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Activists Want Brazil Government to Drop Proposed New AIDS Funding Rule

Brazilian activists have sounded an alarm over a plan by the government to introduce a new law that will have a negative impact on funding for HIV programmes. The activists said in a statement released on 26 October 2012 that the Ministry of Health is about to publish a decree that will allow states and municipalities to reallocate funding that was originally earmarked exclusively for HIV programmes but that was unspent either because of inefficiency or lack of commitment.

The activists said that to worsen matters, the Brazilian government has also issued a new decree stating that its so-called "incentives policy," which earmarks amounts of the general health budget to specific programmes, will be terminated in 2013.

"If approved, this new rule will mean the final blow to the Brazilian AIDS policy, as we have known it," the statement from activists said.

Some HIV funds have been kept in the coffers of states and municipalities across the country without being utilised. In August 2012, the amount of these funds was around 135 million reais (\$70 million).

The argument of the activists against the impending policy is this: If the funds transferred via the incentive policy were not properly used even when they were earmarked, it is difficult to believe that once the earmarks are lifted local public health managers will prioritise HIV programmes. Furthermore, the activists say, the new policy will make it difficult for civil society to monitor the use of public health resources.

The activists said that the Brazilian government has lost interest in the fight against AIDS. One of the reasons this concerns activists is that the Global Fund is scaling down its programmes in the country.

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