The Development of an Educational Program on Water Sanitation Geared towards the Leaders and Community of the Comarca Ngäbe Buglé, specifically Kusapín, Punta Valiente, and Bahía Azul

The Comarca Ngäbe Buglé is an area to the northwest of Panama that is home to more than half of the country’s indigenous population. Over the years, these areas have suffered many preventable illnesses such as diarrhea and other gastrointestinal diseases due to poverty and inaccessibility to basic health services. In an effort to achieve several Millennium Development Goals and reduce the health disparities, the Pan American Health Organization as well as other agencies has geared their efforts to improving the health of the population. The Joint Program in Governance on Water and Sanitation was established in 2009 in two districts of the Comarca (Kankintu and Kusapín). 9 of 76 communities in the area have benefitted so far. For additional support to 3 of the 9 communities, this project focuses on the development and adaptation of an educational program on water and sanitation for the community as well as community leaders through observations and 30 in-depth interviews in the district of Kusapín (Kusapín, Punta Valiente, and Bahía Azul). In addition, the FOAM method was utilized to look at factors such as opportunity, ability and motivation. Of the three communities, Punta Valiente showed the most promise and Kusapín the least. Overall, opportunity and motivation seem to have been the main obstacles for these communities. However, differences in the three factors, observations and interviews lead to the adaptation of the educational program to meet the needs of each community and interventions proposed to improve the perceptiveness of the population in making the necessary changes to improve their health.