



Curamericas Global newsletter Grassroots

HOPE THROUGH HEALTH

SPRING 2013

Note from the Executive Director

Shortly upon my return from Liberia this January, Tolbert Nyenswah, Assistant Minister of Health and Social Welfare wrote, "Curamericas has great friends in Liberia. Your work inspires local people who need services...the entire Liberia team is doing a great job that we appreciate." I could not have been prouder to be part of an organization that is helping improve the health of communities worldwide through partnerships and lasting friendships.

Our ability to encourage changes in life-saving health behaviors as simple as hand washing would not be possible without the understanding and respect of local tradition, governance and social order that our partners help integrate into our programs. The results are clear in the success of our community HIV testing and treatment program in Haiti and in promoting safe water and sanitation practices among the Mayan people in the Guatemalan highlands. Fewer mothers and children are dying in these communities as a result of our work. In Liberia, our partnerships are expanding to include Ministry of Health master trainers who are now equipped to better serve the health needs of rural communities. In this issue we bring you glimpses of these projects and others that are without a doubt creating healthier families in the communities that we serve.

Read on and become inspired, too!

—Francesca Florey

More than 50,000 Served in Haiti



In the final months of Curamericas' CDC-funded project in south-western Haiti, we continued to expand, using every dollar to deliver HIV education, services, and care. In four years we have reached over 149 communities in five cities, recently expanding to Chambellan, a municipality of 15,000 residents.

Obstacles abound working in Haiti but we have used our expertise to focus on neglected communities to provide testing, care, and HIV prevention knowledge. More than 42,000 men and women learned how to prevent HIV transmission and 2,600 pregnant women tested for HIV also received family planning services, significantly surpassing our original project goals!

While visiting the project site in Preville, Executive Director Francesca Florey met a Cuban-trained clinic director who poignantly summarized the limitations of the health system Haitians live with: "Aquí no llega"—the health system simply

continued on back page



Mother brings malnourished boy for growth monitoring in Haiti.

Water Stations Improve Health Practices in Guatemala



A community health volunteer demonstrates proper hand washing in Guatemala.



Can you imagine not having soap and a sink that provides clean, safe water to wash your hands before cooking, after using the restroom or after changing your infant's diaper, because water is either contaminated or not available at all? This is daily life for nearly all of the residents of communities we serve in northwest Guatemala.

Following the success of our water, sanitation and health project in Liberia, we were excited to

continued on back page



Community Engagement for Health in Kenya

SPOTLIGHT on Buzz and Sandra Hartford



Yes, Kenya! Kibera, about 3 miles from the heart of Nairobi, is the largest urban slum in Africa. Home to hundreds of thousands living in unsanitary conditions with poor nutrition, it is a place with desperate basic health needs.

In February we trained CFK trainers pictured above in CBIO and leadership skills to teach the staff to run effective programs. The CFK team has learned CBIO quickly, intuitively grasping the importance of community engagement. Curamericas staff began practicing the first steps of CBIO: census and mapping, establishing trust with the community, providing primary care services, and referring to facilities when needed.

Curamericas is partnering with Chapel Hill-based Carolina for Kibera (CFK) and their local community health volunteers to reduce incidence of diarrheal disease in young children. Over the next two years we will be training and supporting CFK staff on our Community-Based, Impact-Oriented (CBIO) toolset for community health. The goal is that every household receive basic health care and health education to prevent or treat diarrheal disease. We expect to reach 10,000 households in Kibera.

CFK utilizes a community-based approach similar to that of Curamericas, making them an ideal partner for this project, funded by Ronald McDonald House Charities®. The CFK staff and community health volunteers are dedicated and skilled. We've enjoyed the first steps of this new partnership.

Buzz and Sandra Hartford of Cumberland Center, Maine, have been involved with Curamericas, since before the organization was even established. They first met Curamericas co-founders Henry Perry and Alice Weldon in 1976 and remained friends as the planning stages of what would eventually become Curamericas began to develop. The Hartfords were part of an early fundraising and publicity effort for the project through Amigos, a group formed in Portland, Maine. They saw the need for poor, rural communities to receive basic health care in a part of the world that wasn't being reached. As weekly office volunteers this winter, we were able to speak with Buzz and Sandra about their involvement with Curamericas.

What has surprised you most about Curamericas?

How it has expanded! The growth is very satisfying. We've been pleasantly surprised at the success of the Community-Based, Impact-Oriented (CBIO) approach to reduce the number of child deaths, as well as the many inspiring people who continue to give back to Curamericas.

How did family and friends respond when you first asked them to support a project in another country?

They were very curious about what the project would accomplish and at the time, thirty years ago, there was a lot of skepticism about overcoming such great poverty to actually make a difference. Our daughter, Jean, who lives in Chapel Hill, visited a project in Ancoraimes, Bolivia in 1983. She and her family are pleased that we are still involved. We tell everyone about Curamericas!

What do you wish other people knew about Curamericas?

The way the project is structured; to track and collect data from each person served in order to measure the impact on their health. Also that donor contributions are used for the projects and that they are used wisely. It's important to us that Curamericas teaches communities to take care of themselves and then trains locals to be leaders. Curamericas has overcome obstacles through the years and has continued to grow and provide crucial services to people who once had none. ■



Thank you Buzz and Sandra! Visit our blog for the extended interview with these committed supporters.

www.curamericas.org

left to right: Sandra and Buzz with friend and co-founder Henry Perry

Grassroots is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Frank M. Houser, Jr. by the Houser Family who donates our office space. This issue is also provided thanks to support from the Robert I. & Eleanor S. Powell Gift Fund, a component of the North Carolina Community Foundation.

Master Trainers Help Prevent Childhood Illness



According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in Africa every minute a child dies from malaria, every year 1.2 million children die from pneumonia, and 1.5 million children die from diarrhea related illnesses—making malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea the leading causes of death among children. Ultimately, these deaths are largely preventable through a timely, appropriate treatment approach known as Community Case Management of Childhood Illness (CCM).

In Nimba County, Liberia, we are integrating CCM with our Nehnwaa Child Survival Project by training staff members and 130 community health volunteers (CHVs) how to recognize, test for, and treat these preventable diseases in their respective communities. These activities, funded by Ronald McDonald House Charities®, empower communities to manage their own health and help increase access to basic health services.

The CCM project is contributing to the reduction of child mortality in Liberia by serving 25,000 children under the age of five by increasing treatment of malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea as well as improving nutritional status of children who are underweight. An important part of expanding these services is to provide additional education and training to staff and volunteers. CCM staff will become Master Trainers through a Training of Trainers, which equips local leaders to ensure successful services through continued education and evaluation of the project.

Training local leaders is the most sustainable way to improve the community health system. Our training teaches adult learners how



Children ages 0–14 make up 43% of Liberia's population and they are the most vulnerable to harmful diseases.

to facilitate learning in any context and on any health topic. Master Trainers are equipped to train the CHVs and are able to identify where each CHV can improve their knowledge, skills, and attitude in order to provide higher quality health services.

An opening ceremony is taking place this March with the Ministry of Health to publicly provide CHVs with their CCM kits and bicycles so that awareness is raised in the communities we serve about their new expertise, encouraging people to seek their services and treat deadly childhood illnesses before lives are lost. ■





Curamericas Global
HOPE THROUGH HEALTH

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Curamericas Global partners with underserved communities to make measurable and sustainable improvements in their health and well-being.

Your gift to fund our efforts will make a lasting impact around the world. Thank you for your generous support!



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Help Us Honor Mothers Everywhere



Curamericas Global has the privilege of serving mothers around the world. Women of all ages who are strong and work hard for their families; who deserve to know that they can survive pregnancy and labor without fearing for their life or the life of their unborn child.

This season, honor your mother, the mothers we serve, and all mother-figures in your life by making a donation to Curamericas Global. Help us make sure that no mother or child will ever have to perish because they didn't have access to basic and essential healthcare.

Donate before May 1st and we will send a special message to someone who has inspired you, just in time for Mother's Day! To donate by credit card, visit www.curamericas.org. Or, make checks payable to **Curamericas Global** and use the enclosed pre-addressed envelope. ■

Haiti, *continued*

doesn't reach rural communities in this part of Haiti. Far from the capital Port-au-Prince, hundreds of thousands aren't simply overlooked; there is a broken system that lacks resources, including information, supplies, and infrastructure.

We are proud of what we have accomplished in Haiti, working with our tireless country partners and the Haitian Ministry of Health to provide services to men, women and children who might have otherwise succumbed to HIV/AIDS. ■

Guatemala, *continued*

start a similar project in Guatemala funded by the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR). This meant building and distributing 240 hand-washing stations to families with the highest need. One year later, the percentage of households with access to hand-washing stations has grown from 2.3% to 25.4%. Caretakers of young children reported an increase of washing hands at critical times from 1.3% up to 59% due to access to clean water, and education on when, why, and how to wash.

As part of our clean-water focus, Dave Heiser, a Board Certified Environmental Engineer from the Raleigh Chapter of Engineers Without Borders, spent 14 days conducting an in-depth assessment of the source, quality and characteristics of water in this region to devise a plan for enhancing potable water access.

Curamericas finds that many basic health practices are unfamiliar or inaccessible in our project communities. Thank you for helping us focus on to reducing illness and death through expanding services, education, and resources to those in need. ■