



## **DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

# **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 the Dominican Republic is estimated at 8.9 million people, with an average life expectancy of 67.3 years. Spanish is the official language; estimated literacy is 84.7%, evenly distributed between men and women. Although the economy has historically been based mainly on agriculture, in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer, due to growth in tourism and free trade zones. The per capita income is \$6,300 per year.

#### **HIV/AIDS Statistics**

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 1.7%, with approximately 88,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Of these, 62,800 were men aged 15-49 years. HIV/AIDS is the leading cause of death among Dominican women of reproductive age; however, HIV rates among pregnant women have been declining since the late 1990s. Vulnerable groups include sex workers and their clients, individuals with sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and migrants.

#### **Military Statistics**

The size of the Dominican Republic's armed forces is approximately 24,000. As of this annual report, no information regarding HIV prevalence in the military was available.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

#### **In-Country Ongoing Assistance**

The Dominican Republic received funding late in 2005 so the majority of the assistance effort will be conducted in 2006. Significant work has been planned with the Henry M. Jackson Foundation for the Advancement of Military Medicine.

#### **Proposed Future Activities**

A proposal was received on behalf of the military of Dominican Republic for the 2006 fiscal year. Specific objectives of the proposed project include building a training center for military HIV/AIDS prevention, developing a peer education program, building laboratory infrastructure, establishing a counseling and testing (CT) program, conducting a condom distri-

bution program, enhancing clinical care of people living with HIV/AIDS, and hosting a multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS workshop.

## **OUTCOMES & IMPACT**

### **Prevention/Care/Treatment**

Current efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention projects for military members in the Dominican Republic are being undertaken by the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS) as part of a collaborative agreement between DHAPP and USUHS. During February–March 2005, the Dominican Republic military sent 2 physicians to the *Military International HIV/AIDS Training Program* (MIHTP) in San Diego. They were provided with training in prevention, CT, care, and treatment methods, as well as policy development and capacity building. Participants relayed positive feedback from the course and stated that they felt it would enhance their ability to establish prevention, care, and treatment programs for HIV in their country. DHAPP looks forward to continued collaboration with the Dominican Republic military.

Early efforts have yielded preliminary data in the Dominican Republic. One indigenous organization was provided with technical assistance for HIV-related policy development and institutional capacity building. The Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM) was successful in gaining the commitment of host nation military leadership to share pertinent information and to work within the framework of the program. A copy of the Country Operational Plan was provided as a source of information to develop supporting plans. Continued positive coordination/collaboration efforts between the US Military Assistance Advisory Group, US Agency for International Development, and national agencies continue. The officers who attended MIHTP in 2004 are enthusiastic and fully involved within the armed forces program. The main contact with the armed forces is through the officer in charge of the program.

