

MIT IDEAS Competition
Final Application
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De Barrio a Playa –Building Future Leaders
barrioplaya@yahoo.com



BACKGROUND

In Santo Domingo, sixty percent of the population lives in informal squatter settlements. Due to the haphazard way these communities form, neighborhoods are extremely crowded and lack adequate sewage and drainage systems. There is often no regulated garbage pick-up, and trash clutters walkways and clogs drainage canals. As a result, residents face immense health risks from exposure to raw sewage and garbage.

Families in Santo Domingo's barrios face serious economic challenges and often struggle to meet basic needs. Children are not offered enriching educational experiences. Youth often lack exposure to areas outside their community. While many children do attend school, they often do so intermittently. There is a lack of resources for enrichment opportunities like after-school programs or summer camps.

Despite the poor environmental conditions in Santo Domingo's barrios, residents do not understand the health impacts created by poor waste disposal and sanitation practices. Nor are they given an opportunity to use their imagination, innate abilities, and available resources to attempt to constructively address those problems and make positive changes in their community.

De Barrio a Playa will start by specifically targeting youth in La Puya, a low-income settlement of 4,000 residents in the north of the city. Children in La Puya, like the youth in other barrios of Santo Domingo, lack opportunities and face specific challenges that are not addressed in the schools.

In spite of the fact that environmental problems of sewage and trash are collective and touch all members of the community, due to mistrust and a lack of community organization, residents have not come together by themselves to solve these problems. The Dominican government, in partnership with the European Union, recently initiated a program in La Puya to address the environmental issues. The program, called SABAMAR, is working to build organizational capacity in marginal neighborhoods and plans to help the community address trash and sanitation problems.

SABAMAR includes students in part of their outreach, and they have laid the groundwork for educating and organizing the youth in La Puya. However, it is outside the scope and funding of the SABAMAR program to provide educational enrichment experiences for youth, such as a fieldtrip or an intensive workshop focused entirely on educating and engaging young people. *De Barrio a Playa* seeks to complement the process initiated by SABAMAR and raise it to the next level.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The workshop will consist of two parts: an outdoor retreat and a local improvement project.

The *first half* of the workshop will consist of a three-day outdoor retreat to the beach or the mountains where participants will engage in leadership and team-building exercises as they learn about environmental issues in both natural and urban settings. Participants will begin to focus on a specific need in their community and potential ways to address it. Activities will include games, sports, arts and crafts, skits and presentations, and discussion/reflection.

Day 1. Orientation and Communication: Orient youth to the objectives of the workshop and help them become confident communicating with each other in a group setting. Activities include:

- Orientation to the purpose of the retreat and introductions.
- Teamwork and communication activities – Trust Fall, Human Knot, etc.
- Discussion of current issues facing the community.
- Lesson on environmental and health impacts of everyday activities in urban communities.

Day 2. Defining Problems: Provide participants with strategies for defining a problem – context, issues, resources, obstacles. Activities include:

- Recap of issues in the community in light of environmental impact lesson.
- Identification of factors that fuel such issues and barriers to potential improvements.
- Identification and inventory of available resources in the community.
- Lesson on simple things that can be done to lessen environmental health impacts.

Day 3. Strategizing: Develop strategies and provide the youth with skills for practical implementation techniques. Activities include:

- Recap inventory of obstacles and resources.
- Discussion of how resources can be used.
- Brainstorming of potential community initiatives.
- Creation and presentation of action plan.

The *second half* of the workshop will take place back in La Puya. Over a three-day period, the youth will design and implement a small-scale community improvement project of their own choosing. They will work together in small groups to address a real, yet manageable problem and will be given guidance and resources to support their efforts. Possible projects might include holding a trash-cleanup day, creating artwork from recycled materials, or painting a mural. The experience would conclude with a presentation to the community and an awards ceremony recognizing workshop participants as Community Leaders.

Day 4. Preparation and Implementation: Prepare and begin to implement community project.

- Purchase/locate materials
- Begin project
- Discussion of day's accomplishments, how to improve next day

Day 5. Action: Continue implementation of community project.

- Set goals for day
- Continue project
- Discussion of day's accomplishments, goals for next day

Day 6. Closing and Community Presentation: Wrap-up, evaluation, and community presentation.

- Finish project
- Discussion of project challenges and successes
- Project evaluation and closing thoughts
- Presentation to community

Example Schedule

Day 2: Defining Problems

7:30-9:00am	Breakfast
9:00-9:30	Strategy Exercise
9:30-10:30	Discussion of community issues
10:30-11:30	Strategy Exercise
11:30-Noon	Discuss potential “barriers” (groups)
Noon-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00-2:00	Group presentations on “barriers”
2:00-3:00	Discussion/Investigation of resources
3:00-3:30	Break, Sports
3:30-4:00	Strategy Exercise
4:00-5:00	Environmental Education Lesson
5:00-6:30	Dinner
6:30-7:00	Activity TBD

Examples of Strategy Exercises:

Magic Carpet Exercise (team work)

Equipment:	Double Bed Sheet/Shower Curtain
Set-up:	Lay sheet flat on ground and get 12-18 participants to stand on it.
Object:	Turn the “Magic Carpet” over without anyone touching the floor or the ground in any way. No one may lift anyone off the sheet at any time.
Processing:	Who had ideas to overcome challenge? Who was the leader of the group? How many different solutions might there be?

Don’t Touch (problem solving)

Equipment:	Empty bottle and paper clip.
Objective:	Place paper clip inside container. The paper clip must be removed without touching the bottle.

Line Ups (communication)

Equipment:	Blindfolds
Objective:	Blindfold group members, then have them line up according to a certain theme WITHOUT TALKING. May use date of birth, age, height, etc. The leader may also assign each participant a number or an animal. With animals, participants must use only their animal sounds to line up.

INNOVATION

De Barrio a Playa is a workshop designed to fill a void in the educational opportunities for young people in La Puya. By providing both a retreat and a community-oriented component, the workshop will be able to provide a focused experience in which the children learn about environmental issues facing their community in addition to a hands-on opportunity to make a contribution to their neighborhood.

De Barrio a Playa is innovative in the following ways:

Combination of Activities

De Barrio a Playa mixes, matches, and crafts ideas for youth education, teamwork, leadership training and community organizing and applies it to a very unique community. We combine 1) outdoor leadership and teambuilding programs, 2) focused urban environmental educational programs and 3) youth innovation programs, and 4) community improvement programs.

Ingredients

1) Leadership and Teambuilding Experience

Several outdoor education programs exist in the United States, such as Outward Bound and the Sierra Club's Inner City Outings. These programs seek to provide a challenging outdoor experience that provides perspective to participants' urban lives.

2) Environmental Education

Many programs, including some outdoor education programs, contain an environmental education component. Environmental education informs students about the importance of the environment and how it affects the daily lives of individuals. Programs such as the The MIT - Cambridge Public Schools Collaboration on Education for the Environment is an excellent example.

3) Youth Innovation Programs

Several programs exist that foster innovation, creativity, and resourcefulness in youth. This type of learning is often integrated into normal public school curriculum through science fairs and inventors contests. The IDEAS competition is one program which encourages student innovation in community service.

4) Community Improvement Programs

Community improvement programs seek to enhance the quality of life of residents through social, physical, and economic interventions. Thousands of community improvement programs exist around the world, including SABAMAR in La Puya.

Workshop Returns to Community

While being influenced by various existing programs, *De Barrio a Playa* is distinct because the workshop returns to the community. The education that children receive at the beach is connected to their daily experiences in their community. The retreat sets the stage for doing

work in the community. The last three days of the workshop are dedicated to implementing a community improvement project in La Puya.

The outdoor education models for our workshop - Sierra Club's Inner City Outings, Outward Bound, etc. - do not have participants return to the community to apply what is learned at home. These programs do not make direct connections from participant experiences in natural settings to the participant experiences in the community. De Barrio a Playa is, therefore, a program that not only reaches individuals, but also the community as well.

Unique in Dominican Republic

Finally, within the context of the Dominican Republic, De Barrio a Playa is especially unique. We are unaware of any other comparable workshops in the Dominican Republic. Even in higher income communities, it is uncommon for Dominican children to go to camp or to be formally instructed in leadership or teambuilding skills.

IMPLEMENTATION

Work to Date

Jean, James and Elizabeth spent three weeks in the neighborhood of La Puya, Santo Domingo, over the Independent Activities Period. During that time, we worked directly with the community we intend to target. We made valuable contacts with local groups and key individuals that have proven crucial to the success and continuation of our project. In the past month we have contacted our partners by email and phone. We have also researched environmental curriculum specific to the Latin American context, and we have investigated successful youth outdoor and leadership programs in order to draw on them for ideas.

Support Network

SABAMAR has committed to working with us on participant selection and on curriculum development. Members of their team will also accompany us on the leadership retreat. We have received commitments of collaboration from Harald Mossbrucker at SABAMAR Headquarters, as well as Rafael Miranda, from the local office in La Puya.

We have also spoken with the director of the local public school, Rudy Carballo at the Escuela Primaria Juan Bosch de La Puya. He welcomes the idea and has made a commitment to find local educators willing to help lead the workshop. We have contacted a local experienced outdoor guide, Ico Ichavarria, with whom we collaborated in January, and he is enthusiastic about leading the retreat portion of the workshop.

Implementation Plan

Leading up to the workshop we will continue to foster relationships with our network of partners. We will finalize the curriculum and request feedback from our community partners and outdoor and environmental education experts on our planned activities.

In June, we will identify possible participants with the help of SABAMAR and the local school and ask them to fill out an application. Applicants will be asked to describe some of the

challenges they see facing their community as well as possible solutions that could be implemented.

In July, we will finalize and notify the participants through SABAMAR. We will also send the final workshop activity schedule to the SABAMAR office.

The workshop will occur in August. Three of our team members will fly to Santo Domingo prior to the workshop to make final arrangements for transportation, etc. as well as to purchase supplies. The workshop will occur over 6 days. At the end of the workshop, we will survey participants and facilitators to evaluate the program and make improvements.

De Barrio a Playa will be implemented as a pilot project in La Puya with the intent to foster interest and institutional knowledge to continue the program in future years. We will work with our partners in Santo Domingo to improve the curriculum in order to hold the same type of workshop next year. We will continue provide support throughout next school year to ensure that the program can be implemented again with even greater success.

De Barrio A Playa Timeline												
	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Building Community Relationships	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Curriculum Development and Finalization	█	█	█	█								
Application Process for Workshop Participants			█									
Application Evaluation and Participant Selection				█								
Workshop Set-Up in Santo Domingo					█							
Workshop: Retreat and Community Project					🌳							
On-Site Program Evaluation					█							
Monitor Impact and Adjust Program for Next Year						█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Provide Support for Community Run Workshop						█	█	█	█	█	█	█

Challenges

Coordination with local groups and planning the workshop without being in-country may pose a challenge. For this reason our team will arrive in Santo Domingo one week in advance to finish planning and tie up loose ends. A second challenge will be working with adolescents who may never have spent time away from their families before. Participants could get homesick or encounter difficulties being in close contact with their peers for a relatively long period of time. However, recognized community members, teachers, and parents will accompany us on the trip to assist should any problems arise. Evaluation of project impact may be difficult, since for this type of project the benefits are more nuanced and usually long term.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Individual Impact

De Barrio a Playa targets a motivated group of youth in La Puya. The workshop will educate and engage participants with the following resources:

Access to the beach

Visitors perceive the Dominican Republic as a country with beautiful beaches and verdant hills. However, the vast majority of children in barrios like La Puya have never even visited the beach. *De Barrio a Playa* will provide an opportunity for students to leave their immediate context and experience their own country's natural resources.

Environmental Education

The children will receive environmental education, a subject that is missing from the curriculum in the local school and often absent from daily practice. In La Puya, trash is discarded on the ground and solid waste is often channeled directly into the river. Throughout the workshop, children will manage their resources and dispose of their waste in a camping environment.

In Day One of the workshop we have included a lesson on the environmental and health impacts of everyday activities in urban communities. In this lesson, we will teach children about the water cycle through an evaporation and condensation exercise. We will also have a module on Day Two, which includes information about how water is delivered to their community and the health risks of drinking it untreated.

Teambuilding Exercises

The children will learn about the power of teamwork and collective action. The workshop intends to demonstrate the value of teamwork and how it can be used to improve community conditions. Through basic activities such as cooking and cleaning, participants will have to work together to succeed.

On Day One of the workshop we will work on teamwork and communication activities, such as the "human knot" and the "trust fall". The youth will continue to rely on teamwork throughout the workshop to plan and implement their community project.

Resourcefulness

The workshop intends to show the kids that their community has a wealth of resources to be uncovered through innovation and resourcefulness. This resourcefulness will allow children to transform what many consider to be challenges into opportunities.

On Day Two, we will ask students to create a piece of art using art supplies. We will then ask them to create a piece of art using the scraps from breakfast. This exercise will start a discussion about what constitutes a resource. We will elicit the idea that many unexpected things in a community can be used as resources with creativity and resourcefulness.

Innovation in effective youth development and community service does not require genius or wealth. We want to show that anyone can be innovative, as long as you find creative ways to use what you have.

The approach of the De Barrio a Playa attempts to use resources that already exist in the community and in the Dominican Republic to affect change in La Puya. This strategy is empowering because it allows the community to re-conceive itself as a place with a wealth of resources that can be used to address community needs. The approach is also feasible, because besides the initial investment, it does not depend on the fickle nature of outside resources and support.

Community Impact

The community of La Puya has experienced a series of failed government-initiated, top-down, infrastructure projects. Just last year, the national housing agency arranged to supply building materials to riverside houses that had been damaged by storms and flooding. The agency planned to solve what seemed to be a simple engineering problem by providing wood and concrete to owners of the most damaged buildings.

When trucks carrying the materials down to the river arrived in the neighborhood, they were blocked by crowds of protesters. The protesters insisted that the materials be distributed to families living in the more established homes located farther from the water, even though the greatest need was by the riverbanks. Negotiations came to an impasse. The trucks turned around and left. No one to this day has received the materials.

Physical interventions will not stand without the social foundation to support them. Through the community's children, *De Barrio a Playa* will help build the social foundation necessary for physical interventions to work.

De Barrio a Playa, believing that children are powerful agents in community development, intends to impact the community in the following ways:

Building Social Capital

Children often have the ability to bring groups of people together who would ordinarily never talk. Building social networks allows residents to organize for change and it also provides access to a larger set of resources. Specific events in the workshop are designed to build these social networks. The Community Presentation at the end of the workshop is not only a way for the children to display their work, but also a method for whole families to assemble and network. A community with a strong social capital network that breaks barriers of geography, class and race represents a strong social foundation for future engineering-based projects.

Building Community Capacity for Youth Programs

The idea of camp is foreign to most La Puya residents: similar programs do not exist in the Dominican Republic. Through bringing SABAMAR representatives and teachers to the workshop, we will build the expertise in the community so that future workshops can be held after we leave. The workshop will provide the initiative and expertise that SABAMAR needs to expand their services into this area of community development.

Providing Environmental Education

Children are an excellent way to disseminate environmental education in the community. They often take the role of educators in the household – especially when many parents are illiterate.

Children will help build the local knowledge base about environmental issues. Subsequently, when an environmental management program intends to enter the community and fix the sewer system, the community will be more prepared and supportive.

Long-Term Impact

The workshop will help build the social foundation in La Puya through youth. This foundation will prepare the community for necessary infrastructure upgrades, such as water filtration systems and separated sewage lines. De Barrio a Playa’s physical impact is a collateral benefit to the programs goals. Participants will implement a project in their neighborhood such as a community garden, new mural, or a recycled art project.

BUDGET

De Barrio A Playa Budget			
Item	Travel Expenses	Cost	
		Start - Up	Annual
1	Air Transport Boston to Santo Domingo, 3 team members, (3 @ \$400)	\$1,200	
2	Lodging in Santo Domingo, 2 weeks, 3 team members (14 nights @ \$30/night)	\$420	
3	In-town travel for team leaders (\$10 per day for 14 days)		\$140
	Total: Travel	\$1,620	\$140
	Retreat Supplies		
1	Transportation, to and from retreat site (2 mini-buses @ \$150)		\$300
2	Sleeping tents, 3 Large (3 @ \$40)	\$120	
3	Food for 25 participants, 3 days (3 days @ \$150/day)		\$450
4	Cooking supplies	\$40	
5	Safety kits, flashlights, insect repellent, misc. outdoor necessities	\$50	
6	Game and sports equipment	\$60	
7	Educational materials: handouts, books, folders, photocopies		\$60
	Total: Retreat Supplies	\$270	\$810
	Community Activity Supplies		
1	Lunch, 25 participants, 3 days (3 days @ \$50/day)		\$150
2	Disposable cameras and film development (5 cameras)		\$75
3	Art supplies: paper, crayons, paint, pens, pencils, markers, tape, glue		\$75
4	Community improvement project supplies: cement, paint and brushes, shovels, gloves, trash receptacles (depends on idea)	\$80	
5	Group t-shirt (or other item) for all participants (25 @ \$6)		\$150
	Total: Community Activity Supplies	\$80	\$450
	Communications		
1	Project Prep: Phone calls to Dominican partners (300 minutes @ .10)		\$30
2	Project Implementation: Phone calls in-country		\$30
	Total: Communications		\$60
	Total Type Cost	\$1,970	\$1,460
	Total Project Cost		\$3,430

Note: Many of the requested materials, including camping gear, sports equipment and art supplies, can form the basis of a Workshop Toolkit that can be used on future occasions or can be donated to local community groups. We also intend to purchase as many of our materials as possible in-country, which may reduce the cost of many of the items and would support the local economy.