



**BELIZE**

**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 Belize is estimated to be 287,730 people, with an average life expectancy of 68.3 years. English is the official language of Belize, which has an estimated literacy rate of 94.1%, evenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$6,800, with 33% of the population of Belize living below the poverty line. Tourism has become the mainstay of the economy.

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

The HIV prevalence rate in the Belize general population is estimated at 2.5%, which places Belize as having the highest per capita HIV prevalence rate in Central America. Seventy percent of HIV cases in Belize are attributed to heterosexual sex, with another 7% attributed to men who have sex with men.

#### **Military Statistics**

The Belize Defense Force (BDF) consists of approximately 800 personnel, with a primary task of defending the nation's borders and providing support to civil authorities. Belize allocates 1.7% of the GDP for military expenditures. The BDF estimates military HIV prevalence rates at 0.07%.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

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

The Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), implementing agency for the United States Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, conducted an initial needs assessment in Belize in 2004, with a recent follow-on visit to discuss logistics of their proposal to DHAPP. CDHAM will continue to play an integral role in technical assistance to Belize as their program commences.

#### **Proposed Future Activities**

DHAPP received a proposal from CDHAM on behalf of the BDF for activities in fiscal year 2007. Stated goals for the upcoming fiscal year included the following: provide refresher training for 17 counselors for counseling and testing (CT) and peer education, including work with the Louisiana National Guard medical unit; include HIV training when Belize sends BDF medics to the United States for military-to-military training; develop a mass

awareness campaign to introduce the prevention program to the troops; perform a cost analysis of rapid HIV test kits; increase testing of all military personnel via an assessment of current usage of CT centers by military members; assess current laboratory capability and train lab personnel; and train one military medical staff member at the San Diego *Military International HIV/AIDS Training Program*. The proposal was reviewed by a scientific panel and will be presented to the DHAPP Board of Directors.

## **OUTCOMES & IMPACT**

### **Prevention**

The BDF HIV prevention program has recently commenced, with one indigenous organization provided with technical assistance for capacity building. The Military Liaison Office (MLO) of the US Embassy purchased and delivered a laptop computer, projector, and printer to support the BDF HIV prevention program.

Fourteen Belize military members were trained during a DoD-sponsored awareness workshop for the BDF in December 2005. The objectives of the workshop were to enhance the skills of BDF members to provide care and support to persons living with HIV/AIDS. Specific training included capacity-building training in HIV/AIDS-specific counseling and capacity-building training in HIV/AIDS-specific home-based care.

In addition, a 4-day workshop on HIV/AIDS, for uniformed services in the Eastern Caribbean and English-speaking Central American countries, took place in Barbados in April 2006. The objectives of the conference, attended by BDF members, were: initiate and strengthen the regional dialogue on HIV/AIDS in the defense environment, assist in the development of national prevention programs, strengthen civilian-military collaboration, and enhance knowledge regarding the development of an HIV/AIDS prevention program. The training was designed to facilitate the development of HIV/AIDS awareness policies and programs among the militaries of the region.

Finally, 10,000 condoms ordered through Pharmaco (a local distributor in the Caribbean) were delivered to the MLO, which in turn delivered them to the BDF.

### **Care**

Fifteen hundred rapid test kits ordered through the World Health Organization were delivered to the MLO for delivery to the BDF.

