

GHANA

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 Ghana is estimated to be 22.4 million people, with an average life expectancy of 58.8 years. English is the official language of Ghana, which has an estimated literacy rate of 74.8 unevenly distributed between men and women. Well endowed with natural resources, Ghana has roughly twice the per capita output of the poorer countries in West Africa. Gold, timber, and cocoa production are major sources of foreign exchange. The domestic economy continues to revolve around subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 34% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP per capita is \$2,500, with 31% of Ghanaian people living below the poverty level.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in general population of Ghana is estimated at 2.3%, with approximately 320,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Identified risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners, sexual contact with commercial sex workers, and migration (HIV rates are substantially higher in bordering countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, and Burkina Faso).

Military Statistics

The Ghanaian Armed Forces (GAF) is estimated at approximately 12,000 members, with an additional 10,000 supporting civilian employees. The troops are highly mobile, currently engaged in four United Nations Peacekeeping missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Liberia. A nationwide HIV prevalence study done in 2001 indicated an HIV prevalence rate in the military of 6.7%, which is higher than the general population. Ghana allocates 0.8% of the GDP for military expenditures.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

Recognizing the impact of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS on internal and external security, the GAF currently conducts HIV testing for recruitment and deployment overseas. In 2004, with funding and technical assistance from DHAPP, the GAF was provided training in capacity building for laboratory technicians, counseling and testing (CT), and prevention of mother-to-child (PMTCT) personnel, and to peer educators. In September

2006, as part of the national scale-up program and the need to provide integrated HIV/AIDS/STI and opportunistic infections prevention, care, and treatment, the National AIDS Control Program (NACP) supported a GAF HIV program for capacity building of health care providers on the use of antiretroviral therapy (ART).

During the fiscal year, 3 GAF physicians attended the *Military International HIV/AIDS Training Program* in San Diego.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Ghana was awarded Foreign Military Financing 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 during FY05. These funds have been used to procure CD4 count and viral load testing equipment, a refrigerator and centrifuge, in addition to other supporting diagnostic supplies and reagents.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received two proposals for FY07 activities. The first, from the GAF submitted through the Office of Defense Cooperation at the US Embassy in Ghana, emphasized the following objective: prevent new HIV infections and improve the quality of life of GAF personnel and their families living with HIV/AIDS. Specifically, the goals of the proposal include: reduce HIV prevalence by 50%, train 80% of GAF Chaplains and Imams as counselors and educators; train 80% of GAF Regimental Sergeant Majors as peer educators; train 200 civilian employees; determine HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) of troops and their families using a KAP survey; and produce an educational film for the troops and their families.



The second, received from Family Health International on behalf of the GAF, included objectives that strengthen the GAF/NACP initiative for prevention and care by creating demand for and use of HIV/AIDS/STI prevention and care and ensuring the quality of these services. Specifically, the program goals include: assess and reduce risk behavior of uniformed personnel and their families through a range of behavioral change strategies; strengthen the capacity for HIV/STI service delivery, strengthen referral linkages and systems between the military reception centers and health centers in the allied communities targeting people who engage in high-risk behavior, and ensure sustainable services and systems through capacity building and working with local and national counterparts.

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

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

The GAF reported continued success in its prevention and care programs during FY06. During the year, 6 pregnant women were provided with PMTCT services, 4 of whom were provided with a complete course of ART.

Care and Treatment

One (1) GAF outlet provided HIV-related palliative care. During the year, 6 military members or spouses were provided with HIV-related palliative care. One (1) military medical provider was trained in the provision of HIV-related palliative care, including services for tuberculosis.

Two (2) CT centers were operational for GAF personnel and families. During the year, 253 troops were tested for HIV and received their results. One (1) GAF provider was trained in provision of CT. One (1) GAF medical officer was trained in the provision of ART.

Other

Three hundred and twenty-four (324) GAF personnel were trained in institutional capacity building during the year.

