

Forum: social intervention, youth, and sexual health

In recent decades one of the most visible facets in the youth issue has been the formulation and development, by public agencies and organized civil society, of various social programs and services targeting low-income youth in the fields of health, work, culture, and leisure. However, the educational practices and effects of these actions are largely unknown. With the objective of providing support for the implementation and evaluation of social programs for low-income youth, the Ford Foundation supported research in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and Bogotá and Cali, Colombia, concerning the repercussions that such social interventions have on young people's lives and the theoretical and methodological basis for these educational actions. Despite their specificities, the common thread in the studies is the use of qualitative methodologies in the analysis of the social groups' cultural manifestations and material living conditions in the two countries.

The article by Simone Monteiro & Fátima Cecchetto, from the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz, analyzes perceptions by low-income youth in Rio de Janeiro concerning the effects of social programs on their life histories. The authors examine the views, practices, and living conditions of youth who participate in programs for vocational training and promotion of citizenship as compared to those who do not participate in such programs. The article highlights the repercussions of such actions on young people's concepts related to health and AIDS, indicators of social mobility and professional training, and formation of social networks, including the gender perspective.

Mara Viveros-Vigoya & Franklin Gil Hernández from the Universidad Nacional de Colombia analyze the roles and views of individuals in charge of social interventions in the sexual and reproductive area and targeting Colombian youth. The study discusses the national and international historical context for developing such interventions. The authors also analyze the scope and problems faced by professionals conducting such activities as a function of the programs' institutional characteristics, the local political scenario, the country's juvenile legislation, and the different agents involved in socialization of youth (clergy and teachers).

The paper by Fernando Urrea-Giraldo et al. of Universidad del Valle complements the discussion on social interventions in Colombia presented by Viveros-Vigoya & Hernández. The authors focus on sexual behaviors, the adoption of contraceptive methods, and STD/AIDS prevention and the use of sexual and reproductive health services by low-income secondary students as compared to university students, with a mean age of 16 and 19 years, respectively. The data are analyzed according to class, gender, and skin color.

The studies as a whole point to advances and dilemmas in interventions among the low-income young urban population, stimulating the discussion on the impact of social programs and services for reducing social, racial, and gender inequalities. The analyses aim to contribute to the development of indicators for a qualitative evaluation protocol in the area of sexual and reproductive health that is capable of orienting the development of social programs in Latin America.

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