



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

*Vietnam*



## **BACKGROUND**

### **Introduction/General Information**

The population of Vietnam is estimated at 82.7 million people, with an average life expectancy of 70 years. Vietnamese is the official language, and the literacy rate is estimated at 94%. Vietnam is a poor, densely populated country that has had difficulty recovering from the ravages of war, the loss of financial support from the Soviet Bloc, and the rigidities of a centrally managed economy. The average annual per capita income is \$2,500.

### **Country HIV/AIDS Statistics and Risk Factors**

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Vietnam is estimated at 0.3% of the general population, with 130,000-170,000 people estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. Most infections are confined to 2 high-risk groups: intravenous drug users and commercial sex workers. The HIV epidemic is concentrated in people under age 30. In general, population sub-sets with increased HIV prevalence include military recruits. About 65% of HIV infections in Vietnam are attributed to injection drug use.

### **Military HIV/AIDS Information**

The Vietnam Armed Forces are estimated at approximately 13.6 million. HIV prevalence

rates are estimated at about 0.64% among military recruits.

## **PROPOSED PROGRAM**

In April 2003, the Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (COE) submitted a plan to DHAPP titled *HIV/AIDS Prevention Education and Training Program for the Vietnamese Military*. Key provisions of that plan included:

- Developing a strategy to increase capability of the Vietnamese military in infection reduction, awareness, and prevention,
- Identifying in-country resources (budgetary, policy, advocacy),
- Strengthening communication between military and civilian medical leadership,
- Developing a comprehensive HIV/AIDS curriculum for the military to include:
  - HIV diagnostic techniques,
  - Behavior change communication (BCC), and
  - Policy development,
- Developing train-the-trainer workshops, and
- Building a human resource capacity for the Vietnamese to address HIV/AIDS effectively.

which also supports a continuum of care approach.

## **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

### **Military to Military**

In December 2003, the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), COE, and Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) military entered into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to establish a formal relationship and implement an HIV/AIDS prevention strategy. Projects identified included:

- Establishing an HIV/AIDS laboratory at the Military Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (MIHE),
- Developing HIV/AIDS prevention education materials,
- Training military medical personnel about HIV/AIDS,
- Training medical personnel in BCC and counseling,
- Training physicians and laboratory technicians in diagnostic skills, and
- Training in epidemiology and virology for primary care physicians.

Through DHAPP funding, USPACOM/COE and the MIHE co-sponsored a 4-day *HIV/AIDS Policy and Strategic Planning Workshop* in April 2004 attended by 120 Vietnamese military officials. This workshop marked the first forum for the Vietnamese and US military targeting HIV/AIDS prevention. It provided senior military medical leadership with awareness of HIV/AIDS issues, policy planning and development tools, and “best practices” for HIV/AIDS prevention in the military.

The *HIV/AIDS Communication Education and Counseling Workshop* was held 28–30 September 2004 at Military Hospital 175 in Ho Chi Minh City. More than 80 military medical officers as well as local dignitaries, including the US Consul General, attended. This workshop introduced effective communication and counseling skills useful for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS,



Senior Vietnamese military medical officers discuss HIV/AIDS policy issues during a DHAPP-sponsored workshop led by COE.

### **Contractor-Based Assistance**

None during this reporting period.

### **Clinical Provider Training**

None during this reporting period.

### **Interoperability**

The DHAPP-sponsored workshop led by COE in April 2004 was the first forum in which international organizations and other US government agencies were provided access to and interacted with the Vietnamese military. Among these agencies were the University of Hawaii, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Program, and Family Health International.

### **PEPFAR**

Vietnam was selected in June 2004 as the 15th focus country to receive assistance under the *President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief* (PEPFAR), which was

announced in the 2003 State of the Union Address to the Congress. DHAPP has identified DoD representation on the Core Country Team to assist with planning military support under the country operating plan (COP).

## **PROGRAM IMPACT**

As a result of the *Asia Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Technical Training Workshop* in Bangkok, Thailand, 9-12 September 2003, the Vice Director of the Military Center for HIV/AIDS Prevention created an HIV/AIDS educational media room at MIHE as well as designed, produced, and distributed prevention brochures and materials throughout the Vietnamese military.

### **Master Trainers and Peer Educators**

None during this reporting period.

### **Number of Troops Trained**

More than 120 senior Vietnamese military medical personnel attended the training workshop.

### **Potential Number of Troops Affected**

The entire Vietnamese military has the potential to be reached by the proposed HIV/AIDS prevention program.

### **Counseling and Testing (CT)**

An HIV/AIDS Communication Education and Counseling Workshop was held in Ho Chi Minh City, 28 – 30 September 2004 and included representatives from the SVN, COE, PACOM, AFRIMS and DHAPP.

### **Laboratory Capability/Infrastructure**

In August 2004, a group of consultants assessed the clinical laboratory at the MIHE facility. The group generated the scope of work needed to enhance MIHE laboratory capacity, including construction and

equipment upgrades, which will be funded by DHAPP.



A laboratory consultant discusses plans to upgrade the MIHE HIV/AIDS Central Laboratory during August 2004 site visit.



Scene from the HIV/AIDS Central Laboratory, MIHE, during consultants' site visit, August 2004.

### **Mass Awareness**

None during this reporting period.