

81. Training immigrant peer researchers for CBPR on HIV/AIDS in Germany

Background:

Immigrant groups from African, Central and Eastern European countries are disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS in Germany. To date, these groups and their communities are only marginally involved in HIV prevention and research. Community-based participatory research (CBPR) provides a valuable tool for building capacity and enabling immigrant communities to create knowledge for HIV prevention and health promotion in their communities.

Methods:

The PaKoMi-Project is a 3-year participatory research project funded by the German Ministry of Health which aims to improve the involvement of immigrant communities in HIV research and prevention services. It is conducted by the national association of community-based AIDS service organisations (Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe e.V.) in collaboration with partners from different immigrant communities, AIDS service providers and researchers from the Social Science Research Center Berlin (WZB). Community members were trained as peer researchers and supported to conduct CBPR-projects in four cities.

Findings:

Four CBPR-projects were conducted:

1. a community-based survey of HIV-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviour among urban African immigrants;
2. a qualitative study on community building and health in a more rural African immigrant community;
3. internet-based research with immigrant men who have sex with men (MSM), and
4. expert interviews with Turkish- and Russian-speaking community leaders in Berlin.

The findings helped improve community building, health promotion and HIV prevention services in the respective immigrant communities. Factors that influenced community involvement were analysed across the four CBPR projects. These include language and communication, financial reimbursements, HIV-related stigmatization, racism/discrimination, (inter) cultural and socioeconomic factors, and the relationships between immigrant communities and the service providers.

Conclusions:

Members from different immigrant communities used the opportunity to be trained for CBPR in their communities. They conducted CBPR projects tailored to the needs of their communities and conceptualized HIV prevention in the broader context of health promotion. Suggestions are made for involving immigrant communities in participatory HIV prevention research and services.