

## **pcDR13b Trip Report**

September 4 to September 17, 2013

UIC Team: Amy Huang, Clemence Sullivan, Lillian Holloway

Access to Health Team: Shannon Galvin and Juliet Sorensen

### **Acknowledgments:**

Peace Corps Dominican Republic admin and volunteers, especially Rosa Lopez

The Guaymate community and the CAB members

Grupo Volonatrio de Guaymate

180 Grados

Alejandro Laureano, Nelisa Puello, and Meliza Jean

Clinica de Familia La Romana and its staff

Access to Health, Northwestern University

### **Phases of Project**

Partnership Formation – August 2012 to current

Assessment – March 2013 to current

### **Partnership Formation**

Peacecare has been in communication with Peace Corps Dominican Republic beginning June 2012, at which time we began discussions of organization for a collaborative project.

### **Site Selection**

Upon the recommendations of Peace Corps Dominican Republic, the municipal of Guaymate in the province of Romana, located in eastern DR was chosen as the collaborative site. The site was chosen with the following considerations:

- The municipal and its surrounding bateyes have a need for improved health care capacity
- The local community desired a collaborative relationship
- Clinica de Familia in La Romana is a primary care clinic actively involved in the Guaymate and bateye communities, and its staff has experience collaborating with US academic centers and is well-versed in conducting research in the DR
- A Peace Corps Volunteer is currently in place in Guaymate as a Youth and Family Community Development volunteer and is integrated within the community

### **Assessment**

Community assessment of Guaymate started in September 2013. Members of the Community Advisory Board conducted several focus group discussions. When the peacecare team traveled to the DR for their second site visit in September 2013, the team observed some of the focus groups and revisited a couple focus groups. The team also performed key informant interviews with key health professionals, including the medical director of Guaymate Hospital, a health counselor who lives in Guaymate, and the epidemiologist of Guaymate Hospital.

### **pcDR Second Site Visit**

The UIC/peacecare Team arrived in Santo Domingo on Wed, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2013 to start the second phase of the peacecare Dominican Republic project: Community Assessment.

Day 1: Thursday, Sept 5<sup>th</sup>

- UIC Team met up with Dr. Shannon Galvin from Northwestern University/Access to Health. Team members debriefed each other and started to strategize for various upcoming meetings.
- The team was able to enjoy some sightseeing activities in the Zona Colonial in Santo Domingo, the first city in the Americas.

Day 2: Friday, Sept 6<sup>th</sup>

- The team arrived in Guaymate and was warmly welcomed by familiar as well as new faces. A youth volunteer Alejandro Laureano opened the door of his home to provide lodging to the team during their stay. He and other youth volunteers Nelisa Puello and Meliza Jean also cooked for the team.
- In the evening, the first CAB meeting was held. In addition to many of the senior members of the CAB, the younger members of the CAB (mostly college and high school students) had a strong presence during the meeting.
- Over the last 2 weeks, the CAB had conducted seven focus group meetings in various bateyes and neighborhoods in Guaymate. The focus groups covered health issues and community concerns within groups of women, men, sugarcane cutters, college students, and church-goers. The CAB reviewed their findings and discussions with the peacecare team.
- Some of the issues mentioned repeatedly were HIV, concerns about patient confidentiality, high blood pressure, and lack of confidence in the local Guaymate Hospital. There was also overwhelming consensus that the lack of organized health promoters in the region is contributing to their poor health. Additional focus groups are planned for the next few days with the peacecare team's participation.

Day 3: Saturday, Sept 7<sup>th</sup>

- This was a quiet and relaxing day for the team. They enjoyed lunch at PCV Rosa's host-mother's house. Her son, Dr. William Wish – also a CAB member – gave the team a tour of Guaymate and the surrounding infrastructure. They learned insights to the health systems in Guaymate and to medical education in the DR.

Day 4: Sunday, Sept 8<sup>th</sup>

- A productive day for the peacecare team. The team visited two bateyes: Batey 80 and Batey 62, to conduct follow-up questions to the two focus groups that the CAB had led a week prior. They heard firsthand the health problems and frustrations of batey residents, including transportation issues, lack of medications, and difficulty communication with health professionals.

- At Batey 62, the team met a local health promoter, a volunteer who handles the queues for the mobile clinic that comes around Batey 62 every 15 days.

Day 5: Monday, Sept 9<sup>th</sup>

- The team visited Clinica de Los Cocos, a public clinic run by the Ministry of Health. The clinic serves as a primary care facility to the residents of Los Cocos. Services provided include family planning, prenatal care for uncomplicated pregnancies, HIV care, routine well-child visits and vaccinations, as well as chronic disease management.
- The clinic is staffed by two pasantias (doctors in their year of service after medical school and before residency). They work with a local health promoter who visits patients with chronic medical problems and documents infection control of potential TB and cholera cases.

Day 6: Tues, Sept 10<sup>th</sup>

- The team traveled to La Romana to first meet with staff members from Hospital El Buen Samaritano, a private hospital that does a lot of batey outreach and medical mission work. Peacecare members have heard a lot about their work since the first site visit. The team met with Dr. Franklin Bido, the vice-director of the hospital and the coordinator of social services/health promoters program.
- El Buen Samaritano shared their work in the bateyes with the team. They have an extensive voluntary health promoter program that provides family planning and nutritional services to batey residents.
- Professor Juliet Sorensen of Northwestern University/Access to Health joined the peacecare team at lunch as she traveled to the DR for a day to lead the team in meeting with Central Romana.
- The team met with senior health officials from Central Romana at Centro Médico Central Romana: Dr. Jose Lopez, vice president of health and director of Centro Medico, Dr. Carlos Dominguez, sub-director of Centro Medico, and Paul Fernandez, coordinator of rural health.
- Dr. Lopez graciously shared with the peacecare team of the health services provided by Central Romana in La Romana and its surrounding bateyes. They have services for visitors, Dominican residents, and sugar cane workers and their family members. He also gave the team a tour of Centro Médico, a hospital built by Central Romana that opened two years ago. Dr. Lopez and his staff look forward to a proposal from peacecare to improve health in Guaymate.
- After the meeting, Dr. Galvin and Professor Sorensen traveled to Santo Domingo to return to Chicago, while the rest of the team headed back to Guaymate to continue the rest of the site visit.

Day 7: Wed, Sept 11<sup>th</sup>

- The team spent a day in Clinica de Familia La Romana (CFLA) – shadowed physicians while they saw patients in the HIV clinic; went out on a home visit with a health promoter; met with medical director Dr. Leo Lerebours to discuss our project further. Drs. Sullivan and Holloway gave a talk on GI

disease in HIV positive patients to the medical staff at CFLA, as part of Clinica's weekly continuing education session for the physicians, nurses, and rotating students.

- Youth volunteers continued with two more focus group discussions, again identifying lack of preventative services, lack of health promoters, and variable services provided at the Guaymate Hospital as major concerns of the community.

Day 8: Thur, Sept 12<sup>th</sup>

- The team again traveled to La Romana, to meet with Dr. Oscar Estevez, the director of Guaymate Hospital who also works in a private clinic in La Romana. Dr. Estevez received the team warmly, and openly discussed the problems he saw for the Guaymate Hospital: lack of resources, lack of fulltime staff, lack of continuing education for the physicians, and lack of health promoters in the bateyes to be able to provide better preventative services. He specifically spoke of the Dominican culture that often puts the emphasis on curative medicine as opposed to preventative medicine.
- Dr. Estevez is excited to work with peace care to further improve health services provided in Guaymate and expand medical knowledge of its staff and clients.

Day 9: Friday, Sept 13<sup>th</sup>

- The team finally had the chance to visit Guaymate Hospital. They were greeted by Dra. Marja Mateo, the epidemiologist of the hospital. Dra. Mateo excitedly shared with the team the documentation system of the hospital – weekly reports are generated to the Ministry of Health documenting number of patients seen for infectious causes (conjunctivitis, diarrhea, fever, respiratory illnesses, etc.) out of total ER and clinic visits. Dra. Mateo also introduced to the team two lab technicians with whom she works closely to control outbreaks of cholera and Dengue.
- The second CAB meeting was held at night. It was again well-attended by the youth volunteers. Clemence summarized the findings of the peace care team over the last week and discussed potential intervention ideas with the CAB. CAB members listened attentively and agreed that the deepest needs are to improve hospital services and to organize batey health promoters to decrease unnecessary hospital visits.

Day 10: Saturday, Sept 14<sup>th</sup>

- The pc team members enjoyed some down time with PCV Rosa and CAB member William Wish at the Bayahibe beach.
- Team members made their rounds visiting different families in Guaymate, saying their thanks and goodbyes.

Day 11: Sunday, Sept 15<sup>th</sup>

- Team traveled back to Santo Domingo.

Day 12: Monday, Sept 16<sup>th</sup>

- The team had a meeting at Peace Corps Dominican Republic. Amy and Clemence reviewed their trip findings and potential intervention ideas with Art Flanagan, Carole Kessler, Adele Williams, and Diane Partl. PCDR continued to voice their support for the peace care project in Guaymate and is committed to have a PCV presence in the Guaymate community for the next six years.