

ZAMBIA

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 Zambia is estimated to be 11.3 million people, with an average life expectancy of 39.7 years, down significantly from a high of 52 years prior to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. English is the official language, with an estimated literacy rate of 80.6%, distributed disproportionately between men and women. Zambia is one of the most urbanized countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, with almost 50% of the population living in a few urban areas clustered along the main transportation corridor. Agriculture employs about 85% of the population. Annual per capita income is estimated to be \$900.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Zambia is one of the highest in the world. The prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 16.5%, with approximately 920,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Heterosexual contact is the principal mode of transmission. Mother-to-child transmission is also a significant mode of transmission. HIV rates are highest among women aged 20–29 and among men 30–39 years. Rates are much higher in urban areas than in rural areas, with the highest HIV rates found in cities and towns along major transportation routes. Vulnerable groups include military personnel, commercial sex workers, truckers, and fisheries workers.

Military Statistics

The size of the Zambian military is estimated at 22,000. The Zambian National Defense Force (ZNDF) is made up of the Army, the Air Force, and Zambian National Service (ZNS). HIV prevalence is 34% in the Army, 17% in the Air Force, and 28% in the ZNS.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military-to-Military Technical Assistance

DHAPP staff members provided technical assistance during an in-country site assessment in Lusaka, Zambia, 24–28 April 2005. The trip included a visit to Maina Soki Hospital.

In-country activities were reviewed, including (1) JHPIEGO conducting a wide-ranging prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) program in the ZDF (2) implementing an infection control program (blood-borne pathogen training, postexposure prophylaxis, infection control), and 3) developing hospital policies and standards.

DHAPP staff met with the new program coordinator, the Director of General Medical Services of ZNDF, US Embassy staff, members of the ZNDF twinning planning group, the Information, Education, and Communication coordinator for ZNDF, and representatives of the nursing directorate to discuss palliative care,

Clinic, laboratory, infrastructure, and supply needs will continue to be discussed and addressed. Pharmacist and physicians will continue to be trained in more advanced areas of treatment algorithms and supply management.

In addition, DHAPP staff members visited Zambia again with the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) core team to conduct an fiscal year 2006 review and planning for the following year, from 29 August – 3 September 2005. During this visit, fiscal roles for appropriate HIV/AIDS collaborating partners were established and the COP was reviewed.

Plans were made to evaluate equipment and training needs of the laboratory, technicians, and physicians and establish automated blood culture capability. Additionally, there are plans to complete a palliative care visit, finish the library, develop the radiology/ophthalmology facility, and develop a mobile Counseling and Testing (CT) Center with the purchase of vehicles and equipment.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Zambia was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. Specific equipment purchases are currently being negotiated by ZNDF, US Embassy, and DHAPP staff members.

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

In FY05, nongovernmental organizations conducted many efforts being in Zambia. Prevention and treatment, management and staffing, and strategic information were all areas of focus in FY05. Project Concern International (PCI) provided technical assistance to the ZNDF in the areas HIV CT, centering primarily on training medical personnel, social workers, and peer educators in understanding the pros and cons of HIV testing and in developing counseling skills. PCI also provided assistance by conducting an HIV/AIDS prevalence survey in conjunction with the ZNDF; establishing a strong, sustainable palliative care program; maintaining the existing Abstinence/Be Faithful program; and working to reach military units with stigma reduction messages through peer education.

CARE International has been instrumental in implementing an orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) program designed to award educational scholarships to OVC who might not be able to attend school without scholarships, provide psychosocial counseling and support and referrals to both military and civilian social services for children and families who desperately need these services, and provide trade skills or income-generating skills for HIV/AIDS OVC and AIDS widows. JHPIEGO also provided assistance to the ZDF in a multitude of areas, including implementing a comprehensive PMTCT program at 4 military hospitals, providing technical assistance to antiretroviral therapy (ART) service delivery sites established in 4 major military hospitals, and working to prevent new infections at various service delivery sites.

Proposed Future Activities

As a PEPFAR focus country, the military of Zambia submitted a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention, care, and treatment proposal to the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC) via its PEPFAR country team's overall COP. Military activities for FY06 were approved by technical and program review committees at OGAC, as well as by agency principals, and these will commence in the new fiscal year.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

During FY05, the ZNDF was committed to prevention messages with a comprehensive overview. Through these community outreach efforts at comprehensive prevention, 25,591 troops were reached. Four hundred and twenty-eight soldiers were trained to provide this message to peers, and 80 condom service outlets were supported. In addition, 60 military providers were trained in the provision of PMTCT services according to national or international standards. Finally, during July 2005, the ZNDF sent 3 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.

Care

During FY05, 51 outlets provided generalized palliative care for military patients with HIV/AIDS. During the year, 1416 troops and family members received care at these outlets (685 men, 754 women). Two hundred and nineteen personnel were trained in palliative care.

Counseling and Testing

All 53 units are providing some level of HIV counseling and/or testing. Numbers counseled and tested during the period are based on returns submitted by 19 of the units. During FY05, 1068 soldiers were tested and received their results (501 men, 567 women). Eighty-six soldiers were trained in the provision of CT services. Over 50 ZDF personnel have gone public about their HIV-positive status. A number of units do not have adequate facilities designated for CT, and suffer from a shortage of test kits.

Treatment

Treatment activities were initially approved to improve infrastructure through construction and renovation of 6 HIV/AIDS CT Centers, HIV/AIDS laboratories, and tuberculosis (TB)/HIV wards, including Dambwa CT, Mukuni CT, Maramba CT, Livingstone Police/MOH CT and Batoka Hospital TB Ward in Livingstone District, and State Lodge in Lusaka. The locations for these clinics were selected to increase the accessibility of CT services for military personnel, their families, and the civilian population. The TB/HIV ward will serve as a major entry point for anti-retroviral therapy. A CT will be included in this ward.

Since the approval of the funds for this project, renovation of the Batoka Hospital outpatient pediatric ward program was added to the project because this would greatly increase the capacity for PMTCT and treatment for pediatric HIV patients. Currently, the facility lacks space to provide adequate care and treatment for the volume of pediatric patients coming to the hospital. It is also anticipated that the recent policy on free ART services will increase the demand for pediatric ART services at the Batoka Hospital. Livingstone district has one of the highest HIV/AIDS prevalence rates due to proximity to the border with Zimbabwe and Botswana. There are 3 large military bases located in the district and Batoka Hospital is a referral hospital for all military personnel and their families in the district. As initially planned and approved, The US Department of Defense (DoD) will collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which will help to equip the facilities and train laboratory personnel. Finally, 7 laboratories have the capability to perform CD4 and/or lymphocyte testing, and 4 personnel were trained in clinical management.

Other Activities

Four ZNDF nurses were sent to the Naval Medical Center San Diego (NMCS D) to observe practices in palliative care and clinical management in September as a part of the NMCS D twinning activities. The nurses have submitted a visit summary and recommendations after the trip. The American Health International Alliance is working on a post-visit evaluation, which will be finalized in the next few months. The DoD PEPFAR office in Lusaka used the remaining training funds to send a pharmacist at the Maina Soko to receive a course in supply chain management of HIV/AIDS medicines and supplies held in South Africa. Sixteen individuals were trained in community mobilization for total HIV programs. Finally, 48 military members were provided with technical assistance and/or training in the area of strategic information for capacity building.

