

CAMEROON

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

Cameroon has generally enjoyed stability, which has permitted the development of agriculture, roads, and railways, as well as a petroleum industry. Cameroon's population is estimated to be 17.3 million people, with an average life expectancy of 51.1 years. English and French are the official languages of Cameroon, which has an estimated literacy rate of 79%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Because of its oil resources and favorable agricultural conditions, Cameroon has one of the best-endowed primary commodity economies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$2,300, with 48% of Cameroonian people living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Cameroon's general population is estimated at 5.4%. Cameroon has approximately 510,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Cameroon Armed Forces (CAF) is estimated at approximately 26,000 members. Cameroon allocates 1.5% of the GDP for military expenditures. Since 1990, four HIV surveillance studies have been conducted in the military and the last one conducted in 2005 revealed a military prevalence of 11.3%, twice the rate in the general population.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (JHCP) has been providing technical assistance to the militaries of Central Africa (including Cameroon) in the implementation of HIV prevention and surveillance activities. Evaluation from the first four countries in the region to work with JHCP (Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, and Republic of Congo) shows considerable progress in education, training, and surveillance, as well as development of a more sustainable approach to preventing infectious diseases among troops and their families.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Cameroon was awarded Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. This award was allocated for fiscal years 2003 and 2005,

and 2003 funding was released for expenditure near the end of FY05. Although still in negotiation, the country team plans to use 2003 funding to procure CD4 count equipment, an ELISA machine, microscope, refrigerator and freezer, in addition to other supporting diagnostic supplies and reagents.



Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the CAF for activities during FY07. The application included eight countries in the Central African region, and built on the successful work accomplished by JHCP in the region over the past 4 years, aiming to develop a more comprehensive strategy for fighting HIV/AIDS in the region's militaries. Specifically, funding was requested to extend the ongoing program into four additional central African countries (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe.) Continuous efforts were proposed to monitor the rate of HIV in the already established countries (Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, and Republic of Congo), as well as to conduct refresher training for trained peer educators in these four countries. Using the same survey methodology already established in these four countries will provide, for the first time, the ability to reliably compare military HIV rates across all eight countries in the region.

The proposal was reviewed by a scientific review board and will be submitted to the DHAPP Board of Directors for funding decisions.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

The CAF continued to report successful program results in collaboration with JHCP. During the fiscal year, 789 troops were reached with prevention messages that focused on abstinence and being faithful (685 men, 104 women), and 50 additional people were trained on the provision of those messages. Four hundred and twenty-nine (429) military members were reached with comprehensive prevention messages (379 men, 50 women), and 50 were trained to provide that message.

Care and Treatment

Two CAF members were trained to provide HIV-related palliative care, and two counselors in the provision of counseling and testing.

Other

One indigenous organization (CAF) was provided with technical assistance for strategic information and capacity building. Three individuals were trained in institutional capacity building and 50 others were trained in community mobilization for HIV prevention, care, and treatment.

