

Support the Emergency Social Health Fund and Community Medicine Program in Jiquilisco, El Salvador

Extreme poverty in El Salvador results from years of civil war and a succession of natural disasters. Access to health care is a major issue, especially in rural communities. Privatization of health care services has compounded the problem leaving small, rural communities without access to basic health services.

To exacerbate health problems, the water table in Usulután is contaminated with chemical fertilizers used on the cotton and sugar plantations of the past. Thus, unusually high numbers of people suffer from renal problems directly connected to contaminated water.

The Emergency Social Health Fund was created in 1995 by community associations in the Lempa River Region to respond to this need. Change for Children Association (CFCA) and CEBES Edmonton, a local Salvadoran ethnic group, are partners in this project which brings together 50 communities in the department of Usulután. In addition to support from CFCA and CEBES, families involved in the project in El Salvador contribute to a monthly solidarity fund to ensure their access to medical services.

Without the innovative, community-led support of this project, families cannot access basic medical treatment for treatable medical conditions and suffer needlessly with chronic health problems.



This project provides:

- transportation to those in need of treatment in urban hospitals;
- manufacturing and distribution of alternative medicines made with indigenous plants;
- administration of a communal health insurance program;
- training of mobile community health workers and health care advocates
- a stipend to cover the costs for a traveling doctor;
- volunteer visits to the chronically ill.

In addition to the above programs, the project advocates for health rights of the communities of Jiquilisco. Natural remedies are promoted and research is conducted into major health problems in the region so that strategies can be developed to respond to them. The members of this health care community also lobby the national government for health care reforms and participate in regional meetings of health stakeholders.

The Social Health Fund brings in medical expertise to diagnose, treat and educate the local population about health concerns related to poor water quality and promotes the consumption of clean water through the use of filters and through advocating for potable water infrastructure projects.

This community-led project demonstrates the difference that individuals can make when they cooperate to meet their needs.



Human Dignity, Healthy Communities, Global Justice

Change for Children is an Edmonton-based charitable organization with a 32 year history of supporting sustainable grassroots community development in Latin America and Africa. In Canada, CFCA provides an award-winning Global Education program that engages the public in a process of awareness raising, analysis and action on issues of global justice.