

## **Promoting condom access to young males in Brazilian favelas**

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**Issues:** Young men in Brazilian favelas have limited access to condoms and are often reluctant to visit public health clinics to request condoms and HIV/AIDS services, such as counseling and testing. Promoting access to condoms and behavioral change programs in these low-income communities should be a priority for HIV prevention. Young men ages 13-24 represent 7.85% of the number of people officially reported with AIDS in Brazil.

**Description:** John Snow Brasil, SSL-International, and PROMUNDO have been involved in expanding condom accessibility to youth since 1998. In 2001, JSB and SSL launched a condom accessibility project in three Brazilian favelas. In response to the needs expressed by the youth after qualitative research, the project developed a youth oriented condom brand, Hora H. Project activities include developing a gender-equitable lifestyle promotion campaign, promoting peer education and building project sustainability from condom sales. During the first year of the project, an evaluation study done in collaboration with Horizons found that, from a sample of 231 young men in one favela, 22.7% indicated that they have used a Hora H condom (from 1.9% at baseline). Overall, 29.4% of these young men indicated that it was the only condom available in their community.

**Lessons Learned:** This project shows the importance of youth taking the lead in promoting accessibility of condoms in favelas. They cannot depend only on public and private interventions. Also, programmatic activities can be better developed in collaboration with local youth organizations.

**Recommendations:** Clear policies are needed for engaging young populations in condom distribution and promotion in favelas. Accessibility should not be limited to public health clinics and private distribution at traditional outlets. Technical support from young men can also help them to improve community leadership and build employable skills.