

10<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
RETROSPECTIVE

1995-2005

DOCTORS FOR  
GLOBAL HEALTH

Promoting Health and Human Rights  
“With Those Who Have No Voice”



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– Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.



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# PRESIDENTS' LETTER

WE ENVISION A  
WORLD WITH MORE  
TOLERANCE AND A  
GREATER REALIZATION  
OF BASIC HUMAN  
RIGHTS

Dear Fellow Promoters of Health and Social Justice:

Some of you may have read this salutation first in letters that presaged the birth of Doctors for Global Health, entreaties to keep "the eyes of the world on El Salvador," written by hand (unlucky readers!) from Morazán, El Salvador beginning in 1992.

Initially, as volunteers invited by the community to work with them, we made specific appeals: materials to build latrines and chlorinate water during a cholera epidemic; stethoscopes; horses for the health promoters to facilitate community visits and patient transport (long before the Jaime Solorzano Bridge improved access); even costumes for community socio-dramas to improve health and promote human rights.

It soon became evident to us that a global community-grown association was needed that would strive to promote health in its fullest, social sense. Seeking to accompany those who find themselves ignored and un-listened to by the powers that be, twenty founding members and another hundred Advisory Counsel members continued the journey toward participatory democratic association and liberation medicine promotion when DGH became an official nonprofit organization in July 1995.

A dream and much determination gave birth to Doctors for Global Health. This retrospective report is a manifestation of that dream. In these pages you'll see how we talk our talk, but most importantly walk our walk. They highlight our works in progress because that is the nature of accompaniment: our work is not done until a dignified life, optimal health and well-being, and social equity are realities for all.

As our resources grew we helped strengthen the work of five Centers for Integral Child Development, originally formed to help children overcome the trauma of the 12-year armed civil conflict. We helped the community health workers and teachers return to school to complete their formal education. We helped the communities build two clinics, which provide comprehensive medical care, medications (natural and pharmaceuticals), physical therapy, eyeglasses, and dental care, as well as a two-lane bridge that connects them metaphorically and literally with more of the outside world.

As you can see, we focus on an integrated rather than piecemeal approach, leading other communities to invite our accompaniment. Over the years, DGH has been able to accept the invitation of other communities in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Uganda, Mexico, Argentina, Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and Nigeria.

Volunteerism is alive and well in DGH. Our work has been made possible by tens of thousands of volunteer hours and in-kind donations (all volunteers and DGH board members pay their own travel expenses) that help keep DGH's overhead very low, so more resources can go directly to the communities.

Many thanks to you who have supported our work over the years. This report demonstrates the fruition of your contributions. For those who are learning about us for the first time, there is much work to be done, and your help is welcome—opportunities are as limitless as your creativity (see page 13).

We are proud of our work and enthusiastic about our future. As human beings we are world citizens and have a collective responsibility to respond to the voices of our local and global communities. Join us as we advance health and other human rights, one community at a time. Our dream and theirs demand it.

In Health and Human Rights,



Lanny Smith, MD, MPH, DTM&H  
Founding President, 1995–2001



Steve Miller, MD  
President, 2001–2003



Jennifer Kasper, MD, MPH  
President, 2003–present

**DOCTORS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH (DGH)** is a private, not-for-profit organization promoting health, education, art and other human rights throughout the world.

From seeds planted ten years ago by a few committed volunteers in El Salvador, Doctors for Global Health has grown into a thriving international movement for health and human rights.

DGH is comprised of hundreds of health professionals, students, educators, artists, attorneys, engineers and others. DGH is administered by a volunteer board of directors whose members have volunteered with DGH previously and are elected by DGH voting members. The board is assisted by an advisory council composed of nearly 200 people with diverse fields of knowledge and skills. Together we build long-term relationships between people and communities here in the US and abroad to find effective solutions to social justice issues.

Though many of us are health professionals, our solutions extend far beyond the medical. We volunteer our time and expertise in communities that invite us to join them. We fund and support local projects that build on the energy, creativity and passion of local leaders. We educate and advocate for domestic and foreign policies that promote justice and peace. We accompany communities in fulfilling health and other human rights.

Since its inception, DGH has accompanied communities in Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru and Uganda. We are improving the health and well-being of these communities by increasing access to quality health care; developing educational opportunities and avenues for artistic expression; and raising awareness of health and other human rights.

Every community we accompany has unique strengths and needs, but they all share a common thread: The health inequities they face are symptoms of larger

social, economic and political injustices. Malnutrition, poverty, preventable death and violence all violate basic human rights. As global citizens, we must name and challenge these injustices.

Over the years DGH volunteers have given hundreds of talks and lectures about health and human rights, social justice and liberation medicine around the US. Each year's DGH General Assembly has higher attendance. These kinds of events are an important part of our mission.

DGH's mission is to improve health and foster other human rights with those most in need by accompanying communities, while educating and inspiring others to action. We accomplish this by:

- ▶ Funding and carrying out projects in cooperation with local private non-profit, non-governmental organizations and interested communities that promote health, education and social justice.

- ▶ Bearing witness for human rights and against human rights violations.

- ▶ Educating and inspiring others, including students from all walks of life, by offering information, opportunities for service, a human rights perspective and world citizen role models.

- ▶ Directly sponsoring non-profit, non-governmental projects deemed compatible with the principles of DGH. These include emphasizing Community Oriented Primary Care, Human Rights Promotion (Liberation Medicine), Volunteerism and a Democratic approach to the project's administration. Such projects also provide interested individuals with the means of putting their volunteer spirit and ideas directly into action.

Throughout these pages you will learn how DGH puts these words into action.



# Words to Live By: DGH Principles in Action

## Community-Oriented Primary Care

The provision of basic health services with the participation of the community in both the initiation and direction of activities. This approach addresses the health of the individual in the broader context of the community, which requires a multi-disciplinary approach, with attention to nutrition, sanitation, literacy, and mental and environmental health.

### CABAÑAS, EL SALVADOR

DGH has been working on a number of community-inspired projects. The *Centro de Rehabilitación* (Rehabilitation Center), founded in 1992 by a physical therapist from the US, offers respiratory rehabilitation, physical therapy and psychological rehabilitation for the many people who were traumatized by the events of the 12-year civil conflict. Community youth formed a group called *Comite Contra SIDA* (CoCoSi—Committee against AIDS) to educate themselves and others about reproductive health and AIDS prevention using a variety of popular education techniques, including community radio. DGH has been involved in a healthy agriculture project in response to the extensive, uncontrolled use of pesticides in their agricultural work. The youth of the community worked with DGH volunteers to study the problem and change farming practices.

### MORAZÁN, EL SALVADOR

The community-oriented primary care model enabled the identification of the most pressing health needs of the community of El Tablón. In response to these needs, DGH provided part of the funding that enabled the local Salvadoran NGO *Médicos por el Derecho a la Salud* to construct a community building in 1996 that houses a self-sustaining pharmacy, physical rehabilitation clinic, dental clinic and eye-glass making center.

In Estancia, DGH has helped to support five Centers for Integral Child Development (CIDs), which serve almost 200 children a year. Begun at the petition of the communities as a project of preventive mental health and early developmental stimulation for children, the CIDs now also combat malnutrition by providing one healthy meal each day. Parents and volunteers prepare the food and are learning recipes using soy for protein. The children also receive classes on human rights and non-violence. Twelve women from the surrounding communities have received ongoing training in early childhood education and serve as the teachers. Initially held in homes or under trees, the CIDs are now

meeting in five child-friendly buildings built with help from The International Foundation (through DGH) and other donors.


### CHIAPAS, MEXICO

DGH has been helping communities in Chiapas in two important ways: providing volunteer health professionals to rural Hospital San Carlos and supporting a Community Health Worker (CHW) project. The CHWs are from 35 isolated, indigenous, autonomous communities that have decided not to accept services from the

Mexican government because of its maltreatment of the indigenous people, and are struggling to manage their collective resources. A DGH-supported Mexican physician coordinates the CHW training in nutrition, vaccination, parasite treatment and giving vitamin A to prevent night blindness. They are also starting community vegetable gardens and constructing environmentally-friendly stoves.

### MANAGUA, NICARAGUA

In a very poor area on the outskirts of the city, DGH works with the neighborhood association, *Asociación de Promoción Popular Casa Comunal Edgard Lang Sacasa*. The *Asociación* runs a library, a pre-school, a women's arts and crafts center, and typing classes. DGH has been supporting a clinic and pharmacy in the *Casa Comunal*. The clinic-pharmacy has so successfully in providing critically needed basic primary care and affordable medications to the community that the *Asociación* plans to extend its services to surrounding neighborhoods.



“For a community to be whole and healthy, it must be based on people’s love and concern for each other.”

—MILLARD FULLER

### DAVIDSON, NC, USA

Inspired by the El Salvador programs, a DGH founder brought together community leaders to create the Ada Jenkins Center, which houses several community services, including Head Start, a senior nutrition program and a parish nurse program.

# Participatory Investigation

**Being invited by the community, working with it to explore its strengths and weaknesses in health, establishing priorities toward better health, developing initiatives to address the chosen priorities and evaluating their success. This often leads to projects that emphasize social well-being and are vital to the health of the community as a whole.**

## MORAZÁN, EL SALVADOR

In 1994 alone, five people, including two children, drowned in the *Rio Chiquito* (“small river”) in Tierra Blanca, Morazán. Communities surrounding the river had been petitioning local authorities to construct a bridge for over forty years. When it became apparent that the government would not build a bridge in the near future, the community organized themselves and asked their partner non-governmental organizations (DGH, *Médicos del Mundo* and *Médicos por el Derecho a la Salud*) to help them raise funds and provide expertise. Built almost exclusively through the labor of local residents, the Jaime Solórzano Memorial Bridge, completed in 1996, is not only a practical resource, but also a powerful symbol of community action and a source of local pride. The bridge provides safe access to health and education services for nearly 6,000 people in the area.

Other work originating from the community that DGH supports includes a hypothyroidism reduction project. Field surveys performed by community health promoters and DGH volunteers revealed that over 60 percent of the area’s population suffers from decreased thyroid activity that can lead to severe mental retardation, learning disabilities and spontaneous abortions. Prevention is simple: consuming iodine is all that is needed. DGH has worked in conjunction with the community health promoters to teach the importance of using iodized salt and to provide a one-time megadose of iodine to women and children.

## LORETO, PERU

The Amazonian Indigenous People’s Health Project was started by a doctor studying and treating increasingly drug-resistant strains of

malaria among the Urarina people. New strains of malaria are just one of several invaders threatening the survival of the Urarina, who traditionally have moved deeper into the jungle when danger has approached. In addition to the health services provided by the project, the Urarina prioritized defining the actual boundaries of their traditional homeland (constitutionally guaranteed, but previously never measured) in order to prevent and document invasion by oil companies and other entities.

## OMETEPE, NICARAGUA

DGH was asked to donate typewriters to an agricultural cooperative that runs youth programs and other services for communities on this island in the middle of Lake Nicaragua. DGH answered the request and quickly followed up with a visit to investigate with the community its priorities. The co-op members explained the history of a health promoter project that they had not been able to maintain. One of the priorities they identified was to replenish the first aid kit of each health promoter so that they could better serve the community. DGH has responded with the supplies requested.

## CHIAPAS, MEXICO

Communities in Chiapas, having heard of the work being done in El Salvador, invited DGH to work with them in 1996. As trust in DGH has grown, they have identified the need for additional health promoter training, a small community clinic, a diesel generator to supply electricity to the clinic, and a dormitory so it is easier to house promoters when they come from their communities for training. DGH responded with the necessary assistance. The people in these communities are subsistence farmers and most grow coffee to earn what little cash they can, which has become much more difficult as the wholesale price of coffee has fallen dramatically. Recently, women have begun to break through traditional gender roles and have requested help establishing sustainable income opportunities. DGH has worked with them to start a bakery.



**“[When] the sense of participation is lost, the feeling that ordinary individuals influence important decisions vanishes, and man becomes separated and diminished.”**

—MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

# Words to Live By: DGH Principles in Action

## Liberation Medicine

The conscious, conscientious use of health to promote human dignity and social justice.

### CHIAPAS, MEXICO

Since 1996, DGH volunteers have been traveling to Chiapas, Mexico, to work in Hospital San Carlos, a small rural hospital run by the Daughters of Charity, which provides medical care to a mostly indigenous population in the conflict zone. The hospital staff is unique in that it respects the culture, language, family structure and health beliefs of all patients and provides care to all, regardless of one's ability to pay. It also offers training to young indigenous women in auxiliary nursing. Central to the concept of Liberation Medicine is the act of community accompaniment and treating people with respect. DGH supports a community health project in an autonomous municipality, a group of indigenous communities that are struggling for autonomous decision-making in response to discrimination by the Mexican government. We train health promoters using participatory educational techniques, focusing on health issues that the promoters and their communities view as priorities. In this way, we share medical and public health knowledge in a bilateral, egalitarian, respectful way, working in concert to devise community-based approaches to alleviate these problems.

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

An important aspect of Liberation Medicine is the promotion of human dignity and social justice. While it is of utmost importance that these promotions occur in the community, they also need to occur on the global stage.

Members of the DGH community have been instrumental in presenting the ideals of Liberation Medicine at many venues. For example, DGH members conducted the first comprehensive Liberation Medicine Workshop at the American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Conference in 1999. The following presentations were given: *Caring, Compassion and Humility: A Proposed New Model for Medicine Closer to the Heart*, by Ken

Hilsbos, M.D.; *A Personal Reflection On The Concept Of Liberation Medicine*, by Jennifer Kasper, M.D., M.P.H.; *Brief Reflections on Liberation Medicine's Roots in Liberation Theology*, by Audrey Lenhart; *Liberation Medicine: Health From a Social Context*, by Aun Lor, M.P.H.; *Liberation Medicine: Observation and Reflection on Experience and Concrete Suggestions to Action in the Promotion of Human Dignity and Social Justice through Health and Human Rights*, by Joy Mockbee, M.D., M.P.H.; *Toward a Liberation Movement*, by Monica Sanchez. (The full text of these presentations can be found on our web site

[www.dghonline.org](http://www.dghonline.org).) DGH has organized workshops and presentations on Liberation Medicine at subsequent APHA conferences, as well as at many other meetings and universities around the world.

### BANGLADESH

In December 2000, five representatives from DGH traveled to Bangladesh to join over 1,500 activists from more than 94 countries in the first People's Health Assembly. It was a unique opportunity to discuss each other's health and social justice work, form alliances and plan concrete

ways to increase access to affordable health care. The gathering culminated in the writing of the People's Charter for Health. DGH is proud to be a co-signer of this charter. Now efforts are being channeled worldwide towards organizing the People's Health Movement (PHM), a growing coalition of grassroots organizations in a col-

lective effort to open up opportunities for communities and civil society organizations to have a more significant voice in determining the direction of the future of the health care system. DGH has co-sponsored a speaking tour by the founders of the People's Health Movement. In addition, DGH and the Hesperian Foundation are now organizing the PHM USA circle. (For more information, please visit [www.phm-usa.org](http://www.phm-usa.org).)



**“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed toward ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.”**

—ALBERT EINSTEIN



# Human Rights

**As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declares, recognizing the inherent dignity and worth of the human person, the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family, and the need to promote social progress and better standards of life, is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.**

## MORAZÁN, EL SALVADOR

DGH volunteers developed a project offering women education about sexuality, and breast and cervical cancer, as well as performing pap smears and testing for chlamydia. Objectives of the project included increasing the awareness and respect of women's health and rights, increasing women's self-esteem, and teaching health promoters about STDs. Since the community had firmly entrenched cultural beliefs about gender roles, especially *machismo*, the project used a health and human rights framework with the promoters to help community members understand the power imbalances of the relationships. One of the ways in which the idea of respect for women was encouraged in the community was through special—and especially popular—sex education classes for the men.

## LORETO, PERU

Oil workers, loggers and traders enter into the territory of the Urarina people in the Peruvian Amazon against the community's wishes, bringing epidemic illnesses with them. In the last seven years, the Urarina have suffered and died from measles, cholera, pertussis, and drug-resistant malaria epidemics. DGH began working with the Amazonian Indigenous People's Health Project (AIPHP) in January 1999 to strengthen an indigenous primary health care system and to further understand the disease burden faced by the Urarina. A comprehensive village health worker education program is well underway in the communities. Since health goes far beyond merely physical well-being, AIPHP is also assisting in exploring issues pertaining to the Urarina's legal rights to their traditional lands and their ability to control who enters and for what reasons. DGH Advisory Counsel member Dr. Richard Witzig and Massiel Ascencios co-

authored an article in the *Journal of Health and Human Rights*, Fall 1999, about the Human Rights violations experienced by the Urarina and their ongoing struggle for land rights.

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA


In 1999 DGH wrote an official statement of opposition to the use of American tax dollars to train foreign military officers whose human rights records are among the worst in this hemisphere, thus joining the movement to close the US Army School of the Americas (now renamed WHISC).

DGH was a sponsor of a lecture series and workshop on health and human rights, presented by the Center for the Study of Health, Culture, and Society of the Rollins School of Public Health at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia in 1997. Led by Jonathan Mann, MD, MPH, the workshop included topics on the incorporation of health and human rights into academic settings. DGH was also an organizer and official co-sponsor—along with the Emory University Rollins School of Public Health-Institute of Human Rights, World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CARE, and The Carter Center—of the *Lessons Learned from a Rights-Based Approach to Health* conference, held in Atlanta, Georgia, in April 2005.

Every Spring issue of the *DGH Reporter* includes a feature titled, *Human Rights Around the World*. Focusing on different countries in each issue, it is designed to give DGH friends and members a basic understanding of the human rights situation worldwide.

## SAN SALVADOR, EL SALVADOR

DGH has helped support the Medical School of the University of El Salvador's annual International Colloquium on Health. The Colloquium has been an important opportunity for discussion and teaching on issues vital to health, human rights, education and community development. Colloquium themes have included "Health and the Environment" and "Health and Violence."



**“He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.”**

—THOMAS PAINE

# Words to Live By: DGH Principles in Action

## Volunteerism

**A luxury for those who have, a necessity for those who have not, a community opportunity for both, DGH volunteerism explores the difference between charity (giving what one does not need) and solidarity (sharing what one needs with others who also have needs).**

### VOLUNTEERISM IS ESSENTIAL TO DGH

The spirit of volunteerism is well rooted in the founding of DGH. In the pre-DGH era, Dr. Lanny Smith, the DGH founding president, volunteered with rural communities in El Salvador that were trying to rebuild after 12 years of war. Lanny's presence and perseverance ensured that a steady flow of volunteers shared their skills with the communities that invited their solidarity. The combination of capacity-building with friendship-building led the volunteers who founded DGH to ensure that this was an essential component of the organization. Apart from a single staff person who for two years worked to increase the organization's capacity, DGH is still comprised of all volunteers. To date, hundreds of people ranging from physicians to musicians have assisted with our work.

Volunteer work parallels the health and human rights perspective. As DGH receives invitations from communities around the world, we offer opportunities to volunteers, both internationally and locally. Our philosophy is to facilitate the interchange of culture, technical abilities and other aspects of the human experience, to the end of promoting human dignity and social justice. The interchange, of course, occurs in both directions allowing volunteers and community members to learn from each other. The World Health Organization defines health as "physical, mental and social wellbeing—not merely the absence of disease." While many of these volunteer placements have been medically related, volunteers come to the communities with varied backgrounds and areas of expertise.

### UGANDA

DGH has recruited qualified medical volunteers to teach at Mbarara University of Science and Technology School of Medicine in Uganda (a small country in Eastern Africa surrounded by the much larger nations of Sudan, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire). Mbarara University was founded twelve years ago with the express purpose of promoting

community health. One source of volunteers comes through a partnership with Albert Einstein College of Medicine's Montefiore Residency Program in Primary Care and Social Medicine. Senior residents of Montefiore spend one month teaching on the wards at Mbarara Hospital as one of their elective rotations. However, as the long-term goal is to increase in-country capacity, DGH has also helped to fund the training of three Ugandan Internal Medicine residents with the understanding that they will stay to teach at Mbarara University after graduation.

### UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

From its very beginnings, DGH has been the product and conduit of volunteerism. Volunteers donated professional time and resources to incorporate the organization. Volunteers operate the DGH administrative office, e-mail communications, the DGH web site and handle all the DGH mailings. Volunteers also coordinate donations of medical and educational supplies, computers and office equipment (much of the computer, software and office equipment used in El Salvador has been donated through DGH).

A lot of volunteer time and work goes into the publishing of the *DGH Reporter*, from those who write articles, edit and design the newsletter, to those who fold, stamp, and mail the thousands of copies that go out twice a year. The DGH newsletter aims not just to

**"Great opportunities to help others seldom come, but small ones surround us every day."**

**—SALLY KOCH**

keep DGH friends and supporters informed about our work, but also to keep them abreast of important human rights issues around the world and inspired with the arts that touch our lives. (All issues of the *DGH Reporter* are available on the DGH web site at [www.dghonline.org](http://www.dghonline.org).) Some volunteers have raised money for the kinders in El Salvador by selling *matatas* (durable, hand-made bags). Others regularly walked the streets of their neighborhood collecting cans to recycle, donating the proceeds to DGH while promoting a healthy environment.

# Accompaniment

**Amplifying voices, responding to invitations, sharing risk and responsibility, in short accompaniment means being there; working side by side with our fellow human beings to create conditions that demand and facilitate social justice in the understanding that the same chains bind us all, even if some have had more opportunities and easier lives.**

## EL SALVADOR

DGH was founded in work that began as community accompaniment. After the peace accords were signed in El Salvador, communities that had been in conflict zones began the process of rebuilding. Early volunteers used health as a bridge between the Salvadoran government and the rural population. To be present in the community with the people was an extremely important component of these early efforts. DGH volunteers have accompanied these communities for over ten years, from the early post-conflict phase, during Hurricane Mitch and two devastating earthquakes, as well as everyday life.

## HONDURAS

While most of DGH's work focuses on long-term projects, we sometimes become involved during times of natural disasters. In the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, DGH extended its relief work in El Salvador to work with the Honduran NGO *Comisión Cristiana de Desarrollo* (CCD), which promotes community development. DGH made monetary and equipment donations, and sent volunteers to assist in the immediate relief effort.

On invitation from the communities, DGH also sent volunteers, materials, and money to work in poverty and natural disaster stricken Honduras with two different medical assistance delegations under the coordination of Witness for Peace. These delegations assisted the Honduran grassroots organizations of COHAPAZ (which is directly involved in community health organizing, promoting alternative medicines and running a network of health brigades) and COPIN (which focuses on promoting rights and recognition for indigenous peoples).

**"If someone listens, or stretches out a hand, or whispers a kind word of encouragement, or attempts to understand a lonely person, extraordinary things begin to happen."**

— LORETTA GIRZARTIS



## NEW YORK, USA

Not all of DGH's accompaniment occurs in other countries; activities in the US are underway as well. Volunteers in New York City have organized *charlas* (workshops) for the *Centro de Educación de Trabajadores*, a non-profit group that teaches English as a Second Language and basic computer skills to new immigrants in order to improve their job prospects and help them make a dignified life for themselves in their adopted country. The DGH-sponsored *charlas* offer some basics on accessing the health care system, nutrition and other health subjects of concern to this population. In the South Bronx, DGH has teamed with Highbridge Community Life Center and Montefiore's Primary Care and Social Medicine Program to train Health Education Promoters in serving their communities. The Highbridge Center has worked for more than 25 years in community housing and job training.

## GUATEMALA

In Guatemala City, DGH accompanies FUNDAESPRO (*Fundación Esfuerzo y Prosperidad*), a group of women active in the prevention of HIV/AIDS. The group has over 200 women trained to do basic health promotion, working in 19 marginalized communities around the city. The organization also runs several popular pharmacies and a center that includes a clinic, a pre-school and an office of legal assistance (many of the communities have continued to struggle, in some cases decades, for ownership of the land where they live). Each promoter covers 35-50 families. All are volunteers who sometimes cover a few activities outside their assigned section of the community. The AIDS program has four coordinators who have received special training in HIV disease, its transmission and prevention. They in turn train the community health promoters. The promoters have collectively given thousands of individual and group educational sessions and have participated in several community health fairs. The coordinators are now starting to identify and visit houses of prostitution to educate the sex workers about HIV. They are also setting up talks in schools.

# Words to Live By: DGH Principles in Action

## Promoting World Citizenship

**Increasing the awareness of the everyday reality of other members of the human race, a tenet of Liberation Medicine, is vital to the improvement of Human Rights. As Martin Luther King, Jr. taught, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny."**

### NEW YORK, USA

The development of a philosophy that avoids drawing a line between "them" and "us" should begin early in life and continue to be nurtured. Several groups of school children in Central New York now have a better knowledge of what life in one remote, mountain community in El Salvador is like. The children's eyes and minds have been opened to a culture very different from their own, the concept of basic human rights and who is responsible for protecting them. This new understanding began when they read the novel, *Journey of the Sparrows*, by Fran Leeper Buss. It is about undocumented children from El Salvador trying to survive in the US. It was complemented by a combination of slides, video, sharing personal 'souvenirs' and stories by a DGH board member. As a result, these children have gained insight into the rights they enjoy and how that contrasts with what their peers in El Salvador lack.

### GEORGIA, USA

Some seventh grade students in Georgia received an education in global awareness and know about helping those less fortunate. After hearing about the work of DGH to improve health and human conditions in El Salvador, they wanted to do what they could to help. When they learned about the desperate need for a bridge and how children had lost their lives simply trying to get to school, they decided that they would contribute funds to help build this bridge. So where do twelve-year-olds get money for something like this? They put their collective creativity to work and held a bake sale, raising over \$250. But they gained much more than the satisfaction of completing a successful project and contributing money toward a worthy cause. They also experienced an attitude adjustment, from "Me first" to "What can I do to help?" They are now aware of health and human rights conditions beyond their doorstep and want to help change them.

### VIEQUES, PUERTO RICO

Since 1947, the US Military has conducted exercises, including bombing, on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico. In coordination with the Puerto Rican community of the Bronx, DGH and Residents at Montefiore Medical Center made public presentations, including poetry and epidemiologic data in the Montefiore Cherkasky Auditorium (12/2000), a candlelight march and vigil in the South Bronx (3/2001), and official participation in the American Public Health Association National Meetings (11/2001) and the First Public Health Conference in Puerto Rico (4/2002). On May 1, 2003 the US Military finally stopped the bombing, but left an environmental mess that includes the debris of depleted uranium shells, unexploded ordinance and other toxic waste. DGH continues to accompany the people of Vieques in their quest to make the island environmentally safe.

### EL SALVADOR

In 1993, the first group of students from Harvard School of Public Health arrived in Morazán, El Salvador to study the project there as an "alternative health" project. That was the first of three HSPH groups over the next two years. A few months later, a group from Davidson College, led by a professor and a student, both of whom later became DGH founding board members, arrived to volunteer their services and learn about



**"The worst sin towards our fellow creatures is not to hate them, but to be indifferent to them. That is the essence of inhumanity."**

—GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

the reality of live in El Salvador. That was the first of six annual visits by Davidson students. In 1995 came the first of two visits from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. 1996 saw the first of four annual visits by students from the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, who came to learn while volunteering with the project. Many of the students and professors who visited and volunteered with the project in El Salvador, even for a short period of time, point to the experience as "life-changing" and important in making decisions about their futures.

# Art & Social Justice

**There is an intrinsic relation between art, health, education and human rights that makes it possible to explore Human Rights and other aspects of Social Justice through the creativity and healing that art engenders.**

## UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Art has been an integral part of DGH since the beginning of the organization. The volunteers who founded DGH felt a strong link between their work and the inspiration offered by the arts in all its forms, from books to films to music. Art was used in the very first DGH project to help make learning about health fun and interesting (see Morazán, El Salvador below). An artist volunteered her time and talent to create the DGH logo.

Examples of how art continues to play an important role in the work of DGH abound. In commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, DGH sponsored a poetry contest to draw attention to the still ardent need to fulfill its promise. A year later, DGH sponsored a photography contest to illustrate the need for universal healthcare. All entries in both of these contests had to be based on the theme of DGH's mission, "Promoting health and human rights with those who have no voice."

DGH has also been involved in the promotion of films that depict issues related to the organization's mission. The *Long Haired Warriors* is a full-length documentary film about Vietnamese women who were soldiers and prisoners of war during the American war in Vietnam. The strength, determination and fortitude of these women during an extremely challenging and dangerous time is brilliantly captured by the director and producer, who shot the film on location in Vietnam. The filmmaker raised funds for a group of Vietnamese women through DGH-sponsored showings of his film. *River of Tears* is a short documentary film created by a DGH board member about the 1996 flood of the *Favela* (slum) City of God, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Despite the many



**"Therein lies the social significance of art: It is constantly at work educating the spirit of the age, conjuring up the forms in which the age is more lacking."**

—CARL JUNG

deaths and the thousands left homeless, international aid was never solicited. The homeless were sheltered in schools, many for more than a year, under terrible conditions that magnified the normal horror of the *Favela*. The majority of those relocated were moved to a landfill over an industrial waste dump, an hour from their former sources of livelihood, exposed to toxic gases.

To further share DGH's commitment to the arts as a vital part of the social justice movement, every fall issue of the DGH newsletter includes a section called *Human Rights in the Arts*. Here

DGH members offer art in its various forms—books, films, music and visual arts—that has influenced their lives.

In addition, several concerts have been held to benefit DGH. For example, Sumaj CHASQUIS played for DGH in Boston. They showcase pure, native, Bolivian music, as well as the European and African cultural influences on indigenous music.

## MORAZÁN, EL SALVADOR

The time had come for the Health Promoters, having finished their first round of training, to return to their communities. Would they be accepted as now capable Health Promoters by those who had watched them grow from infancy? We decided to reintroduce them as a group, using popular theater. We chose the theme of breast-feeding promotion, with hygiene and medical tips. The sub-plot was the role of the Health Promoter.

As the play begins, an off-stage rooster crows and a radio announcer gives the hour as 4:30 am and, with *ranchera* (Mexican country) music in the background, reads an ad for "Super-Vitamina Gringa." A typical breakfast scene in a one-room bamboo home lays out the plot of a child who is breast-fed and a neighbor's infant who is not—and thus has chronic diarrhea and poor growth. A Health Promoter appears to give counsel and, using sock puppets, directs a play within the play.

Innuendos, spontaneous lines and local satire are the rule in each presentation. At these dramas the whole community would come and laugh, but leave wiser in public health practice and with new respect for their native sons and daughters.

# DGH PRINCIPLES OF ACTION

DGH affirms that every human being regardless of race, gender, class, religion, sexual orientation, physical or mental disability, culture, age or other attribute, has the right to a life of dignity, equal treatment and social justice.

**A.** DGH works with those who are among the most poor, the most vulnerable and the stigmatized of the world's population, amplifying their voices that they be heard.

**B.** DGH's approach is to accompany communities with small, community-oriented health initiatives that also promote human rights, encourage sustainability and respect environmental concerns.

**C.** DGH sets an example for how medicine should be practiced by promoting Liberation Medicine, which is defined as, "The conscious, conscientious use of health to promote human dignity and social justice."

**D.** DGH promotes health equity as more basic and fundamental than private, corporate interests. Its mandate is to strive for the optimal health and well-being of all members of the human race regardless of ethnicity, sex, sexual preference or religion.

**E.** DGH is committed to advocacy and working for social justice both locally and globally. It encourages its members to take action in their own communities and participate in the accompaniment of communities around the world.

**F.** DGH pledges to be active in the struggle to expose and confront the pervasive and destructive nature of racism and classism (personal and institutionalized, conscious or unconscious) and all other forms of discrimination, both within DGH and in the world at large.

**G.** DGH is a volunteer organization that invites and encourages those with a desire to help humanity by providing them with a vehicle to use their unique talents and skills in support of the DGH mission. Special efforts are made to reach out to youth, students of all ages, and people with the wisdom of experience.

**H.** DGH respects and invites those of all backgrounds and beliefs who agree with its mission and principles to join; proselytizing is contrary to the mission and principles of DGH.

**I.** DGH integrates artistic expression that promotes healing and celebrates all life into its activities. These expressions include literature, music, drama, painting, drawing, sculpture and other art forms.

**J.** DGH is vigilant to ensure that its projects, programs, affiliations and fundraising efforts don't involve even subtle compromises of its values.

**K.** DGH participates only in investigations, publications and/or research initiatives that are important to the work of DGH, ethically sound, benefit the involved communities, and are compatible with DGH's mission. Both the involved local communities and the DGH Board of Directors must approve any such efforts.



**DGH WELCOMES YOUR DONATION**, which is tax-deductible. To contribute, please make your check payable to Doctors for Global Health and send it to our virtual office at P.O. Box 1761, Decatur, GA 30031. You can also donate using a credit card online at [www.dghonline.org](http://www.dghonline.org).



Doctors for Global Health welcomes the support of individuals, organizations, and companies who share its goals and beliefs. Please,

- ✔ Join our mailing list to receive DGH's newsletter and/or e-mail news updates.
- ✔ Tell your friends and colleagues about DGH. (You can download a DGH flier in English or Spanish from the DGH web site to print and distribute.)
- ✔ Volunteer your time and services in your community or abroad.
- ✔ Offer contributions of funding or material goods.
- ✔ Offer ideas for fundraising, friendraising or grant opportunities.
- ✔ Purchase books and CDs online through the DGH web site and earn a referral fee for DGH.
- ✔ E-mail your comments and suggestions about DGH's projects, volunteer opportunities, fundraising opportunities, newsletter and web site.
- ✔ Be an active participant in our annual General Assembly.
- ✔ Educate yourself and others about the link between health and human rights and how policies attend to or neglect these rights.
- ✔ Join us in our advocacy efforts to respond to human rights violations affecting people in the communities DGH accompanies.
- ✔ Link up with others who endorse the People's Health Movement's HEALTH CARE FOR ALL campaign ([www.phmovement.org](http://www.phmovement.org)).

**Doctors for Global Health**

Box 1761, Decatur, GA 30031 U.S.A.  
Tel. & Fax: 404-377-3566  
[dghinfo@dghonline.org](mailto:dghinfo@dghonline.org)  
[www.dghonline.org](http://www.dghonline.org)

DGH is incorporated in the state of Georgia as a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-governmental organization. It is not affiliated with any religious group. All contributions are tax-deductible.

“To be truly radical is to make hope possible  
rather than despair convincing.”

– Raymond Williams

Doctors for Global Health  
thanks you for helping to  
keep hope possible in the  
communities with which  
we work around the world.

**DOCTORS FOR GLOBAL HEALTH**  
Promoting Health and Human Rights  
“With Those Who Have No Voice”\*

**Box 1761, Decatur, GA 30031 U.S.A.**  
**Tel. & Fax: 404-377-3566**  
**E-mail: [dghinfo@dghonline.org](mailto:dghinfo@dghonline.org)**  
**Web Site: [www.dghonline.org](http://www.dghonline.org)**



\*Romero