

The Double Burden of Malnutrition in El Alto, Bolivia

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The double burden of malnutrition (DBM), defined as the simultaneous manifestation of both undernutrition and overweight/obesity, is much more common within lower socio-economic classes and areas that are more rural. Obesity is on the rise in these communities secondary to changes in the food system; particularly the availability of cheap ultra-processed food and beverages and major reductions in physical activity at work, transportation, home, and even leisure due to the introduction of activity-saving technologies. When looking at the methods from other countries who have had success in combating childhood obesity it is found that environmental factors greatly increase the rate of obesity and yet it is perpetuated by a lack of nutritional knowledge. In a study, conducted prior to this project in Bolivia, outreach was offered to rural communities in the form of classes with nutritional health as the outline and ways to achieve this goal. These classes were very well received with over 90% participation of the community. With this information, the program first conducted an in depth literature review and laid groundwork for what proper nutrition for a child looks like: correct food groups, smaller portions, “good fats,” how to reduce the overall caloric intake etc. There exists significant want and need from these families and communities to improve nutrition, so user friendly content such as healthy menu options, information about the double burden of malnutrition, and sustainable development goals were developed for an outreach app, that is currently being created to help bring easily accessible information to Bolivian communities. Throughout the project cultural humility and intercultural communication was also thoroughly practiced by applying the knowledge of how the United States and other countries have combated childhood obesity while simultaneously learning and working with differences in cultural values, preferences and food availabilities and maintaining a healthy respect for the culture and not attempting to implement my own values and preferences.