

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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 Papua New Guinea is estimated to be 5.5 million people, with an average life expectancy of 64.9 years. English is the official language; the estimated literacy rate is 64.6%, distributed disproportionately between men and women. Papua New Guinea is richly endowed with natural resources, but exploitation has been hampered by rugged terrain and the high cost of developing infrastructure. Agriculture provides a subsistence livelihood for 85% of the population. The annual per capita income is estimated at \$2,200.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

Papua New Guinea has the highest per capita HIV prevalence in the Pacific. Prevalence is estimated to be 0.6%, with 16,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. The first case was reported in 1987, and the number of infections had risen steadily since the mid-1990s. Heterosexual intercourse is the primary mode of transmission. The epidemic is concentrated in Port Moresby and other towns, and along major transport routes. Geography is a major factor in the spread of HIV in Papua New Guinea, which shares an island with Papua, a high-prevalence region of Indonesia.

Military Statistics

The size of the Papua New Guinea Defense Force (PNGDF) is approximately 4000. As of this annual report, no information regarding HIV prevalence in the PNGDF was available.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military-to-Military Technical Assistance

DHAPP staff conducted a technical assistance visit to Papua New Guinea 8–15 September 2005. The purpose of the visit was to focus on capacity and partnership-building issues, and related policy concerns, regarding the DHAPP-approved and -funded bilateral HIV/AIDS engagement between the US Pacific Command (USPACOM)/Center of Excellence (COE) and the PNGDF.

During this visit, the following tasks were accomplished: (1) coordination of overall bilateral HIV/AIDS 2-year strategic plan; (2) review and signing of terms of reference; (3) a key working group meeting that included additional partners outside of implementing partners, such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Papua New Guinea National

AIDS Council (NAC); (4) a site assessment of PNGDF medical, communication, and technical infrastructure capacity in Port Moresby at multiple barracks; (5) a site assessment of PNGDF medical, communication, and technical infrastructure capacity at 2 remote posts: Wewak and Lae; (6) a needs assessment and identification of human resources within the PNGDF medical department; (7) a site assessment and evaluation of future training sites for implementation of the overall plan; (8) coordination and briefing of the US Embassy in Papua New Guinea on bilateral engagement, procurement, and overall strategy; and (9) further developing the existing interoperability relationship and capacity building between US military medical services and the PNGDF.

Plans to train technicians within the PNGDF to use purchased laboratory equipment are under way. Further augmentation of current infrastructure, including communications and laboratory equipment purchases as well as consumables to outfit Counseling and Testing (CT) Centers, is needed and an expanded look into the epidemiological patterns of HIV infection in the PNG DF is being considered.

Proposed Future Activities

A proposal was received on behalf of the PNGDF for the 2006 fiscal year. Specific objectives of the proposed project include developing laboratory infrastructure, developing an HIV/AIDS awareness and education program, developing surveillance capabilities, conducting a behavioral surveillance survey, developing a CT program, and strengthening capabilities in palliative care.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention/Care/Treatment

Efforts in HIV/AIDS prevention projects for PNGDF members are relatively new. During FY05, 6 military members were trained to be able to provide comprehensive prevention messages to peers. One laboratory has the capability to perform HIV tests, but not CD4 or lymphocyte testing. The Taurama barracks in Port Moresby have some newly renovated space; however, this barracks program is currently referring patients to Port Moresby General Hospital for CT and treatment. PNGDF has utilized some rapid testing when available. Most testing is performed by Provincial hospitals after soldiers are referred to them for care.

Other activities

One indigenous organization was provided with technical assistance for policy development visit during a visit by team members of USPACOM/COE, 6–15 September 2005 in Papua New Guinea. Technical assistance was provided at 4 main PNGDF bases as at the NAC. FY06 first quarter plans include procurement of communications equipment and capacity building via outfitting of 2 CT Centers.

DHAPP staff members look forward to expanded collaborative efforts with the PNGDF program in the coming year.

