



EL SALVADOR

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 El Salvador is estimated to be 6.8 million people, with an average life expectancy of 71.5 years. Spanish is the official language of El Salvador, which has an estimated literacy rate of 80.2%, evenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$4,700, with 34% of the population living below the poverty line. A 12-year civil war, which cost about 75,000 lives, was brought to a close in 1992 when the government and leftist rebels signed a treaty that provided for military and political reforms.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the general population of El Salvador is estimated at 0.9%, with approximately 34,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The most frequent mode of transmission is through heterosexual intercourse (77%). Vertical transmission, following a marked downward trend, accounts for 7.4% of transmission. Urban areas comprise 75% of the reported cases.

Military Statistics

The El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) consist of approximately 16,000 members, with 15,000 members in the Army, 700 in the Navy, and 1100 in the Air Force. The ESAF is primarily made up of young men and women aged 18-49 years with a 12-month service obligation. El Salvador has had 380 Infantry and Special Forces personnel in Iraq since August 2003. In 1987, the first HIV case in the Armed Forces was detected. Since that first case until 2005, 383 cases of HIV/AIDS have been reported in the ESAF. In 1994, the Military Medical Command approved a directive for a policy, standards, and procedures plan to regulate research, control, and surveillance of HIV/AIDS in Armed Forces personnel. El Salvador expends 1.0% of its GDP for military purposes. Military HIV prevalence rates are unknown.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

In August 2004, the Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance/Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (CDHAM/USUHS) received funding from DHAPP to conduct an assessment visit to identify ESAF needs. Subsequent engagement has taken place to move forward in planning and executing the projects approved in fiscal year 2005 to enhance HIV/AIDS prevention program activities. CDHAM personnel have supported the Chief for ESAF HIV/AIDS programs during dedicated visits, and while attending conferences on

HIV/AIDS, sponsored by such agencies as the US Southern Command (USSOCOM), the committee for the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the Armed Forces and National Police: Latin America and the Caribbean, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and others.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received two proposals for activities in FY07 on behalf of the ESAF. The first, from CDHAM, emphasized the following objectives: implement an institutional HIV/AIDS policy in the ESAF; increase knowledge, improve attitudes, and prevent HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection (STI) among Armed Forces personnel; build the capacity of health services providers to provide comprehensive HIV/AIDS/STI; care and form the committee for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in El Salvador to contribute to the national HIV/AIDS response.

The second, from Research Triangle International, listed the following objectives: establish an HIV surveillance program that links HIV serosurveillance and behavioral surveillance of the ESAF, and develop and implement a master trainer model for HIV/AIDS prevention training of peer counselors and for risk-behavior change.

Both proposals were reviewed by a scientific panel and will be submitted to the DHAPP Board of Directors.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

DHAPP has continued its collaborative interaction with USSOCOM and CDHAM/USUHS as implementing partners for future activities in the El Salvadoran Armed Forces. No programmatic activities took place in the ESAF during the current reporting period. DHAPP looks forward to future collaboration with El Salvador.

