

Abstract

MOPE0850 - Addressing sexuality, gender and vulnerability to sexuality transmitted infections in a detention centre in Brazil: using research to influence policy and practice

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Issues: FEBEM-São Paulo, the state-run institution for the re-socialisation of young men and women under the age of 21, has jurisdiction of 20,000 young people; 6,800 of which are kept under lock full-time. Previous research has shown that young male detainees (94% of the population) had higher prevalences of STIs/HIV and other risk-taking behaviours compared to their same-aged peers. Despite this fact, preventive programmes have had low coverage and wavering institutional support.

Description: The aim of this research was to use the results of a well-designed needs assessment for the development of an institutionally-supported intervention to reduce sexual vulnerability. Three related sub-studies were carried out using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Researchers conducted 21 in-depth interviews with young men and detainees; 15 in-depth interviews with family members, girlfriends and social workers; 1 FGD with young women; 4 FGDs and a KAP survey (N=166) with staff members; and 35 semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in government, academia and civil society.

Lessons learned: Sexual activity within the institution is not talked about. Although staff have high levels of STI/HIV transmission knowledge (>90%), the structural factors to put this knowledge into practice are clearly missing, i.e. institutional guidelines on staff training and activities with young people, access to condoms, and guidelines for referral to sexual health services. Interviews with young men from female-headed households showed that they are alone when it comes to finding out about sex and preventing STIs. Stakeholders are divided along moral lines with some disregarding the expression of sexuality as a basic human right of young people within FEBEM.

Recommendations: Multiple and interlinking public health interventions are needed in order to positively influence public policy, institutional practices, community norms and young people's behaviours. Preliminary results will be reiterated with research partners and stakeholders before making concrete recommendations to FEBEM.