

GLOBAL LINKS

Sharing Surplus. Saving Lives.

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 26 NUMBER 1 SPRING 2018

GET INVOLVED



Volunteer at Global Links



Support our work with a financial gift. Globallinks.org/donate, United Way #4319



Donate your unwanted crutches, nebulizers and more.

ENGAGE



Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and Instagram



Attend a Tour or join us for a Lunch + Learn



IMPORTANT DATES:

5.1 World Asthma Day

5.6-5.12 Nurses Week

6.3 National Cancer Survivors Day

ABOUT GLOBAL LINKS

Global Links is a medical relief and development organization dedicated to supporting health improvement initiatives in resource-poor communities and promoting environmental stewardship in the US healthcare system.

Globallinks.org
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Physical therapy nurses taking care of infants in an early childhood development program in Sucre, Bolivia.

Strength in Collaboration

INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL AID PROGRAM

“The Pachamama (Mother Earth) gave us the MUNAY(love), the YANKAY (work) and the YACHAY (knowledge). The Pachamama gives life to human being, she is the sublime divinity in our world. The Pachamama taught us to love everything unconditionally. She showed us that work was one of the highest virtues, because if we build with love in our work, then we become sages.”

TRADITIONAL ANDEAN TEACHING

At Global links, making health for all a reality is a pillar of our mission. To accomplish this goal, we help communities form networks to care for their members, especially communities with women, children, people with disabilities, and indigenous groups. The story of our work in Bolivia demonstrates that good can happen when communities

come together to become the positive change they want to see for their people.

Global Links has been working with partners in Bolivia since 2000 by supporting public health initiatives across the country and serving vulnerable indigenous populations deep in remote areas. Our International Medical Aid team,

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along with Bolivian health officials, has been working to strengthen the public health system by supporting primary care in remote areas in the Andean and Amazonian regions, as well as improving the country's physical therapy and rehabilitation services. In 2018, Global Links, in partnership with Bolivia's Ministry of Presidency, is supporting the improvement of major healthcare facilities in the nine municipalities of Mancomunidad Chuquisaca Norte, located in South Central Bolivia.

The population in 8 of the 9 municipalities in Mancomunidad Chuquisaca Norte is over 93% indigenous. In most Latin American countries, indigenous people have higher rates of mortality and morbidity than their non-indigenous counterparts. In indigenous communities, particularly those in remote areas, maternal-infant mortality rates are often two or three times as high as national averages. Unfortunately, Mancomunidad Chuquisaca Norte fits these startling statistics. Bolivia's national infant mortality rate in 2001 was 55 (mortalities per 1,000 live births). While the capital of Sucre came close, the majority of the other municipalities vastly exceeded or

nearly doubled that.

For indigenous groups in Bolivia, there are many barriers to public healthcare: cultural, physical, and economic. Cultural barriers include lack of respect for indigenous peoples, disregard of traditional healing practices, stark religious differences, and language barriers. Physical barriers include long distances to healthcare facilities due to the isolation of indigenous communities and unfavorable conditions of those facilities. Economic barriers include scarcity of health insurance and little money to pay out-of-pocket expenses.

Despite these challenges, the governing bodies of Mancomunidad Chuquisaca Norte have undertaken a number of sustainable development initiatives from land and forest preservation, implementation of water resource/management plans, the creation of local committees on economic development, to the promotion of local sustainable investment projects. By uniting to form the Mancomunidad, the governing bodies of Chuquisaca Norte have improved their capacity to collaborate effectively on projects promoting their shared interests, thereby strengthening their position and amplifying the

voices of their communities on a national level.

At the end of 2017, Global Links' International Programs Director, Karina Zelaya, met with Mancomunidad Chuquisaca Norte government officials to discuss how the Strengthening the Public Health System program in Bolivia can provide material support to the improvement of the major healthcare facility in each of the 9 municipalities. By increasing the quality of healthcare services offered in these communities, Global Links is able to work with the local government to strengthen the public health network throughout Chuquisaca Norte.

In 2018, we have planned 9 distributions—one to each municipality—containing furnishings, equipment, and primary care medical supplies. These distributions of supplies are directly supporting the implementation of the initiatives of the local governing officials in Bolivia to increase health outcomes for their communities. We're proud to partner with them in order to make access to quality public health care a reality.

Learn more about our long-term projects in Bolivia, Nicaragua, Cuba and more at globallinks.org. •

The Secret Sauce of Global Links

VOLUNTEER SERVICE PROGRAM

In 2017, 4,400 individuals spent 19,600 hours volunteering at Global Links. During that time, thousands of boxes of medical materials were packed, hundreds of crutches, canes, and wheelchairs were prepared for new owners, tons of scrubs were assessed and sorted, and countless laughs and



Lucy modeling how to use the counting aids.

smiles were shared by all of our volunteers.

At Global Links, we refer to our volunteers as the “secret sauce” of the organization. Since the beginning, our founders made the conscious decision to engage volunteers in the process of quality assessing, sorting, and packing materials. Besides keeping operating costs low, working with volunteers is the best way to build our ‘big tent’—bringing individuals of all backgrounds, religions, ages, and abilities together to do one very important thing... improve the lives of others who have less than we have.

Within each international project, and each local distribution, a lot of Pittsburgh pride and love can be found in the materials delivered to communities that lack resources.

To keep thousands of volunteers on task and completing high-quality work, our team has developed unique ways to ensure that all volunteers can

contribute and make a real difference for others.

Volunteers from partners such as ACHIEVA and The Children’s Institute can use counting aids, folding boards, adjustable tables, and other items to help make their tasks as easy and efficient as possible. We even have a quiet room with materials such as books, puzzles, Playdough, and items for volunteers with sensory issues.

For the individuals that sort through medical materials from hospitals and the community, we have padded floor mats for support during the two-hour ‘power sorting’ sessions. We also provide magnifying glasses and flashlights to help our volunteers ensure that even the tiniest expiration date doesn’t go unchecked. Gloves and natural cleaners are key for groups that assess and clean walkers and crutches, and for the Wheelchair Wranglers that refurbish gently-used wheelchairs... well, they have their very own workshop filled with tools,

spare parts and whatever they need to get the job done.

There is always an upbeat Spotify playlist that can be heard throughout the center to keep our volunteers motivated and, sometimes, dancing. Lastly, our coffee pots are always full of delicious, fair-trade Nicaraguan brew from our partner Building New Hope to fuel the entire process.

Our volunteer supervisors are trained to make sure the experience is rewarding, educational, and engaging, regardless of age or ability. Global Links is a place where friendships and new connections are made across barriers as volunteers come together to work towards a common goal. We’re very grateful to have our dedicated, diverse, and committed ‘secret sauce’ because we absolutely could not do what we do without them!

Learn more about becoming a volunteer at our website.



PHOTO CREDIT: ANNIE O'NEILL

Some of our amazing volunteers during a power sorting session.

Traveling and Training with Sutures

SUTURE DONATION PROGRAM

“On behalf of the medical staff at Memorial Christian Hospital, I want to thank Global Links for their generous suture donation which has been lifesaving for many women in Bangladesh.”

DR. CHRISTINA CIRUCCI, MALUMGHAT, BANGLADESH

Sutures donated to Global Links have a dramatic impact on our International Medical Aid Projects. In many countries, sutures are prohibitively expensive and hard to come by. As a result, Global Links has been working with US hospitals since 1989 to recover surplus sutures to supply partners who are committed to providing free and reduced-cost surgeries for low-income patients.

Many of our partners are surgeons and other healthcare providers who travel to train and perform surgeries in medically underserved areas throughout the world. It takes a unique and dedicated person to leave their local and familiar medical practices to deliver life-saving procedures, techniques, and sutures to clinics abroad. One such individual is Dr. Christina Cirucci, an OBGYN who has partnered with Global Links for 14 years to provide assistance to the Memorial Christian Hospital (MCH) in Malumghat, Bangladesh.

MCH serves a patient population of over one million people in Bangladesh, which is an extremely poor, overpopulated, and low resource country. Because of MCH, the patients in this area have access to high-quality medical care. Dr. Cirucci mainly worked to provide obstetrics care at MCH. Access to cesarean sections is one of the greatest medical needs in



Dr. Christina Cirucci holding a newborn after performing a cesarean section using Global Links suture.

the underdeveloped world. Women without access and have obstructed labor can labor for days in the village, often resulting in fetal and/or maternal death, among other complications. MCH has worked to provide life-saving training to village birth attendants (who deliver babies in their villages but often have no medical training), on safe delivery skills, including when it is necessary to transport the patient to the hospital.

Global Links provided more than 800 sutures as well as other surgical supplies to MCH in 2017. This donation is vital to the continuing work of the hospital. A few days after Dr. Cirucci arrived, the staff indicated that they needed to open the carton of sutures from

Global Links right away as they were running low on supplies. The donation from Global Links saved the lives of many patients who needed safe surgery and would not have otherwise been able to have access to it. Dr. Cirucci did many Cesarean sections at MCH with the suture from Global Links. One example is MB, a 25-year-old Bengali woman who needed a repeat cesarean section. Dr. Cirucci used Global Links sutures including 0-PDS and 4-0 Vicryl.

If your company or facility has surplus sutures to share, contact **Medical Outreach Manager Luke West** at **412.361.3424 x213** or **lwest@globallinks.org**, or **call 412.361.3424**.

From the Founder

In the fall of 2019, my third child (as my daughters call it), Global Links, turns 30. As a founder who has run this organization for nearly three decades, I have decided to step back from my executive leadership as of March 1st and have taken on the new role of Special Advisor to the Executive Director.

I am pleased to announce that Angela Garcia, whom you have known for many years as Deputy Director, and who has been working closely with me on behalf of Global Links for the last 17 years, will take over as Executive Director. She does so with my and the Board of Directors unanimous support. I have the utmost confidence in Angela's ability to lead Global Links into the future.

I would not be taking this step at this time if I wasn't completely confident in the team and if I didn't feel the pull of my wonderful grandchildren, who are growing up so fast, and with whom I'd love to spend more time. I will continue to

act as a champion and ambassador for the organization while focusing on fundraising and planning for Global Links' 30th Anniversary next fall.

Thank you for your support and friendship over these many years. We simply could not do what we do, without you. Our partnerships are stronger than ever, and our programs to recover surplus continue to expand, but the need for the work we do and the services we provide is also expanding. We are so grateful for your continued support as we work together in our mission of sharing surplus and saving lives. ●

PHOTO CREDIT: ERIN M. JONES



Kathleen Hower
Special Advisor to the Executive Director and Co-Founder



**MATERIAL
ALERT!**



Our Community Partner Organizations are in great need of standard and transport wheelchairs with leg supports ASAP. If you have a wheelchair to donate or know someone who does, please visit globallinks.org for drop-off locations.

Thank you for helping a neighbor in need!

Your old car = cash for Global Links!

Turn your unwanted car, truck, boat, or RV into life-saving programs by donating it to Global Links. Our partners at V-Dac will arrange to pick up your vehicle, running or not, and sell it at auction. Global Links will receive the cash and you'll get a nice tax deduction.

Call 877-999-8322 to start the process.

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globallinks.org

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306

tons of materials
kept from landfills

392

nebulizers received
from 32 states

26

local organizations
supported

\$3.83

million in medical aid

2017
by the
numbers

7

tons of materials
from home
health/community
donations

6

tons of
scrubs received

101

countries benefited
since 1989

Watch for the full report
of our work in 2017
coming in June!