

NAMIBIA

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

Namibia's population is estimated to be 2 million people, with an average life expectancy of 43.3 years. English is the official language of Namibia, which has an estimated literacy rate of 84%, evenly distributed between men and women. The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining accounts for 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a primary source for gem-quality diamonds. Namibia is the fourth-largest exporter of nonfuel minerals in Africa, the world's fifth-largest producer of uranium, and a producer of large quantities of lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. The GDP per capita is \$7,000, with 56% of Namibians living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Namibia's general population is estimated at 19.6%. Namibia has approximately 230,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact. By the end of 2003, approximately 57,000 children in Namibia had lost one or both parents to AIDS.

Military Statistics

The Namibian Defense Force (NDF) is estimated at approximately 15,000. Namibia allocates 2.3% of the GDP for military expenditures. There are no official figures for HIV prevalence in the NDF, but it is estimated to be similar to the general population.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DHAPP staff members provided technical assistance to the NDF during in-country Core Team visits. The purpose of each trip included review, assistance, and preparation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Country Operational Plan (COP) for fiscal year 2007, as well as military-specific planning and technical assistance to the NDF and US Embassy personnel. DHAPP staff members represent the NDF as members of the PEPFAR Core Team, and have been involved in every level of country planning, ensuring that NDF programs are adequately addressed.

Proposed Future Activities

Ongoing successful NDF and partner programming was expanded to include additional aspects of comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment for military members and their families. All proposed activities were submitted to the Namibia country team, and were included in the FY07 COP.



OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

During FY06, NDF continued to provide exceptional results, specifically in HIV prevention. The Namibian Ministry of Defense (MoD) Military Action and Prevention Programme (MAPP) continued to focus on three main methods: education sessions on bases, education sessions at the Remember Eliphaz Education Centre (REEC) in Rundu, and other workshops and training events. The Namibian military leadership advocates abstinence and/or being faithful and strongly encourages these prevention methods for troops on deployments. The Social Marketing Association (SMA) MAPP teams reached a total number of 9,507 soldiers with comprehensive prevention messages through edutainment events during the year (7594 men, 1913 women). An additional 411 were trained in the provision of these messages.

Typical education events with NDF military members include a motivational song and participatory dance, a film, lectures on abstinence and being faithful, condom use and demonstration, a drama and facilitated discussion on the messages, HIV testing, anti-retroviral therapy (ART), and prevention of mother-to-child transmission. One of the current dramas used at the seminars is called *Cover Up*, which is about a soldier who dies of AIDS and his wife becomes the responsibility of another soldier. Even though the cause of death of the soldier is widely known to be AIDS, a “cover-up” occurs. Unit commanders and senior officers are involved in these seminars. There are always a number of high-ranking officers present at the edutainment events. In addition, the NDF sponsored 68 targeted condom service outlets.

The SMA MAPP team met with the NDF Fourth Battalion before deploying to Liberia for United Nations peacekeeping in March 2006. This is the first contingent composed of 100% of soldiers who produced an HIV-negative test before being eligible for deployment. DoD-funded MAPP efforts in Namibia can be credited with raising the consciousness of the relevant decision makers within the MoD/NDF in this regard since messages about HIV testing and its importance have been repeatedly reinforced over the past 5 years.

A study tour to Mozambique took place during the last quarter of the year. Participants were the Chief of NDF Medical Services, the only Namibian NDF doctor, the acting HIV coordinator, the senior counselor at the counseling and testing (CT) center, and 3 MAPP staff. One of the key areas of interest was a prevalence study conducted by the Mozambique military.

Care

One (1) service outlet provided HIV-related palliative care to military members and their families. During the year, 23 male military patients under various stages of home-based care were visited by a combined MAPP team of both SMA members from REEC and NDF members from the collocated military base in Rundu. These patients were given salt, sugar, e'pap, cooking oil, maize meal, and vegetables. The vegetables were grown in the REEC garden. Each patient's family members were counseled on general home-based care practices and referred to community-based services.

Since April 2006, 2 military CTs are fully operational, one at REEC in Rundu and the other at Grootfontein Army Headquarters in Grootfontein. Five hundred and one (501) soldiers have been tested for HIV and received their results (367 men, 134 women). Another 16 NDF members were trained in the provision of CT services.

Other

The SMA MAPP accomplished numerous capacity building and training activities in the last quarter. Training included (1) CT foundation training, (2) computer training at REEC, (3) a second ART course, (4) a crisis management workshop, and (5) an emotional support and counseling workshop. The NDF HIV coordinator was sent on a year-long peace-keeping mission in September highlighting the risk of focusing all educational opportunities on one member of the force. She was replaced in an acting capacity by a captain with a long association with MAPP. He was originally the SMA NDF liaison and worked in this position for a year.

In FY 2005–2006, a total of 96 base commanders were trained at an expert speakers' seminar forum in order to equip them to manage HIV on their bases. Included in these training events were sessions on community mobilization, and stigma and discrimination. The ultimate goal of this intervention is to build capacity throughout higher echelons of the MoD/NDF.

Finally, on World AIDS Day, the US Embassy used the film *Remember Eliphaz* to educate staff members.

