

CAMEROON

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

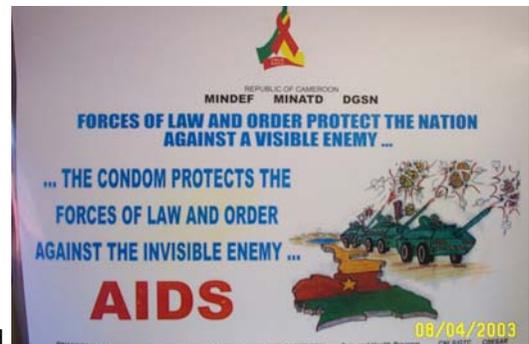
BACKGROUND

Country Statistics

The population of Cameroon is estimated at 16.4 million, with an average life expectancy of 47.8 years. English and French are the official languages, with an estimated literacy rate of 79%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Cameroon has generally enjoyed stability, which has permitted the development of agriculture, roads, and railways, as well as a petroleum industry. The economy is based mainly on oil and agriculture. The annual per capita income is estimated at \$1,900.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 6.9%. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS is approximately 560,000; these cases are equally distributed between men and women. HIV prevalence in Cameroon is higher in urban than in rural areas. HIV transmission is primarily heterosexual and women are most vulnerable, with 3 infected women for every infected man. Identified significant risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners, contact with commercial sex workers, and lack of care and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs).



Military Statistics

The Cameroonian Armed Forces (CAF) is estimated at 13,000. Because the CAF has not performed forcewide HIV testing since 1996, current prevalence rates are unavailable. However, a 2002 Johns Hopkins University HIV prevalence study of a sample of CAF military personnel revealed a prevalence rate of 9.8%.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military-to-Military Technical Assistance

DHAPP staff provided technical assistance to the Central African militaries in Cameroon

during an in-country assist visit 8–10 August 2005. The purpose of the trip was to discuss the Central African militaries project with John Hopkins University, and to educate the country team on the DHAPP and President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) programs and the role that Defense Attaché Offices play in HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

Meeting participants included Defense Attaché Officers from the following countries: Cameroon, Chad, Congo Brazzaville, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Gabon. Participants in this meeting discussed how HIV/AIDS is an integral part of the defense security system and how DHAPP, PEPFAR, and Johns Hopkins University each have an important role as a security agent.

There was strong agreement by all central African countries for an immediate response from all representatives to write proposals for the upcoming DHAPP proposal cycle. Further detail is planned for the Defense Attaché Officers at the October meeting in Germany.

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

Continuing with efforts established in 2002 and 2003, the Walter Reed–Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (WRJHCP) targeted the capital city of Cameroon for their continued efforts. Their work focused on training 2 medical personnel in STI care using the syndromic approach and facilitated medical care of AIDS patients in the target population, according to national policies and international guidelines. Other efforts were made to encourage behavior communication change among military personnel and their family members by training 200 peer educators. Further efforts were made to improve and encourage both HIV preventive behaviors and the protection of persons living with HIV/AIDS in the target group through 75 educational sessions organized by peer educators. Lab efforts targeted improving skills in the use of rapid tests for the diagnosis of HIV in the military health centers by training 2 laboratory technicians. Mass awareness emphasizing behavior change related to STI/HIV/AIDS resulted in the production and distribution of 2000 pamphlets and 200 artificial penises, 115 photo flip charts, 2000 posters, and 2000 uniforms for peer educators.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Cameroon was awarded Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. This funding was awarded during FY03, and was released for expenditure during this fiscal year. Equipment purchases are still in negotiation. The country team plans to use the FMF funds to purchase a chemistry and hematology analyzer, along with supporting reagents and supplies.



OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention/Care/Treatment

WRJHCP is committed to providing technical assistance to Central African militaries to improve their HIV/AIDS prevention programs. To meet this objective, a statement of work was refined for efforts in Cameroon, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. During the latter part of fiscal year 2005, initial efforts took place in Cameroon, as well as Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Chad, with emphasis on STI treatment and care, training military peer educators, and training laboratory technicians on the use of rapid testing kits. Early FY06 efforts will involve Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and will expand upon the efforts commenced during FY05. DHAPP anticipates successful programs in all 7 Central African militaries and is progressing toward these important targets in prevention and care.

In addition, ongoing efforts from the 2002/2003 Cameroon program implementation led to the training of 200 military and family peer educators, 2 physicians in STI management and HIV-related palliative care, and 2 laboratory technicians.

