

[F11800] Improving the expertise and skills of health-care workers of a prevention and treatment Project on STD/AIDS for underserved communities, in Rio de Janeiro (RJ), Brazil

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Issues: HIV/AIDS has been spreading vigorously to persons with low educational level, unemployed and/or engaged in low-paying jobs, most of them living in deprived communities. Two national programs: The Community Health Agents Program (PACS) and the Family Health Program (PSF) have been strategic in the reform of the National Health System (SUS) and are considered top priorities by the Brazilian Government. These programs underscore the importance of the family and the community, fostering active participation in disease prevention and health promotion, thereby enhancing people's ability to take care of their own health and to adopt safer behaviors. **Description:** The project, funded by the World Aids Foundation, aims to improve, through education and training, the expertise and practical skills of health care workers from PACS/PSF. Families and communities are mobilized through the active participation of communitary agents and staff from PACS/PSF, improving prevention and treatment of STDs/AIDS in Rio's impoverished outskirts - Baixada Fluminense. As of December 2001, 182 community health agents and 74 PSF physicians and nurses from key municipalities of RJ State have been trained. **Lessons learned:** The training process has been promoting and facilitating integration of STD/AIDS local Programs and Family Health and Community Health Agents local teams. This integration will certainly result in additional benefits, such as an improved management of STD and better prevention of HIV and major sexually transmitted/blood-borne infections. Training activities have been pivotal in the definition of a common agenda with PACS/PSF, updating information on STD/HIV/AIDS and improving practical skills of trainees. **Recommendations:** Such initiatives should be carefully evaluated and extended to other municipalities, using mobile teams and long-distance audiovisual resources to reach remote areas/marginalized communities most in need of support.

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