

BENIN

DHAPP

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HIV/AIDS
PREVENTION PROGRAM

REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF HIV/AIDS
AMONG UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN
SELECTED AFRICAN NATIONS AND BEYOND

WINNING BATTLES IN THE WAR AGAINST HIV/AIDS

BACKGROUND

Country Statistics

The population of Benin is estimated at 7.5 million people, with an average life expectancy of 50.5 years. French is the official language, and the in-country literacy rate is estimated at 33.6%, distributed unevenly between men and women. The economy of Benin is concentrated primarily in agriculture and services, with an annual per capital income of \$1,200.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 1.9%. Benin has an estimated 68,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Identified risk factors include early initiation of sexual activity, poverty, illiteracy, gender status disparity, and lack of treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Eighty-two percent of HIV/AIDS infections in Benin occur through heterosexual contact; mother-to-child transmission is also an important mode. Although prevalence is relatively low compared with other African countries, HIV is spreading steadily among young adults and other vulnerable populations.



Military Statistics

The size of the armed forces is approximately 7500. A surveillance study conducted in July 2005 based on 893 blood samples revealed that the HIV prevalence rate in the Benin Armed Forces (BAF) is 2.02%, very similar to the national rate.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

In 2005, DHAPP provided funds to establish a subcontract with Population Services Inter-

national (PSI)-Benin to support a multitude of activities, including trainings, workshops, sensitization activities, testing, the purchase of rapid test reagents, a survey, library materials, labor, travel, and costs associated with HIV/AIDS prevention and care.

Proposed Future Activities

A proposal was received on behalf of the military of Benin for the 2006 fiscal year. The overall goal of the proposed project is to increase responsible health behavior among BAF members. Specific objectives include improving the information, education, and communication program, improving the HIV surveillance system, improving the STI management program, improving psychosocial support for people living with HIV/AIDS, conducting a behavioral surveillance survey, performing monitoring and evaluation, establishing a condom distribution program, and expanding counseling and testing (CT) services and laboratory diagnostic capabilities.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

During FY05, the BAF continued its commitment to prevention messages with a comprehensive overview. One hundred and forty-six troops were reached through these community outreach efforts at comprehensive prevention (74 women, 72 men). Ninety-one soldiers were trained to provide this message to peers, and 48 condom service outlets were supported. All condom service outlets were managed by decentralized units, and were provided with condoms throughout the period. These decentralized units include 250 peer



educators, who will receive follow-up training in FY06. Two service outlets providing prevention of mother-to-child transmission provided services to military members and their families. During FY05, 711 pregnant women received PMTCT services, and 31 women received a course of antiretroviral therapy (ART). Finally, 30 military health personnel were trained on the use of HIV rapid test kits, with a focus on injection safety.

An important achievement in the BAF includes the completion of a behavioral and serological survey. Analysis of the serological data activity was conducted in July 2005 and managed by a team composed of 3 laboratory technicians. Overall, 893 blood samples have been tested at the CT laboratory based in the military hospital. Brief analysis of the data revealed that HIV prevalence rate in BAF is 2.02%, very similar to the national rate of 2%.

Care

During FY05, 1 outlet provided generalized palliative care for military patients with HIV/AIDS. During the year, 7 troops received care at these outlets.

Counseling and Testing

One service outlet provided counseling and testing (CT) for military members. During FY05, 1017 soldiers were tested and received their results (478 men, 539 women).



Treatment

During the last quarter of FY05, 2 service outlets provided ART to soldiers and family members. During this quarter, 40 adults (16 men, 24 women) and 6 children (4 boys, 2 girls) initiated ART. By the end of FY05, 542 adults (282 men, 260 women) and 398 children (228 boys, 170 girls) had ever received ART services, and 230 adults (110 men, 120 women) and 43 children (23 boys, 20 girls) were receiving therapy at the end of the final quarter. Four health workers were trained in the provision of ART services, and 4 laboratories had the capability to perform CD4 and/or lymphocyte testing. Thirty people were trained in the provision of laboratory services.

Other Activities

In FY05, 15 personnel were trained in strategic information, and 1 indigenous organization was provided with technical assistance in strategic information, policy development, institutional capacity building, and overall prevention/treatment/care strategies.