



*DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program
Status Report
May 2003 to September 2004*

Cameroon



BACKGROUND

Introduction/General Information

The population of Cameroon is estimated at 16.1 million people, with an average life expectancy of 48 years. English and French are both official languages. The literacy rate in Cameroon is estimated at 79%. Cameroon is described as a developing nation with significant oil reserves and favorable conditions for agriculture. The primary sectors of the Cameroonian economy are agriculture, industry, and service. The annual per capita income average is \$1,800.

Country HIV/AIDS Statistics and Risk Factors

HIV/AIDS prevalence in Cameroon is estimated to be 6.9% of the population, affecting roughly 560,000 people; these cases are equally distributed between males and females. Identified significant risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners and lack of adequate care and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Military HIV/AIDS Information

The Cameroonian Armed Forces (CAF) is estimated at 27,000 active-duty personnel. Because the CAF has not performed forcewide HIV testing since 1996, current prevalence rates are unavailable. However, a 2002 Johns Hopkins University HIV prevalences study of a sample of CAF uniformed services personnel revealed a prevalence rate of 9.8%.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

The CAF expended continued effort in the implementation of their HIV/AIDS prevention plan, which included objectives in behavior change, STI management, HIV infection and opportunistic infection management, training for military medical personnel, and sentinel surveillance to determine the prevalence of STIs within the CAF.

The plan included an intense behavioral change component, based in training designed to increase awareness of STIs while concomitantly reducing risky behaviors.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military-to-Military

The CAF was approved for Foreign Military Financing grant funds to procure HIV screening and diagnosis equipment; formal mechanisms for receipt and disbursement of these funds are in progress by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency and the Navy International Programs Office.

Contractor-Based Assistance

Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland was awarded a contract for work with the CAF, including HIV prevention curriculum development, implementation of on-site educational and training programs for service members, establishing a Counseling and Testing (CT) program, and improved HIV surveillance and treatment.



DHAPP-sponsored Johns Hopkins University consultants formed a local team that continues the fight against HIV/AIDS in the CAF.

The project was begun by determining seroprevalence rates for representative samples of CAF personnel through the use of serological surveys in all military garrisons. In addition, a peer educator training program was created, and military units participated in monthly health education meetings and were given access to HIV/AIDS/STI information centers located in 10 military garrisons nationwide. A media campaign of HIV/AIDS prevention messages was also conducted throughout the military that entailed distribution of pamphlets, brochures, posters, educational aids and guides, and production of a quarterly HIV/AIDS prevention program bulletin.

Clinical Provider Training

A HIV training grant from the *John E. Fogarty International Center for Advanced Study in the Health Science* provided support for a Cameroon Family Practice physician in a fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. This training included lectures and teaching rounds in the CAF medical facilities. As a result of this fellowship, 48 medical personnel in Cameroon have since been trained in STI management and treatment.

Interoperability

None during this reporting period.

PROGRAM IMPACT

In Cameroon, all four pillars of the DHAPP program were supported. The vigorous program initiated with Johns Hopkins University and ongoing involvement through military-to-military efforts helped maintain focus on HIV/AIDS prevention in the CAF.

Master Trainers and Peer Educators

The program trained 951 peer educators, 51 CT counselors, and 48 medical personnel in STI management and treatment.

Number of Troops Trained

The numbers trained among the military, police, and prison wardens totaled 35,450.

Potential Number of Troops Affected

The total number of troops that can be reached is 55,845, which includes military, police and prison wardens.

Counseling and Testing (CT)

DHAPP opened 6 CT centers and trained 51 counselors. Each center provided information, counseling, and testing rooms; TV, VCR, and educational tapes; HIV prevention pamphlets and posters from a variety of sources; 2 permanent staff for each center (a counselor and a laboratory technician); and additional counselors on part-time rotation.



Training CT counselors and peer educators continues with DHAPP support.

Laboratory Capability/Infrastructure

Laboratory capabilities were established as part of the CT centers. In addition, one laboratory technician has been trained for each CT center.

Mass Awareness

DHAPP provided funds to Johns Hopkins University to conduct a mass awareness education campaign designed to reach military troops in Cameroon. This multi-faceted campaign involved the distribution of pamphlets, posters, bulletins, and other materials to spread the message of HIV prevention.