Building Healthy Communities in the Dominican Republic: A Mixed-Methods Approach towards Engaging the Community

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Las Malvinas II

Building a Healthier and More Sustainable Community in the Dominican Republic
The healthy communities movement is a collaborative, community-engaged effort primarily focused on improving the health status and long-term quality of life within specific geographic areas.

The WHO and the CDC have championed this movement. It promotes development of multidisciplinary partnerships to assess status of the social determinants of health within a community, with the objective of developing targeted interventions to improve the health and wellbeing of its residents.

This story map walks you through the process followed to design and implement a building a healthier community process at las Malvinas II in the Dominican
The Building Healthy Communities Creative Inquiry was established in Fall 2015 at Clemson University by Dr. Arelis Moore de Peralta.
Las Malvinas II is a small, low-resource community in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. It is nestled between two rivers (the Ozama River and Isabela Rivers) and an Industrial Park.
This project involves Clemson and UNIBE students, allowing them the opportunity to work together.
1500 residents live in .1 square kilometers of land in Las Malvinas II. Many residents face unemployment, low literacy, lack of access to potable water, lack of sewage systems, transportation, and other issues.
Las Malvinas II Fast Facts:

1) 58% of people obtain water from wells or the surrounding river (Isabela River).

2) The unemployment rate of Las Malvinas II is 70%, more than twice the national average.

3) 1/3 of residents are unable to read or write.
However, despite its poverty, Las Malvinas II is a promising community that is full of resources already present (assets), for example their highly engaged and motivated Neighborhood Association leadership. The Building Healthy Communities Creative Inquiry focuses on utilizing these assets and bridging external resources to improve the overall community health and well-being of Las Malvinas II.
Public Health Priorities and Social Determinants of Health

This initiative focuses on addressing prioritized public health issues and social determinants of health (SDH), through planned interventions, to create a healthier community. These SDH include but are not limited to: education, housing, access to potable water, cleanliness, infrastructure development (e.g., primary health clinic, school expansion, etc.), health preventative measures, and more.

Selection of Las Malvinas II public health priorities was made in consultation with our partner local university (UNIBE) and the Neighborhood Association.
Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and Action Plan

Findings from the CHA informed the development of a CHIP.

Leaders from Las Malvinas II, governmental and non-governmental organizations conveyed in March 2017, to develop a CHIP and action plan.
Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) and Action Plan cont.

These local leaders and government officials identified both short and long-term strategies and programs to address the priorities identified in the CHA.

This CHIP is currently being implemented in las Malvinas II.
During its first year (2015), the CI team at Clemson analyzed data provided by UNIBE to propose five public health priorities: unwanted pregnancies, vaccine-preventable diseases, chronic disease management, sanitation, and education. These priorities were selected in consultation with community leaders.
Data Collection and Analysis
The Health Priorities framed the development of surveys and questionnaires for focus groups and interviews with key informants.

Dr. Moore also facilitated focus groups and interviews in five different sectors of the community: education, community-at-large, health, work, and community institutions and organizations.
During spring break 2016, students and Dr. Moore went to different households in Las Malvinas and collected survey data using arcGIS.
Students created maps illustrating relationships among various factors using geographic information system (GIS) technology and the data collected from the Spring 2016 trip.

The map displayed here illustrates the relationship between frequency of water chlorination and the incidence of dengue and malaria.
In the spring of 2017, Dr. Moore and four students facilitated a workshop to develop the CHIP with the participation of representatives from Las Malvinas II Neighborhood Association, governmental and non-governmental organizations.
Current & Future Plans
Current and Future Plans: 2017 to 2018

2018: The CI team is currently creating protocols for facilitating focus groups and a photovoice project with Las Malvinas II youth population. This research effort will facilitate youths' engagement in ongoing community health improvement process.
Construction of the Primary Health Clinic began with financial support from the municipality. The community won a participatory budget contest.
Other achievements include:

The government began installation of water pipes for water distribution throughout the community.

Regular water truck delivery by the government

More frequent trash pick up

Youth vocational education including arts and craft, theater and dancing lessons facilitated by the government

Partnership agreement between UNIBE’s school of architecture and Mancomunidad (governmental program) to develop the community Urban Master Plan (ongoing)
Student Impact

Building Healthier Communities in the Dominican Republic: Community Health Needs and Assets Assessment Preliminary Results

Results:
- 40% households with DDT exposure
- 60% households with lead exposure
- 90% households with pesticide exposure

Conclusions:
- Health education and awareness campaigns
- Improved infrastructure and sanitation
- Community involvement

References:
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- National Institutes of Health (NIH)
- World Health Organization (WHO)

The project has had:
- 4 presentations and conferences
- 1 technical report
- 1 paper on CHA submitted for publication
- 1 CHIP
Tigers Building Healthier Communities Abroad (TBHCA) is a newly formed student organization based on the Creative Inquiry.
At the end of the semester, the class celebrates their hard work. Pictured here is the class at "Cena de Navidad," or "Christmas Dinner."