à l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées) has worked to provide access to education and vocational training while promoting the development of physical infrastructure necessary for mobility. Beyond providing mobility-assist devices, the organization also promotes the integration of disabled people into the community through legislation and social media.

“The most important thing is not to provide the materials,” says David Charles, Manager of BSEIPH’s materials bank. “It is about equipping people with reduced mobility with suitable materials to ensure their autonomy and security in their various activities.”

Global Links is launching a pilot project with BSEIPH to provide mobility-assist devices for about 1,000 individuals. The walkers, crutches, canes and wheelchairs from Global Links – all of them prepped by volunteers – are more than just devices. They provide the ability to fully engage in life.

That is exactly what Dr. Patrick Dely wants for the children of his community, St. Michel de l’Atalaye. Dely recognized that in order to address the myriad problems caused by poverty – poor nutrition, poor health, and limited prospects – the best chance to help the people of the town where he grew up lay in an unconventional approach.

(continued on page 3)
Re-organizing and refurbishing in Gran Chaco, Bolivia

The request for assistance came from the community of El Bagual in Gran Chaco, and the local doctor, a graduate of the Latin American Medical School in Cuba. The Gran Chaco region of Bolivia suffers from general poverty and an arid environment that makes even subsistence farming difficult, and the levels of child and maternal mortality are very high. Global Links is working now to support two existing health facilities in the region.

The health center at Caiza is overused, overcrowded, and lacking equipment. Because of its location, it sees most of the traffic accidents and trauma in the area, but has been addressing most of the community’s other health needs as well. The community wanted the health center at El Bagual to focus on maternal and child care, but that center was not properly equipped to do so. With the most recent donations from Global Links to both health centers, that reorganization – and better care – will be possible.

In addition, Global Links is providing the baby care products that we normally distribute to maternity centers. The women in Gran Chaco have developed a small business sewing baby bags on machines provided by the municipality. The bags will be filled with the items provided by Global Links and used as incentives to encourage women to seek prenatal and maternity care. Having the community support maternal infant health in this way validates the importance of the prenatal care and attended deliveries that are at the heart of the baby bag project. Seeing women paid to produce the bags, and understanding what purpose those bags serve, can have a positive influence on attitudes about childbirth and about women more broadly.

Donating the contents of the bags supports the women’s “baby bag business.” Equipping the clinic so that women have a positive and healthy experience when they do seek care is at the heart of this health improvement project.

Stay Connected

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Dr. Dely is an epidemiologist, a graduate of the Latin American Medical School in Cuba, and a visionary. The school he opened, l’École du Bon Samaritain, provides education from grades K to 6 and at least one meal a day. While the children can receive basic primary care and vaccines at the school now, Dr. Dely is planning a larger clinic that will serve the community of St. Michele de l’Attalaye as a whole. The clinic will include the only ophthalmology clinic in town and will perform basic eye exams and vision screening, corrective lenses, and surgery where necessary. Funding is in place, and construction has begun. Global Links is committed to outfitting the clinic and expects the project to be complete by 2014.

Global Links is proud to support these projects, which – as always – are about so much more than the provision of medical equipment. Well-planned and well-executed health improvement projects lead to healthier communities, where citizens are free to take advantage of all that life has to offer.

Global Links and MERP: Everybody Wins

Global Links’ partnership with the Medical Equipment Recycling Program (MERP) at UPMC Horizon is one of those instances in which everybody wins.

“So far this year, Global Links has provided our organization with materials worth $7882, not to mention the 179 people in western Pennsylvania who have been materially helped through the donation of this equipment,” said Cindy Hanna, Program Coordinator at MERP.

MERP provides refurbished medical equipment to people in UPMC Horizon’s service area who lack the insurance coverage or means to buy new medical equipment, and the demand for certain items often exceeds the equipment they collect in their community. In 2011, Global Links began working with MERP to help meet their needs for items such as rollator walkers, shower benches, canes and hearing aids.

MERP in turn donates their own surplus items to Global Links for our international programs, such as the project in Haiti described in the previous article. By collaborating, our organizations are keeping even more usable and life-enhancing materials out of landfills and providing them to those who need them.
Collaborative Partnership Helps Guyana Build Back Better

St. Joseph Mercy Hospital plays a vital role in Guyana’s healthcare system. So when a fire destroyed the oldest wing of the hospital – including the emergency department, an operating theater, and administrative spaces – the disaster had far-reaching consequences. Fortunately, thanks to the dedicated hospital staff, not a single patient was lost in the fire.

St. Joseph Mercy, a Catholic hospital, has always been dedicated to providing care to Guyana’s diverse population regardless of ethnicity or religious beliefs. The Guyanese government prioritizes universal access to healthcare and St. Joseph Mercy helps make that possible.

Global Links has been collaborating to renovate the hospital, working with hospital staff, the Sisters of Mercy, who originally opened the hospital, Trinity Healthcare, Hospital Sisters Mission Outreach, and Catholic Health Partners. Thanks to this collaboration, the labor and delivery area was completely refurbished by March 2013.

A second collaboration is being planned with a major donation of surplus materials from the closing of a hospital in Ohio, which should complete the planned refurbishment of St. Joseph Mercy. Partnerships such as these provide a model and an inspiration for improving healthcare – by sharing surplus, and saving lives.
Sutures in Bangladesh: How a Suitcase Full of Supplies Saves Lives

“It’s impossible to do surgery without sutures!” said Dr. Christina Cirucci of Premier Women’s Health, Sewickley. Dr. Cirucci has been using medical supplies from Global Links in Bangladesh since 2005. On her most recent trip, she brought the hospital sutures as well as blades for skin grafts.

“One of the big needs of the hospital are sutures,” Dr. Cirucci said. “Global Links donated many boxes of sutures to Memorial Christian Hospital, which I brought with me in my luggage. After I had been there a short time, I was told that we really needed to get those sutures unloaded because they were running very short.”

Dr. Cirucci performed much-needed hysterectomies and C-sections with the sutures she brought from Global Links, procedures that she said would not have been possible without the Suture Donation Program.

When Dr. Cirucci presented the blades and materials for skin grafts, she said the staff was “elated - knowing that future skin grafts would take well and have a good result.”

Global Links Suture Donation and Medical Service Trip Programs make a big impact on hospitals in resource-poor communities worldwide by providing supplies that are scarce or very costly. A suitcase full of high-quality sutures from Global Links will save many lives. We are proud to support the work of medical professionals such as Dr. Cirucci.

Breathe Hope

In resource-poor communities around the world, asthma is on the rise, and nebulizers – machines that treat episodes of asthma – are very scarce. Global Links collects nebulizers that are no longer needed for donation to communities in Latin America and the Caribbean. Global Links also provides nebulizers to agencies and clinics serving under- or uninsured patients in the US. Volunteers check each nebulizer to be sure it is in proper working condition, and pack it along with new supplies. For more information about Breathe Hope, Global Links’ nebulizer collection, see our website or the Breathe Hope tab on our facebook page.
Celebrate Global Links’ Grand Opening!

Friday, October 4, 2013
11:00 am - 2:00 pm
Ribbon cutting, building tours

• Lunch for sale by Nakama, Randita’s and Street Foods.

Saturday, October 5, 2013
10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Community Day.

• Special performance by Attack Theatre, hands-on activities by glass artist Daviea Davis and Pittsburgh Center for Creative Reuse, an international shopping village, and more!

• Lunch for sale by Pittsburgh Taco Truck, Nakama, Randita’s and Street Foods.

• Check our website or Facebook page for more details.