

LESOTHO

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 the Lesotho is estimated to be 2.02 million people, with an average life expectancy of 34.4 years. English is the official language of Lesotho, which has an estimated literacy rate of 84.8%, unevenly distributed between men and women, interestingly with women having higher literacy rates (94.5%) than men (74.5). The economy is still primarily based on subsistence agriculture, especially livestock, although drought has decreased agricultural activity. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$2,500, with 49% of people in Lesotho living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

AIDS is the number one killer of the Basotho people, with 23,000 dying each year from the disease. The HIV prevalence rate in the Lesotho general population is estimated at 23.2%, resulting in approximately 270,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) is estimated at approximately 2,000 members. Lesotho allocates 2.1% of the GDP for military expenditures. No HIV prevalence data are currently available for LDF members.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DoD partner Population Services International (PSI) began working with the LDF in 2005, with activities focused on training of peer educators among military personnel, prevention programs that emphasized counseling and testing (CT) and correct use of condoms, and training of CT counselors. The activities have led to increased demand for CT services among military personnel.

In addition, DHAPP staff traveled to Lesotho during the fiscal year to provide technical assistance regarding their military prevention, care and treatment targets in the context of the larger country operational plan.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from PSI on behalf of the LDF for activities in fiscal year 2007. The

primary objectives were to increase the number of master trainers and peer educators trained among military personnel; develop and implement new Information, Education, and Communication materials, including a board game called “Snakes and Ladders,” which emphasizes partner reduction; increase use of mobile CT services and increase uptake of CT services at one base in the country through which most military personnel rotate during the year; and increase quality control of CT laboratory procedures.

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 LDF reported impressive early results of their prevention programming in collaboration with PSI. During the fiscal year, 990 troops were trained in the provision of prevention programs focused on abstinence and/or being faithful (886 men, 104 women), with 880 of these trained as peer educators in the provision of these messages. Another 170 troops were reached with comprehensive prevention messages (150 men, 20 women), with 80 trained in the provision of comprehensive prevention. The LDF supported 18 condom service outlets.

The LDF supported 2 outlets providing prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. During the year, 30 pregnant military women were provided with services there. Another 15 medical personnel were trained in the provision of PMTCT services.



Care

Two (2) service outlets provided HIV-related palliative care services to LDF personnel and their families. During the fiscal year, 548 military personnel were provided with HIV-related palliative care (463 men, 85 women). Of these, 75 received treatment for tuberculosis. Nine (9) medical personnel were trained to provide HIV-related palliative care.

Two outlets provided CT services for military personnel. Four hundred (400) troops or family members were tested for HIV and received their results (201 men, 199 women). Twenty-nine (29) medical personnel were trained in the provision of CT.

Treatment

Two (2) service outlets provided antiretroviral therapy (ART) for LDF members and their families. At the end of the year, 590 troops and family members were provided with ART (13 boys, 6 girls, 353 men, 218 women). Eighteen (18) military medical providers were trained in the provision of ART. Four (4) laboratories had the capability to perform HIV testing, and 11 laboratory personnel were trained in the provision of these tests.