

AFGHANISTAN

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

In 2004, Afghanistan inaugurated its first democratically elected president, and its National Assembly was inaugurated in December 2005. Of the estimated 4 million refugees in October 2001, 2.3 million have returned. The Afghan population is estimated to be 29.9 million people, with an average life expectancy of 46.2 years. Pashto or Persian (Dari) are the official languages of Afghanistan, which has an estimated literacy rate of 36%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Growing political stability and continued international commitment to Afghan reconstruction create an optimistic outlook for continuing improvements in the Afghan economy in 2006. Expanding poppy cultivation and a growing opium trade may account for one third of the gross domestic product. GDP per capita is \$800, with 53% of Afghani people living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Afghanistan's general population is estimated at less than 0.01%. Risk factors in the epidemic are not well-documented; however, sexual transmission, blood transfusion, and intravenous drug use were all identified in the available sample.

Military Statistics

The new Afghan National Army (ANA) is estimated at approximately 70,000 members, with an Air Force of 8000 members. Military HIV prevalence rates are unknown.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

A US Army physician assigned to Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) in Afghanistan worked in close collaboration with the DHAPP staff and the ANA Surgeon General to commence training of recruits in the newly established Army. DHAPP provided HIV prevention materials, which have proven effective in many countries with established and successful programs. The prevention materials were translated into Dari, and during distribution of the training manuals, the CFC-A physician conducted a knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey with recruits. Results are being analyzed.

US Central Command Surgeon staff have begun working closely with the ANA Surgeon Gen-

eral to align future efforts with prevention and policy training in the ANA.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal on behalf of the Afghan National Army for HIV prevention scale-up efforts in fiscal year 2007. The primary objective of the proposal focused on collaborative efforts of the ANA, the National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA), US military training missions, and DHAPP to prevent the spread of HIV among Afghan military forces and to sustain an indigenous program in conjunction with the international effort to build the ANA. The majority of proposed activities focused on the inclusion of HIV prevention training in the NMAA curriculum to ensure all levels of the ANA play a leading role in the fight against the epidemic among ANA forces. The proposal was reviewed by a scientific panel and will be presented to the DHAPP Board of Directors.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

DHAPP staff members have continued collaborative efforts with ANA officials and US Embassy staff to establish a comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention/education program for military members in Afghanistan. The ANA HIV prevention program for military members has only recently commenced. DHAPP looks forward to successful program implementation in Afghanistan.

