



From the desk of... David Walton

Dear Friends,

"Narratives can make us understand. Photographs do something else: they haunt us."
-- Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*

I have had the privilege of working for PIH as a medical student and physician for the past decade, and have been taking photos for nine of those ten years. Several days ago a friend asked why I take so many photos when I'm working in Haiti. The question caught me off guard, and I couldn't immediately respond. In thinking about why I and others in PIH are compelled to take photos, three main themes come to mind.

First, many of us take photos to document what we witness: a broken hand; a wattle and daub shack; an accompagnateur administering medicine; a malnourished baby crying for her mother. These photos allow us to create a library of images that often serve as medical documentation or to help us triage acute social needs. For example, when patients come in to the office and describe the conditions in which they live, it can be difficult to truly understand their reality. But after a home visit and photo documentation, we can more effectively address and advocate for our patients' medical and social rights and needs.



Photo taken by David Walton of two children in Haiti

We also seek to capture images. By virtue of the fact that we work with the destitute sick, we inhabit a privileged place - we are privy to some of the most intimate moments in our patients' lives. Their struggle to survive is ongoing, even after their health improves. They allow us to bear witness to this struggle, and to capture it with our cameras. Even in times of intense emotion and despair, I have never had a patient ask me to stop taking photos, despite my own hesitation. In fact, they often encourage me to keep shooting through their tears, through their pain, through their hunger, through their sadness. All they ask for in return is a copy of the image and a commitment on our part to show their photos to others, so that those of us who live in relative comfort may bear witness to their struggle through the images.



Quick Links

[Donate to PIH](#)
[Calendar of events](#)
[e-Bulletin sign-up](#)
[PIH homepage](#)

In this issue:

- From the desk of ...
- PIH celebrates first anniversary in Lesotho
- Photo exhibit honors PIH's 20 years of health and social justice
- PIH helps Rwandan children get new heart valves in Sudan
- MDR-TB program off and running in Lesotho
- IHSJ helps lead course on health and social justice at U.S. Social Forum
- Dateline PIH: Project updates from all over
- Arcade Fire reignites tour and aid for PIH
- Students for PIH Listserv

Arcade Fire reignites tour and aid for PIH

Montreal-based rock band Arcade Fire goes back on tour September 15, beginning in Austin, TX. As with their previous tour, the band will donate \$1 per ticket to PIH. And that's not all. At each show this fall, 10 students will serve as PIH/Arcade Fire volunteers to provide information on our work in Haiti. Arcade Fire has also designed some special merchandise that will be available at every show. Check www.arcadefire.net to see if they're heading to a city near you.

Finally, we seek to create with our photography. Our creations lie not in what is captured in the frame, but rather in what is captured by the viewer. Each person who views our images has a different reaction. The photos may compel some to action, and may cause others to feel overwhelmed and helpless. Our ultimate goal is to evoke a sense of compassion and, beyond that, a sense of connection and solidarity with our patients. As Susan Sontag notes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, "Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers. The question is what to do with the feelings that have been aroused, the knowledge that has been communicated."

I write this piece as colleagues at PIH are organizing a [photo exhibit to celebrate our 20th anniversary](#). A number of my photos and dozens by other PIH staff and supporters will bring into clear focus 20 years of solidarity with the destitute sick and the effort to remediate inequalities in health care across the globe. But the exhibit will also serve as a stark reminder that there is much left to do.

I hope that many of you have the chance to view the exhibit, and that the photos will help you connect with those we serve.

-- David Walton
(David is a physician working with PIH projects in Haiti)

Mountain villagers celebrate anniversary of PIH work in Lesotho



August 22, 2007 is a date that the people of the tiny mountain village of Nohana, Lesotho, will never forget. That was the day their community hosted a gala celebration marking the first anniversary of PIH's work in Lesotho.

Thousands of people attended the event, including the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, and numerous other dignitaries ferried in by plane and helicopter to join local schoolchildren, PIH staff, village health workers and patients.

The program included a parade of horses in a homage to how patients had to be brought down from the mountains for medical care.

From Students for PIH

What kinds of topics are being discussed on the [Students for PIH listserv](#)? Here is a selection of excerpts from recent posts.

I'm not sure yet if I want to pursue a degree in medicine but I know that I'm committed to public health and social justice. What are ways to help without having an M.D.?

Being extremely moved by Farmer's cause, I am attempting to raise money for Partners in Health at Austin College. Utilizing the Facebook network... I am soliciting as many students as possible, both from Austin College and not, to contribute to this fabulously worthy cause... I need the help of individuals or businesses looking to make a difference that could sponsor or contribute to the [Austin College] PIH campaign. Is there anyone here who has done something like this already?

I'm a recent college grad and would like to get some volunteer experience before grad school. I have a friend in Kenya right now with Global Volunteer Network and she's had a very involved and rewarding experience. I was just wondering if anyone else could offer experiences or share advice about volunteer locations or organizations.

I've thoroughly enjoyed this listserv, seeing the energy and creativity of motivated students

Paul Farmer made a speech, and was followed by speeches by the Irish ambassador (the Irish government has funded much of the work in Lesotho), a representative of the Clinton Foundation (another important partner), and the Prime Minister, who spoke for an hour in both English and Sesotho.

In a short email message, PIH Country Director Jen Furin shared with colleagues and supporters at PIH much of the excitement of a long day:

I just wanted to tell you the anniversary event yesterday was spectacular on every level. I wish you could have been there to see the community come alive.

It was the most remarkable thing I have ever seen. The joy and pride of all those there was clearly visible and very real. The little dusty airstrip was like JFK International with five MAF (Mission Aviation Fellowship) planes and four choppers. High-level dignitaries--including the Prime Minister--all praised you for your work. Most important, the patients and village health workers were there to celebrate life.

The only time these communities come together any more is for funerals, and this was a real and beautiful celebration. To make this project function has been the work of hundreds of people, including all of you on many levels. You were in our hearts and thoughts as always.

Photo exhibit celebrates 20 years of PIH



PIH is organizing a photo exhibit as one of several events marking the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the organization. The exhibit will be displayed and open to the public for a month, from September 20 to October 19, at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design in Boston. After that it will go on the road, with stops at several cities around the country.

Exhibit dates and locations will be posted on [PIH's web-](#)

[site](#) as they are scheduled. In the mean time, A 2008 calendar inspired by the images and themes of this exhibit is also in the works. [Find out how you can get one.](#)



Paul Farmer addresses the crowd at the first anniversary of PIH's work in Lesotho

throughout country. I'm sure there are many similar students at my home university, though we have no student organization to unite under and to turn our energy into actions. I'd like to organize a general student organization to discuss ideas and projects that relate to the very basic principle of helping the disadvantaged in our community and the world... I'm hoping for insightful feedback/guidance from anyone who is a part of such an organization (a potential sister organization!) or generally from anyone with helpful comments, criticism or advice like I see everyday on this fantastic listserv.

The Students for PIH listserv provides a forum for students to raising awareness about inequalities, pursue careers in global health, and promote social justice. It's a space to ask questions, share ideas, exchange information, and motivate others. [Read responses to any of the above posts, or join the discussion.](#)

Right to Health Care: From Rwanda to Sudan for heart valves and hope

"Jeanette was so sick," said Dr. Joseph Mucumbitsi, a Rwandan pediatrician. Bedridden for months, the 14-year-old only weighed about 65 pounds. Her heart, weakened and scarred from an infection, could not effectively pump blood to the rest of her body, and she was slowly suffocating.



Jeanette before heart surgery

Eight-year-old Louise was also struggling to survive. Her swollen body was wracked by recurrent asthma-like spasms in her lungs and persistent coughing.

Both girls suffered from rheumatic heart disease (RHD), a grim and all too common diagnosis in their Rwandan community. What was uncommon was the international effort to save them on the part of PIH's Rwandan partner organization Inshuti Mu Buzima, the Salam Center for Cardiac Surgery in Sudan, and an Italian humanitarian organization called Emergency.

Both girls faced almost certain death without heart surgery, something that no medical facility in Rwanda—or in most African countries—could safely provide. So PIH and Emergency arranged for them to travel to Sudan, where the Salam Center for Cardiac Surgery had opened earlier this year in the capital city of Khartoum. Built by Emergency, the state-of-the-art facility provides health care for free to the people of the region.

At the Salam Center, doctors struggled to fix Jeanette's damaged valve, but the tissue had already been scarred beyond repair. So they replaced the valve with a new temporary one, which they hope to exchange for a more permanent one in several years. Louise also received a new valve.



**Jeanette and Louise
after surgery**

"It's very amazing to see how they have improved," says Eric Kamanayo, a nurse who accompanied the girls to Sudan. "Louise is now able to run 100 meters without stopping. This is unbelievable but true!" Louise has already gained more than four pounds, while Jeanette has put on an amazing 15 pounds since the surgery.

For more information and photos, [read the full story on the PIH website.](#)

Lesotho project starts treating patients and testing model for tackling drug-resistant TB and HIV

Barely five months after Partners In Health and the Open Society Institute announced plans to create a model for treating overlapping epidemics of multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and AIDS, the program in Lesotho is up and running. At least 21 patients have already started receiving the complex combination of drugs needed to treat MDR-TB. In addition, most of the work had been completed to equip and train the national tuberculosis laboratory to perform the lab tests needed to diagnose cases of drug-resistant TB, and to turn a dilapidated hospital into a state-of-the-art center for TB treatment.



PIH community coordinator Likhapa Ntlamelle (right) talking with two MDR-TB patients

With nearly one-third of its adult population infected with HIV, Lesotho may have the world's highest incidence of tuberculosis as well. TB epidemics almost always shadow AIDS in populations where many people's immune systems have been weakened by HIV. Evidence to date suggests that about one in three cases of TB in Lesotho is resistant to at least one drug, and more than 75 percent of patients with TB are also infected with HIV.

By the end of August, 21 patients in Lesotho had already begun the complex drug regimen for MDR-TB, which is just one part of the comprehensive approach used successfully at other PIH sites. The program also includes food support, as well as frequent visits and support from community health workers, says Dr. Hind Satti, the director of PIH's MDR-TB program in Lesotho, based in Maseru, Lesotho's capital city.

[For more information read the full story on the PIH website.](#)

Advocating health and social justice at U.S. Social Forum in Atlanta

More than 10,000 people from across the United States and around the world converged in Atlanta, Georgia, earlier this summer for the first-ever U.S. Social Forum. Based on the model of the World Social Forum, the U.S. event was a gathering of activists, community leaders, students, and professionals committed to creating a more just and sustainable society. Critical social issues ranging from global warming to militarism to dismantling racism led to an engaging exchange of ideas.

At the forum, the Institute for Health and Social Justice (IHSJ), the education and advocacy arm of PIH, lead a 4-day course called *Promoting Health for All*, which explored the connections among politics, economics, oppression, and health. Over 40 participants discussed a broad range of topics that affect health and access to health care in the U.S., including trade, debt, war, and discrimination.

Drawing on a wealth of personal knowledge and experiences, course faculty and participants outlined how the current US health care system fails to meet the needs of the most vulnerable—people living in poverty, people without insurance, people of color, women, and children—and projects that example as a model for the world.

For more information about the International People's Health University and PIH's role in the course in Atlanta, [go to the story on the PIH website](#) or visit www.phm-usa.org.

Dateline PIH: Project updates from all over

Haiti: PIH's Program on Social and Economic Rights (POSER) recently completed the construction of 40 new homes for families in Haiti. The program was created to tackle the social inequalities that put our patients at risk of disease, including malnutrition, unsafe housing, and illiteracy. Additionally, a group of doctors from the Global Health Equity (GHE) Residency Program recently visited the Zanmi Lasante site in Lascahobas, Haiti. While there, they hiked to a remote mountain village that had never experienced local health care services brought to them, and examined 775 patients with diseases ranging from tuberculosis to worms to hypertension. The residents also vaccinated 220 children in one week. The GHE program gives residents training in both internal medicine and public health at both Brigham and Women's hospital and PIH sites around the world.

Malawi: PIH's partners in Malawi, Abwenzi Pa Za Umoyo, officially opened its newly renovated laboratory. With running water and new equipment and furniture, the facility will help serve patients much more efficiently.

Peru: A rapid-response medical team from PIH's partner organization, Socios En Salud (SES), was among the first to arrive ready to provide relief, guidance, and a little bit of hope to survivors of the recent earthquake in Peru. SES was able to contribute badly needed medicine, food, clothing, and blankets. Although no deaths have been confirmed among SES's 115 multidrug-resistant TB patients in the area, the quake destroyed the homes of more than half of them and several lost at least one family member. [For more information about the earthquake and SES's response, go to the PIH website.](#)

Rwanda: The PIH clinic in Mulindi recently celebrated the installation of new solar energy systems with a dedication ceremony. The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) designed and installed the system, which uses advanced technology to supply "clean" electricity for state-of-the-art laboratories, refrigeration, lighting, computers, and lab equipment. [Read the full story on the PIH website.](#)

Lesotho: PIH's partners in Lesotho recently trained over 100 traditional birth attendants, the third such training since May. These trainings included teaching the birth attendants about the importance of HIV testing for mothers. So far, PIH staff has found a correlation between these trainings and the number of mothers going to the hospital for testing. To help prevent the transmission of the virus from HIV-positive mothers to their babies, the program is also now providing formula to 18 babies, with an average of five new babies starting each month.