

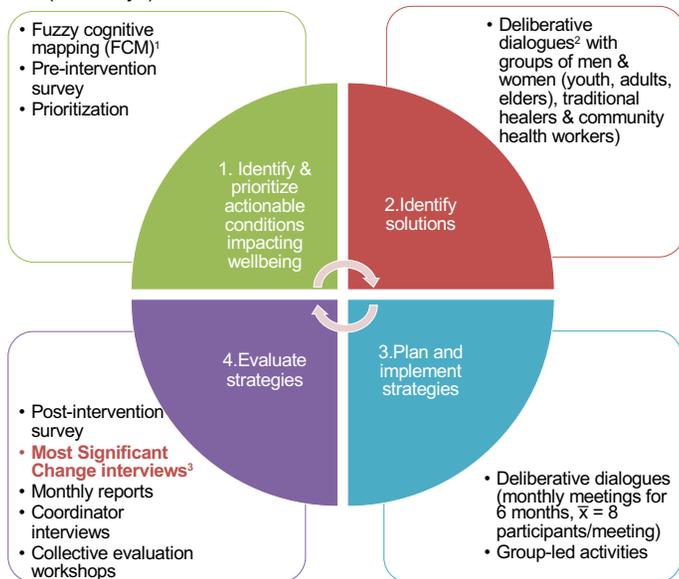
What happens when indigenous communities mobilize to promote wellbeing in Guatemala?

Pizarro, KW^a; LeBel^b, N; Petzey Quieju, D^c; Yarcinio López, B^c; Paiz Bekker, L^{c,d}; Groleau, D^e; Cockcroft, A^{c,f}; Andersson N^{c,f}; Chomat, AM^e

^a Division of Social & Transcultural Psychiatry, McGill University ^b University of Ottawa ^c CIET International ^d American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) ^e Institute of Community and Family Psychiatry, Jewish General Hospital ^f Department of Family Medicine, McGill University

Background: Community mobilization to improve wellbeing in remote, indigenous communities

- We are piloting a [participatory, dialogue-based intervention](#) to address high levels of substance use, domestic violence and psychological distress in remote, indigenous communities in Guatemala
- Focus on a strengths-based, wellbeing approach
- Implementation took place in Santiago Atitlán (97% Maya) & Cuilco (20% Maya)



Objective

- The objective of this analysis was to explore the impacts and change pathways of the community mobilization intervention to promote wellbeing in Santiago Atitlán and Cuilco, Guatemala, from the perspective of participants.

Methods

- Most significant change interviews with participants (N=69)
 - Thematic analysis (deductive & inductive coding)
 - Deductive codes identified through FCM & research literature

Results

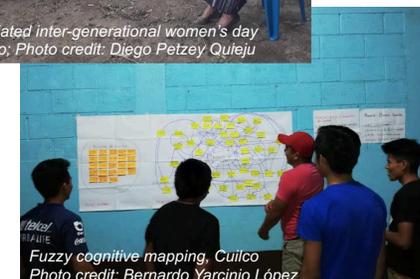
- Primary impacts described by participants
 - Improved emotional wellbeing
 - Reduced substance use (men)
 - Improved relationships
 - Helping others & community solidarity (primarily Santiago)

- Key mechanisms identified by participants
 - New knowledge & critical consciousness
 - Reduced isolation, social support & trust
 - Confidence to express oneself
 - Stress-relief & self-care

- Key intervention components identified by participants
 - Regular group meetings outside the home
 - Getting to know other community members
 - All opinions sought & valued equally
 - Advice and support from peers
 - Advice and support from local coordinator
 - Sports & learning strategies for stress-relief



Participant-initiated inter-generational women's day event, Santiago; Photo credit: Diégo Petzey Quieju



Fuzzy cognitive mapping, Cuilco
Photo credit: Bernardo Yarcinio López

(After my mother's illness) I no longer went out and I became depressed, and my head hurt too much and they told me that it was because of thinking about my mother's situation... I started going out again when I participated in the meetings... there was a part of me that improved since I was able to socialize with other people. Before I didn't know what they were thinking and by sharing my ideas I forgot about my problems.
Young woman, Santiago

Before, people knew me as a very angry person, both within the community and in my family... from all these workshops that we were receiving, they motivated me, and I reflected that it isn't necessary to be that kind of person... I began going out for walks in the community and people began to greet me... Now my daughters and sons are happy with me, they hug me and my neighbors give me help... I am setting an example for others to change their lives, because anger gets you nowhere.
Male elder, Santiago

Implications

- The approach was aligned with local, indigenous understandings of wellbeing, rooted in community solidarity and social relations.
- Engaging men in addressing substance use and problematic family dynamics is feasible within a strengths-based, community mobilization approach.

References

- ¹Khan, M. S., & Quaddus, M. (2004). Group decision support using fuzzy cognitive maps for causal reasoning. *Group Decision and Negotiation*, 13(5), 463-480.
- ²Boyko, J. A., Lavis, J. N., Abelson, J., Dobbins, M., & Carter, N. (2012). Deliberative dialogues as a mechanism for knowledge translation and exchange in health systems decision-making. *Social Science & Medicine*, 75(11), 1938-1945.
- ³Dart, J., & Davies, R. (2003). A dialogical, story-based evaluation tool: The most significant change technique. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(2), 137-155.