AIDS Crisis and Brazil
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Summary

The response to the AIDS crisis in Brazil has been the focus of significant attention around the world—both as a model of social mobilization that other countries might follow and as an example of the difficulty of sustaining mobilization without necessary political support. It is possible to identify at least four reasonably distinct phases in the Brazilian response to HIV and AIDS, beginning in 1983 (when the first case of AIDS in Brazil was officially reported) and running through mid-2019. An initial phase, lasting roughly a decade, from 1983 to 1992, was marked by significant conflicts between activists from affected communities and government officials, but precisely because of the broader political context of re-democratization was also the period in which many of the key ethical and political principles were elaborated that would come to provide a foundation for the Brazilian response to the epidemic thereafter. A second phase ran from 1993 to roughly the beginning of the new millennium, when these ethical and political principles were put into practice in the construction of a full-blown and highly successful national program for the prevention and control of the epidemic. During the third phase, from 2001 to 2010, the response to the epidemic increasingly became part of Brazilian foreign policy in ways that had important impacts on the global response to the epidemic. Finally, a fourth phase, from 2011 to late 2019, has been marked by the gradual dismantling of the Brazilian response to the epidemic, at first through relatively unplanned omissions on the part of the federal government, and then through a very conscious set of policy decisions aimed at deprioritizing the strategic importance of HIV- and AIDS-related public health issues in Brazil.

Keywords: AIDS, re-democratization, social movements, activism, human rights, World Bank loans, treatment access, foreign policy, intellectual property

Subjects: History of Brazil, Science, Technology, and Health

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