



Smiles amid tough circumstances in hurricane affected regions of Nicaragua

NEWSLETTER
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INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL AID PROGRAM UPDATES

Disaster Response and Recovery in Nicaragua

“It is at this stage where Global Links helps play a decisive role to protect the population from more health complications, especially in an area [like RAAN] where malaria is common and where COVID-19 continues to be a crisis.”

KARINA ZELAYA, INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL AID CONSULTANT

In 2020, Global Links focused on strengthening Nicaraguan public health institutions to improve the quality of care and support for the increase in patients due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Global Links was able to provide high quality hospital beds and stretchers, emergency medical supplies, and personal protection equipment for the health institutions involved with

the pandemic response. Global Links also provided healthcare backpacks, assembled by our volunteers in Pittsburgh, to support mobile health brigades who provide “house calls” in areas where vulnerable communities do not have easy access to health care facilities.

In the midst of the pandemic, on November 3, 2020 Hurricane Eta, a Category 4 storm, made



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landfall along the Caribbean coast in northeastern Nicaragua.

Powerful winds knocked out power lines, cellphone grids and trees, and damaged infrastructure. Flooding became a major concern as roads and bridges were washed out, cutting off access to remote areas impacted by the storm and triggering landslides. Tens of thousands of individuals were displaced from their homes into emergency shelters.

Relief efforts were severely hampered when just 2 weeks later, on November 16th, Hurricane Iota, a stronger Category 4 storm with winds up to 155 mph, hit Nicaragua in Bilwi, only 15 miles south of where Hurricane Eta first made landfall. **Officials say this is the most powerful storm to ever hit the country.**

Bilwi, also known as Puerto Cabezas, is the capital of the North Atlantic Autonomous region (RAAN), the largest territory in the country. The area has a population of about 194,800 people of indigenous and African descent, who have their own languages and traditions. 75% of the population lives in poverty or extreme poverty.

As a consequence of the damage left by the hurricanes in the northern coastal regions of the country, there is a high unemployment rate, food shortages, price hikes, little access to drinking water and an increase in viral and stomach diseases; all compounded with the ongoing threat of COVID-19. Karina Zelaya, Global Links' International Medical Aid consultant, notes, **"In RAAN the only ICU has 6 beds and they are full...everything (in the hospital and health posts) is in terrible condition or was destroyed by the hurricanes, so rather than people going to the hospital they stay and die at home. In addition, there has been an increase in mental health problems and in domestic violence."**

At the end of January 2021,

Karina visited Bilwi together with representatives of United Nations agencies and a team of health professionals. The objective of the visit was to assess the damage caused by the hurricanes and formulate a collaborative action plan for the rebuilding and the re-establishment of services in the area. During the visit, Karina provided technical assistance for the first mobile health brigade in the area since the hurricanes. Additionally, Karina distributed reusable menstrual hygiene kits donated by Global Links in partnership with Days for Girls.

Karina reports, "Four months after the passage of the hurricanes, the reconstruction is very slow. Many immediate response agencies have already left the area, but it is time to implement the post-disaster measures that are the most expensive and logistically difficult, such as the rehabilitation of hospitals and

emergency health posts, permanent water supply, return to school, and economic revitalization among the most urgent needs. **It is at this stage where Global Links helps play a decisive role to protect the population from more health complications, especially in an area [like RAAN] where malaria is common and where COVID-19 continues to be a crisis."**

Following the visit, Global Links has been in conversation with other agencies working in the country and the Ministry of Health, and will be working in the affected area this year to provide supplies, clinical equipment, furnishings, and mobility devices to the health institutions in the area devastated by the hurricanes according to their most pressing needs. **Global Links will need to raise an additional \$50,000+ to fully fund our Medical Aid Program in Nicaragua for 2021.** •



Health Center in Nicaragua damaged by trees toppled during Hurricanes Eta and Iota

Bolivia: Celebrating Community Health

Despite the border openings and closings of 2020, we were able to impact the health of 45,000+ people in Bolivia with shipments benefitting 4 health networks in 4 different municipalities. The municipality of Presto celebrated the opening of a new comprehensive health center, equipped by Global Links, that is going to serve more than 12,000 people from their community. •



Celebrating a health center opening in Bolivia

Honduras: Helping our Global Neighbors Face Covid-19

Of the 10 health networks which benefited from recent shipments to Honduras, some are harder to reach than others. Once a container arrives at a port in Honduras, it takes up to another 4-6 weeks to reach its final destination if it's in Wampusirpi along the Atlantic coast. The supplies and furnishings are transported by truck, by air, and then also by water in canoes to reach this remote community. The community unloads those canoes to ensure their local health posts are equipped. No longer needed beds from dormitories in the U.S. become life-altering wards in remote areas like this one. Dr. Karen Calderón, the director of the Wampusirpi Health Network, writes, “Thank you all for your help, we are very grateful. Thanks to your donation we have been able to face Covid-19. We have been able to give better care [to our patients] and we continue in the fight!” •

Cuban Hospital Recovering from Tornado Damage

In 2020 we were able to impact the health of 96,900+ people in Cuba with shipments of medical materials benefitting 4 health institutions, including a hospital focused on maternal health. Our partners there shared, “Last year, our institution suffered a terrible tornado,

leaving us devastating results with severe damage to the structure, furniture and equipment in general...the donation that we received today as a noble gesture of solidarity from the organization that you represent, will undoubtedly allow us to carry out better quality healthcare, this being our main mission.

On behalf of patients, workers and health representatives, we extend our sincere thanks to you.” •



Unloading the canoes carrying Global Links furnishings and supplies



No loading dock nor lift gate means heavy lifting for our partners in Cuba



ACCESS picking up deliveries for local childcare centers

DOMESTIC MEDICAL AID PROGRAM UPDATE

Local Partnerships Allow for More Impact: Trying Together, FedEx, and ACCESS

Global Links' success has always depended upon strong partnerships and collaborations. We could not have grown from helping 30+ Community Partner organizations in 2019 to helping 1100+ in 2020 as part of local Covid-19 response without the help and dedication of partners like Trying Together, FedEx Ground, and ACCESS.

Global Links first worked in the summer of 2020 with Trying Together, a regional non-profit which supports high-quality care and education for young children by providing advocacy, community resources, and professional growth opportunities for the needs and rights of children, their families, and the individuals who interact with them.

This was the period when daycares were trying to reopen safely after shutdown but they were also not able to easily obtain the personal protection and hygiene supplies they needed.

For the first few months of 2021, Global Links once again helped get needed supplies to all the licensed childcare centers in Allegheny County through the Trying Together network. Allison Robinson of Trying Together wrote, "Supplies were needed due to the [price] inflation of cleaning supplies and also the inability for some to even get them...the supplies will last most larger programs 1-2 months and smaller programs possibly 3-4 months." The most needed supplies include gloves and cleaning wipes. Because of Global Links' ability to purchase, store and distribute supplies in bulk, we could provide supplies needed for good health at a much lower cost than childcare centers could do on their own when paying retail prices for lesser quantities. Any parent can tell you their ability to return to the workforce is dependent on the ability of childcare providers to remain open and for their children as well as center staff to remain healthy.

However, there are 600+ licensed childcare centers in Allegheny County

and Global Links has limited staff and trucking. This is where our partners at ACCESS played a critical role in helping us support health and hygiene for our local neighbors. And for this project, a team of volunteers from FedEx Ground were also able to help us optimize delivery routes. With FedEx expertise and ACCESS drivers reaching 4-5 centers a day, we were able to provide supplies in 2-3 months to all the licensed centers in the county. Never underestimate what a collaboration of nonprofits and corporate volunteers can accomplish together! If your company is interested in partnering with Global Links to make a difference, contact us at info@globallinks.org or 412-361-3424 •

MEDICAL SURPLUS RECOVERY PROGRAM UPDATE

NEW! Senior Facility Surplus Recovery

The Medical Surplus Recovery team is excited to announce the rollout of the new Senior Facility Program. Our goal is to partner with all care levels of senior facilities in Western PA to recover no longer needed items such as wheelchairs, walkers, incontinence supplies, beds, and more. These items will support our domestic and international medical aid programs. If you or someone you know is a resident or staff member at a senior facility in the region, call us at 412-361-3424 or email us at medicalsurplus@globallinks.org •





Volunteers of all ages can pack Personal Care Kits

Be a Good Neighbor: Virtually Volunteer to Pack Personal Care Kits

Global Links Personal Care Kits Project aims to provide 21,000 kits in 2021 to our local partner nonprofits serving individuals, children, and families who are struggling due to the combination of high unemployment and loss of income from the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in and around Allegheny County.

Each kit contains products that are key to general health and hygiene,

employability, personal dignity and well-being. They are unfortunately NOT covered by SNAP benefits (food stamps) or other government assistance programs. We distribute these Personal Care Kits through our Community Partner network to ensure they get to our neighbors who need them most. Contact us at 412-361-3424 or glvolunteer@globallinks.org to help! •

A big "Thank You" to
Nurses today and
every day!

National Nurses Week May 6th-12th

Giving Considerations

Need to make a Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from your IRA if you are 70 ½ or older? Talk to your financial advisor about whether you can make a Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) to Global Links, and possibly take advantage of tax savings while supporting our work.

Have a Donor Advised Fund (DAF)? Consider making a donation from your DAF to improve mobility, independence, dignity and health for neighbors locally and globally.

Become a Legacy Donor - include Global Links in your will and provide Health for All.

Have a vehicle you no longer need? You can donate your car, truck, boat or RV and designate Global Links to receive the proceeds and you can claim the tax deduction. Contact us for details. •

Virtual Walk for a Healthy Community

Global Links is pleased to be participating for the 2nd year in the Highmark Virtual Walk for a Healthy Community, supported by YLAC, our Young Leader Advisory Committee. If you missed the chance to walk or practice yoga/pilates with us on May 15, you can still support our fundraising teams and “walkers” through July 15. Visit www.globallinks.org for more information. A very special thanks to our presenting sponsor Surgical Product Solutions and to the Yoga Hive for donating their yoga class time. •



PRESENTING SPONSOR OF GLOBAL LINKS FOR THE
2021 HIGHMARK WALK FOR A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



With much gratitude for an incredible 29 year career at Global Links, we want to thank Dave Davis and wish him well on his retirement to sunny Florida. Come back often to visit as we cannot imagine Global Links without you!!

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ABOUT GLOBAL LINKS

Global Links is a Pittsburgh-based medical relief and development organization dedicated to supporting health improvement initiatives in resource-poor communities. For 30+ years, Global Links has been collaborating with partners to improve health for vulnerable populations by sharing surplus rescued from the US healthcare system to support health programs both globally and locally.

We Believe in Health for ALL.

Respect for all people and the environment guides our mission. We believe everyone has value and deserves to be included equally. We believe everyone is our neighbor and we are dedicated to helping all people live with dignity, independence, mobility and in good health. We will call out inequities, injustice and work to lift up all.

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