

## FORSKNINGSRAPPORT - ABSTRACTS 2019

### Health promoting ideas and actions generated by community engagement in an underserved Swedish area

#### *Medverkande i forskargruppen*

M Magnusson, 1 – 2, HB Forslund, 3, C Berg, 6, K Wretling, 4, M Hallmyr, 1, C Hedström, 1, LM Vaughn, 5

**Introduction:** For an intervention to contribute to decreased health gaps, people living in underserved areas must participate in the research-to-action process during the development of the intervention. Methods for increased engagement and participation have been developed within the community-based participatory research (CBPR) paradigm. Group Level Assessment (GLA) is a qualitative, participatory methodology that is designed for a large group to generate and evaluate relevant needs and priorities within a lens of action for positive social change. Influence of researchers is tuned down in favour of partnership and impact from the community. Ideally, the process results in participant-driven data and relevant action plans.

**Aim:** The aim was to apply GLA to generate reflections on the situation in the community, aligning towards action for change.

**Methods:** We applied GLA together with people living in Gårdsten, an underserved Swedish suburb where obesity, caries and other illnesses are prevalent. Residents were recruited by posters and post cards at a community center and by snowball sampling. In total, 47 residents attended at least one of eight GLA sessions held over a five-month time period. The majority were women. Outcomes were reflections, suggestions and actions for change.

**Results:** Themes were: resident pride of the area, the importance of communication and of places to meet, a feeling of being abandoned by society, and a desire for more collaboration between schools and parents. Immediate results were a language café and inquiries from the community about information regarding teeth, food and health. When the results were presented for stakeholders in a report and an exhibition, new collaborations were founded and old were refreshed.

**Conclusions:** GLA helped residents identify what they thought valuable and relevant concerning health issues and supported them in taking actions to achieve change.

**Message 1:** Participatory processes that directly engage community residents can result in fruitful discussions and actions.

**Message 2:** Methodologies like GLA that support such processes may contribute to closing the health gap.