

PUBLIC HEALTH, PRECARIOUS AND INADEQUATE

Policy Brief VI.6

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VI.6.1 Introduction

Health in Maré is precarious, there are few establishments that provide services to the population. The Emergency Unit (UPA) provides care in simple cases, and complex ones are rendered over the Bonsucesso General Hospital, that can barely meet the demand of its own neighborhood. There are in Maré two family clinics and some health centers, both kinds modest and insufficient for a population of 136,000 people.

The emergency units (UPA) devised to complement the public health structures should count at least with 7 beds and care for 250 people per day, according to the law. In Maré's UPA, there are three beds and the service does not meet the minimum needs of the residents.

Residents have proposed the installation of more health facilities, expanding and improving the services that are already provided by health posts, family clinics and the UPA. It is also necessary to diversify the types of health care that function throughout the territory of the set of slums of the Maré.

According to one respondent, the Maré health system improved since the creation of the Maré 1994 quarter:

"Well, certainly, with the creation of the Maré 1994 quarter and the implementation of municipal and State apparatus in Maré, the health system has improved, because before we only had, as I remember, the Leo XIII foundation there in New Holland, I don't know if it exists anymore, and the SESI that is there between the Morro do Timbau and the Salsa e Merengue. They were the only two at the time here in Maré, which would be closer to a federal hospital that we had. With the creation of the Neighborhood Maré 1994 and the entry of State and Municipality elements, we have a health center in almost every street corner. So the health services had improved a lot. Health itself, in relation to technology and research, has improved also, so I say that Maré, today, has passed that precarious health services, has improved greatly." (Rogerio Santos, a resident of Maré).

Residents indicated that the health care varies in each location of Maré. Depending on the type of service, it is only offered in one of the Maré slums and, in some cases, as

there are specific treatments, and regionalized by the Family Clinics, services only meet the demand of the residents of one the slums of neighborhood, using as criteria their place of residence. For example, Vila dos Pinheiros clinical family only serves residents of this site, excluding residents of other localities of Maré.

Another interesting issue to be mentioned is that the expansion of the health service, although insufficient, occurred based on the construction of buildings that diminished the few recreational areas of the neighborhood. There was the recent creation of a Family Clinic in Pinheiro who was settled on the bike path, on two soccer fields, and over some volleyball courts that existed in the locality.

Such creations of new family clinics and health centers should be settled in a number of existing empty warehouses, in Maré's own area of, abandoned for decades.

Residents manifested that the State government should not expand health services - although they are already extremely precarious in the neighborhood - if this is accomplished by destroying other recreational equipment which are also not enough.

Basic sanitation

Whenever asked about health in their territory, residents mentioned it is impossible to talk about health without mentioning sanitation. Although there has been significant improvement compared with the past, especially after the Favela-Bairro project, when a leap in quality occurred, sanitation needs attention and improvement. If we think of the site at the time of its creation, in the period of stilts houses, when unhealthiness was huge in the region, there is now a new panorama.

There are areas where basic sanitation exists, where there are no open sewers, with minimally paved roads, with drinking water coming to the homes. But if we analyze the neighborhood as a whole, we will find some slums that really need infrastructure. They live in extremely poor conditions, with open sewage, animal proliferation, insects that transmit a number of diseases and scarce access to water. There is an unequal distribution of infrastructure between the slums of the neighborhood. The farther from the expressways and more internalized the localities are, they receive smaller investments and have worst living conditions.

It is not enough to expand the health system. It is necessary to invest in infrastructure in Maré as a whole. Residents said it is important not to focus only on the construction of new care services, because the notion of health posts required by the inhabitants not only involves the necessary creation of new facilities, but also the minimum guarantee of a decent basic sanitation for the population.

VI.6.2. Policy Recommendations:

- Expansion and development of the local health system, encompassing the creation of more health facilities, expansion and diversification of services already rendered;
- Universalization of medical care provided in the neighborhood. Dissemination of specialties in equal measure in all local health units;
- Sewage treatment, improvements in the overall infrastructure of the neighborhood, more frequent garbage collection;
- Paving of all streets, universalization of water distribution in the neighborhood.