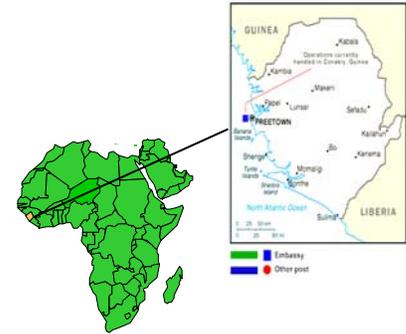




*DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program
Status Report
May 2003 to September 2004*

Sierra Leone



BACKGROUND

Introduction/General Information

The population of Sierra Leone is estimated to be 5.88 million people, with a life expectancy of 42.7 years. English is the official language in Sierra Leone, which has an in-country literacy rate estimated to be 31.4%, distributed disproportionately between males and females. Sierra Leone is described as an extremely poor nation, even by sub-Saharan African standards, since a long civil war and ongoing social disorder preclude development. The annual per capita income estimate is \$500.

Country HIV/AIDS Statistics and Risk Factors

Sierra Leone has an estimated prevalence rate of 4.7% of the adult population with either HIV infection or AIDS. Estimates for the number of people believed to be living with AIDS is 170,000. Identified significant risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners and commercial sex workers.

Military HIV/AIDS Information

There are no reliable estimates available for the size of military forces in Sierra Leone, and the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) has not performed forcewide testing of personnel, making prevalence rates unavailable. It is believed HIV prevalence rates within the military population are higher than the national average.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

Sierra Leone requested funding and logistical assistance with a plan entitled *Strategies to Control and Reduce the Rapid Spread of HIV Infections and AIDS Within the Sierra Leone Army*, including the following objectives:

- Expanding laboratory facilities at all 34 military hospitals,
- Screening at least 60% of all military personnel for HIV,
- Training laboratory assistants, technicians, nurses, and health educators,
- Developing a screening program that includes prevention education, and
- Providing print and electronic training materials.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military to Military

DHAPP provided funding to support the RSLAF HIV/AIDS prevention proposal. The RSLAF conducted monthly regional training seminars for all RSLAF units deployed in the field. Additional funds were provided to establish counseling and testing (CT) centers, produce educational materials, and to hire a Foreign Service National to staff the HIV/AIDS prevention effort in the Office of Defense Cooperation in the American Embassy.

Contractor-Based Assistance

None during this reporting period.

Clinical Provider Training

DHAPP funded an RSLAF physician to attend the 4-week *Military International HIV Training Program* in San Diego, California, in the summer of 2003.

Interoperability

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention continued efforts to establish a Global AIDS Program Office in Freetown.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Master Trainers and Peer Educators

More than 35 peer educators have been trained and have received refresher courses in HIV/AIDS prevention and peer advocacy.



An article in the August 2004 RSLAF newsletter, *The Torch*, summarizes an HIV/AIDS prevention train-the-trainer workshop held at the Armed Forces Educational Center, Wiberforce Barracks.

Number of Troops Trained

To date, 1,572 RSLAF troops have received HIV/AIDS prevention training.

Potential Number of Troops Affected

The entire RSLAF force has the potential to be reached by the proposed prevention efforts;

however, the total force numbers are presently unknown.

Counseling and Testing (CT)

A total of 2749 RSLAF troops and their dependents have received HIV testing and counseling to date. Over 770,000 condoms have been distributed among 23 clinic sites throughout the RSLAF Military bases.

Laboratory Capability/Infrastructure

The RSLAF lab is equipped for rapid response HIV test kits and has a DHAPP-sponsored trained full-time laboratory technician.

Mass Awareness

DHAPP-sponsored mass awareness activities are among the primary focuses in the RSLAF HIV prevention efforts. Music and dramas play significant roles. For example, 5,000 music cassettes and 30 CDs featuring HIV/AIDS songs have been produced with DHAPP funding and 15 drama scripts have been completed. 4 road shows have been conducted. Several public concerts, including a major production in Freetown attended by the President of Sierra Leone, the American Ambassador, and senior RSLAF military leaders, helped deliver the HIV/AIDS prevention message to large audiences of RSLAF troops, their families, and the civilian community. Additionally, 25 billboards and 7000 calendars with HIV awareness messages have been displayed and distributed.



The DHAPP-sponsored *Steady Bongo Tour* is a nationwide series of concerts designed to increase awareness among servicemen and women about the threat of HIV/AIDS.