



GUATEMALA

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 Guatemala is estimated to be 12.3 million people, with an average life expectancy of 69.4 years. Spanish is the official language of Guatemala, which has an estimated literacy rate of 70.6%, unevenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$4,700, with 75% of the population living below the poverty line. Guatemala is the largest and most populous of the Central American countries with a GDP per capita roughly one half that of Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. The agricultural sector accounts for about one fourth of the GDP, two thirds of exports, and half of the labor force. Coffee, sugar, and bananas are the main products.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the general population of Guatemala is estimated at 0.9%, with approximately 61,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Seventy percent (70%) of reported cases are men. Under-reporting could be as high as 50%, due to Guatemala's inadequate surveillance system, social stigma and discrimination, and insufficient medical access. The Guatemalan epidemic is spread primarily through sexual activity, and is growing rapidly among men who have sex with men and commercial sex workers.

Military Statistics

The Guatemalan Armed Forces (GAF) consists of approximately 15,500 members, stationed in 44 military bases across the country. Guatemala has a draft system and requires 18 months of military service. Guatemala expends 0.5% of its GDP for military purposes. 3000 military personnel tested for HIV as part of a 2003 study, 0.7% of these members were found to be HIV positive.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The GAF, in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Ministry of Health in Guatemala, began HIV prevention and HIV counseling for military personnel in 2003. Since then, 11 training sessions have been held in all 44 military commands, with 6800 service members tested for HIV. Eighty-two (82) new HIV infections have been identified, with 41 requiring antiretroviral therapy (ART) according to World Health Organization guidelines. No ART has been started to date, since these medication regimens are not currently provided to the military.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal for fiscal year 2007 from Project HOPE on behalf of the GAF. The proposal emphasized the following objectives: conduct quality peer education at the troop level by increasing the number of military health educators trained to promote HIV/AIDS prevention; provide basic-level HIV counseling and testing services; and provide quality care and treatment to people living with HIV/AIDS by training military health workers to deliver ART services.

The proposal was reviewed by a scientific panel and will be submitted to the DHAPP Board of Directors.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

DHAPP has only just begun its collaborative interaction with the GAF. No programmatic activities took place with military personnel during the current reporting period. DHAPP looks forward to future collaboration with Guatemala.

