How You Can Help

**Make a financial contribution** through our website, or by sending a check. Consider making a recurring monthly donation by credit card.

**Support** our New Baby Bag project. See details on how the bags improve maternal/infant health on the back page. Visit [www.globallinks.org](http://www.globallinks.org) to see all the ways you can help.

**Volunteer** to help sort and pack supplies or prepare furnishings.

**Blog** about our nebulizer collection or our scrub collection. You can take part in these ongoing projects from anywhere in the United States.

**Host a benefit brunch** or other fundraiser with friends and family. Our YouTube channel has videos that illustrate our projects and will inspire your guests.

**Attend a tour** to learn more about what we do and how we do it.

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**Global Links is a medical relief and development organization dedicated to improving health in resource-poor communities while reducing medical waste. By recovering high-quality surplus medical supplies and equipment from U.S. hospitals and distributing them to public healthcare institutions, primarily in Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Links provides a socially and environmentally beneficial alternative to sending tons of still-useful materials to landfills. Since 1989, Global Links has delivered over $200 million in critical medical aid through our collaborative, capacity-building programs. Our unique Suture Donation Program recovers lifesaving sutures to help patients worldwide. For more information, visit [www.globallinks.org](http://www.globallinks.org).**

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**After the Hurricane: Restoring Healthcare in Santiago**

Before Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey and New York at the end of October 2012, it spun ashore over Santiago, Cuba. Hospitals and health centers suffered losses, with two of the main teaching hospitals severely damaged. Nearly 200,000 homes throughout Cuba were damaged.

When a hurricane devastates a city, the chaos of competing needs is one obstacle to recovery. People need safe places to sleep, along with food, water and dry clothing. Traumatized children need comfort. Homes must be rebuilt, transportation and utilities must be restored ... and underpinning all of these is the need for healthcare.

According to the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), “615 health facilities of different levels have been affected in six provinces” by the hurricane, with Santiago hit especially hard. The Cuban healthcare system is, the PAHO report states, based on primary care, with small health facilities playing a major role. The smaller facilities also provide community health information to the larger system.

“The effect on health infrastructure could further complicate those areas previously affected by cholera and could impact food handling and other waterborne diseases,” the PAHO report continues. In the days after the storm, PAHO continued to stress the dangers of water-borne diseases caused by improper storage of water and by damaged sanitary facilities. In addition, flooding can lead to water-borne and vector-borne diseases such as typhoid and dengue fever and leptospirosis, which require medical attention.

People who were physically harmed during the storm obviously needed immediate medical assistance, but the aftereffects of hurricanes such as Sandy can negatively affect the health of the population for a long time. And so while restoring community health centers may not seem as immediate a concern as rebuilding homes and bringing in food, the consequences of inadequate healthcare in such circumstances can be as devastating as a second storm.

Global Links, one of the very few organizations licensed by the US government to work in Cuba, was well positioned to help. Not long after the storm hit, two 40-foot containers packed with hospital linens, anti-bacterial soap, infection control supplies and basic...
Doctor Kits for ELAM Students: The Right Tools in the Right Hands

Cuba’s Latin American Medical School (ELAM is the acronym in Spanish) was founded to improve primary care in disadvantaged communities. The school stresses social responsibility and offers free medical education to students from all over the world, who then use their new skills in underserved communities at home. Global Links is supporting their education and the Cuban Public Health system by providing them with some basic tools as they begin their clinical work in hospitals throughout the island, packed in a modern-day doctor kit – a backpack.

With the right equipment, the students are able to learn the practice of medicine, and then practice what they learn. When they return to their home communities after graduation, they are better equipped for the realities they will face, sometimes traveling to see patients on scooter or on foot when those patients are unable to go to a clinic.

In addition, having the right tools and resources lends these young doctors more respect from the communities they serve, raising their morale and making them more likely to stay where they are needed so badly. In this way, this program expands access to community-based primary care, the best way to improve health in underserved areas. Consistent and accessible primary care can resolve basic health issues before they become complex problems.

“My grandfather used to say that the hand is the instrument of all instruments. With this gift you have been an instrument, reaching out and providing us with the tools to achieve our ultimate goal, to bring health to all, being the best prepared doctors we can be,” said William López Castro, an ELAM graduate from Guatemala.

Through a special grant, Global Links has been providing these medical kits for ELAM students since 2008. ELAM’s approach to teaching medicine stresses social responsibility, and most of the students not only come from resource-poor communities, they are committed to returning and serving those communities after graduation.

Global Links has seen the benefits of supporting these students. Our program officers frequently meet ELAM graduates in the underserved areas of Latin America and the Caribbean where we work, and their dedication to their patients – and to working for the betterment of their communities – is remarkable. This collaboration, supported by The Atlantic Philanthropies, puts the right tools in the right hands for great results.

If you would like to sponsor a medical kit, please use the enclosed donation envelope or go to www.globallinks.org and click on Donate. You will be directed to our secure online donation page. The cost of one complete kit is $180.
Continued from page 1

Domestic Recovery Efforts After Sandy

While Global Links’ primary focus has always been on communities in Latin America and the Caribbean, when our own community suffers, we do all we can to help. After Superstorm Sandy, volunteers transported sanitation kits from Pittsburgh to our partners at the Afya Foundation in New York, a non-profit that, like Global Links, specializes in medical surplus recovery and has been involved in storm relief efforts. Volunteers heading to New York in December delivered four carloads – 425 kits containing gowns, gloves, masks and a few other items essential for sanitation and infection control.

We also provided kits to the Notre Dame Club of Staten Island. “The folks at the relief center in Staten Island were delighted to get the kits,” said Global Links volunteer Melissa Sullivan, who coordinated the donation, “because getting homes habitable again is a huge issue in the area and will be for a long time.” The kits are especially useful because cleaning up after a flood often involves exposure to hazardous waste.

Medical supplies were on their way to Santiago. Furnishings and other items for basic care followed in two additional containers in mid-December.

An organized response to disaster, with reliable communication, is essential to overcoming the chaos of the first days and weeks. Global Links has been working in Cuba since 1994, and has long-term relationships with both PAHO and Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba (MEDICC). MEDICC is a non-profit organization working to enhance cooperation among the US, Cuban and global health communities for better health outcomes. Drawing on our successful collaboration with these organizations over the years, we have been able to quickly address both immediate and long-term needs.

While restoring basic services following a disaster is crucial, taking the long view is equally important. Global Links is planning 12 shipments of aid in 2013 for relief and rebuilding efforts. And because the medical school in Santiago was flooded and all library materials were lost, Global Links is also working on replacing educational materials and furnishings at the school. A collaboration with MEDICC will enable us to provide those materials, helping to ensure uninterrupted training of medical personnel – a resource that is essential for a healthy population in the long term, and one that will help them weather whatever lies ahead.

Global Links staff preparing a shipment for Santiago full of supplies to help limit the spread of disease and protect medical personnel.

Cubans were digging out from Sandy by the time the storm hit the Northeast.

Volunteers like Laura Louzon, driving to New York for the holidays, took supplies from Global Links to storm-damaged communities.
Volunteerism and Sustainability

A few months ago, we celebrated International Volunteer Day, recognizing a few longtime volunteers on our Facebook page, providing cookies for the folks who came in that day, and giving them all a virtual “pat on the back” in a blog post. We wanted to acknowledge not just our irreplaceable volunteers, but the concept of the day itself, and the way it ties volunteerism to sustainability.

This dedication to sustainability was formalized by the organization Volunteer Action Counts, which posted this statement on their website: “It was recognized that nothing short of a transformation of our attitude and behaviour would bring about the changes that were urgently needed in order to protect the planet from the effects of both poverty and over-consumption.”

By sorting and packing the surplus medical materials we recover, our volunteers directly alleviate the effects of poverty in the communities where we work abroad, while encouraging better use of resources at home. But this essential work is not all that our volunteers do. They also hold baby showers, both in person and on line, to support our Baby Bag project. Benefit Brunches and Blog-a-thons raise money for our programs, helping to cover the high costs of shipping the supplies and furnishings that other volunteers have carefully packed and labeled. Some volunteers drove medical supplies to the New York area after Superstorm Sandy – see the story on page 3. Some help us sort out the technical aspects of communications in the 21st century.

But the main thing that Global Links volunteers do is act on the conviction that we really are all in this together. If volunteers were a nation, according to Volunteer Action Counts, they would form the 10th largest country in the world in terms of population. That country of volunteers is our best hope for building sustainability and overcoming the poverty that hurts us all.

People in other countries are literally dying for what we throw away.®
Supplies for an Essential Healthcare Provider in Democratic Republic of Congo

Gloves from Global Links reached Nebobongo Hospital in Democratic Republic of Congo shortly before the Ebola virus did. The hospital must routinely wash and sterilize gloves for reuse, a process which, while necessary for infection control, causes the gloves to break down over time. The gloves from Global Links, carried to Nebobongo by Barb Lanser, were of higher quality than those the hospital normally uses, and will last longer – a lucky thing, since the presence of the deadly virus makes sturdy gloves more important than ever.

Barb and her husband Rob Lanser were in Democratic Republic of Congo to install solar panels and generators at Nebobongo. In addition to the gloves, they delivered sutures and other medical materials. When sutures are scarce at Nebobongo, the hospital staff uses fishing line, a substitution fairly common in limited-resources hospitals but one that can cause complications. When fishing line is used internally, it often must be removed after the patient has healed, necessitating another risky surgical procedure.

Nebobongo is located in the north of Democratic Republic of Congo, and is run by Dr. Jean Claude Bateneni, along with his wife Dr. Christine Bateneni and a small medical staff. They care for a population of well over 200,000 and have a chronic need for supplies. Because of their remote location, it is difficult to provide the assistance they need, but the hospital is an essential healthcare provider in the area.

Dr. Jean Claude Bateneni is the first residency-trained surgeon at Nebobongo, and as word spreads about the hospital’s services, more patients are traveling long distances for care that was previously not available. We are grateful that Global Links donations of sutures, gloves and other materials are helping him and his staff serve their patient population.
How Global Links New Baby Bags Help Save Lives

Maternal/infant health is a priority for Global Links. Our New Baby bags are filled with items carefully chosen for the care of a newborn but that are difficult to obtain in the communities where we work. The bags encourage expectant mothers to come to a clinic or hospital for prenatal care and attended deliveries, which can save the lives of both mother and baby.

A Michigan quilter designed Global Links’ sturdy, all-purpose bag and made hundreds of them before helping to assemble instructions for other volunteers to follow. The bags are designed to have a long and useful life after the baby is born.

In 2013, Global Links’ goal is to donate 500 baby bags. Please visit the New Baby collection page of our website for information on how you can help – by shopping for supplies, making a bag (instructions are on our website), hosting a baby shower or making a donation to support shipping the bags to their destination.