From Data Collection to Community Listening: A Methodological Experience of Health Promotion and Community Engagement in a Brazilian Settlement

Beatriz Coutinho Dias de Oliveira[1] et al.

[1]Bauru Medical School, University of São Paulo (FMBRU-USP), Bauru, São Paulo, Brazil

Background

University extension initiatives can strengthen health promotion by connecting academic training with community needs. This experience report describes the methodological transformation of Projeto Primavera, conducted in a socially vulnerable settlement in São Paulo, Brazil. Initially based on structured data collection, the project progressively adopted active listening and Narrative Medicine to strengthen community engagement.

Objectives

To describe the methodological transformation of Projeto Primavera from structured data collection to active listening and community participation, highlighting its contributions to health promotion and university-community engagement. The project also sought to better align health education activities with residents' needs.

Methods

Field observations, residents' narratives, and post-action discussions were used to identify emerging community needs and inform subsequent activities.

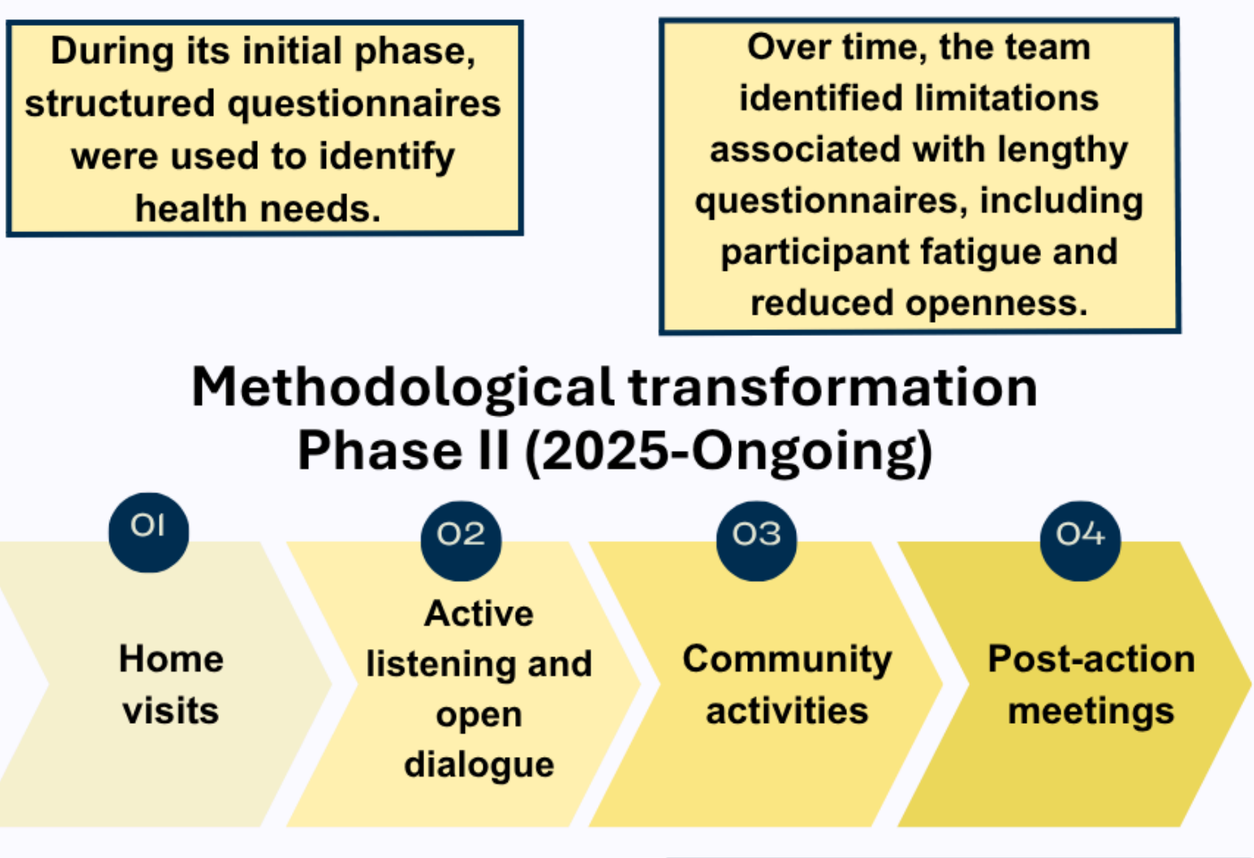


Figure 1. Medical students wearing Project Primavera vests during a home visit in Vila Cristiana Settlement.



Figure 2. Health fair in the settlement. A medical student provides guidance on contraceptive methods to a resident.





Results

- Identification of community needs not captured by structured questionnaires;
- Greater openness to discussing sensitive topics and community engagement during activities;
- More active community participation;
- Health education activities better adapted to emerging demands.



Figure 3. Educational theater on scorpion envenomation developed in response to residents' reports of frequent accidents among children.



Figure 4. "What is pain?" conversation circle inspired by residents' experiences of pain. Anonymous resident response: "For me, pain is being away from my family."

Conclusion

Longitudinal university extension can:

- move beyond data collection toward genuine community listening;
- strengthen university-community relationships;
- foster meaningful community participation;
- enable more contextualized health interventions responsive to community needs.

Contact

bia.coutinho@usp.br

www.fmbru.usp.br

See more about the project