

UGANDA

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 Uganda is estimated to be 28.2 million people, with an average life expectancy of 52.6 years. English is the official language of Uganda, which has an estimated literacy rate of 69.9%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Uganda has substantial natural resources, including fertile soils, regular rainfall, and sizable mineral deposits of copper and cobalt. Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy, employing over 80% of the work force. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,800, with 35% of Ugandan people living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Uganda's general population is estimated at 6.7%, with approximately 1 million individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Identified significant risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners and sexually transmitted infections. Prevalence is higher in urban areas (10.7%) than in rural areas (6.4%). Prevalence is higher among women than men.



Military Statistics

The Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) consists of approximately 50,000 active-duty members with an estimated 200,000 dependents. Uganda expends 2.2% of its GDP for military purposes. Military HIV prevalence rates are unknown, however it is estimated that 10,000 active duty military are living with HIV with an additional 5,000 to 10,000 HIV infected family members. A sero-prevalence survey is underway to provide more accurate HIV rates and program requirements.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The UPDF HIV/AIDS Control program is comprehensive and covers the critical elements of prevention, such as counseling and testing, peer education, condom distribution, and PMTCT. UPDF medical leadership assisted in the military adaptation of the 4-week clinician training and the 2-week nurse and clinical officer training at the *Infectious Diseases Institute* (IDI) in Kampala, benefiting multiple African militaries.

A cornerstone for the UPDF prevention programs is the Post-test clubs (PTCs), which are open to all military personnel, their families, and persons from the local communities who have tested for HIV. The PTCs contribute to the counseling and testing (CT) program, encouraging members to test, provide a link for care and treatment services and psychosocial support, and through facilitation and disclosure, support military commanders in HIV prevention discussion venues for the troops.



A new program has addressed the obstacles and strategies for antiretroviral therapy (ART) adherence in UPDF personnel, through the assistance of the University of Connecticut Center for Health, Intervention, and Prevention (CHIP). Meetings with the leadership of the UPDF AIDS Control Program and focus groups with UPDF health care providers, counselors, and HIV-infected personnel and family members were conducted, to initiate the development of a pilot adherence protocol for the Kampala-based ART sites.

Throughout the year, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Core Team provided technical assistance to the UPDF. This included discussions on current UPDF needs and procedures, as well as site visits to collaborating organizations that support the UPDF. Follow-up assistance was organized by the PEPFAR the Core Team to assist the UPDF with their Country Operational Plan (COP) for fiscal year 2007.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Uganda was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. This award was allocated for fiscal years 2003 and 2004, and 2003 funding was released for expenditure during FY05. Fiscal year 2003 funding was used to purchase a hematology and chemistry analyzer, in addition to other supporting diagnostic supplies and reagents.

Proposed Future Activities

Ongoing successful UPDF and partner programming will be expanded to include additional aspects of comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment for military members and their families. Specifically, the 2007 program will add three new program elements, including tuberculosis (TB) control, injection safety, and addressing orphans and vulnerable children of the UPDF. Mobile services will be added as a core component of CT and behavior change communication (BCC) to reach the rural, more isolated locations. The role and access of the PTCs will be strengthened by providing focal points of peer educators within the PTCs.

The pilot ART adherence protocol being developed in 2006 for the two Kampala based sites, will also be modified and extended to the other six ART sites. The results of the 2006 sero-prevalence survey will also provide policies and protocols for an ongoing HIV surveillance program and contribute to an overall effort to better address the medical information systems.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

It is estimated that the BCC has reached more than 10,000 troops through the PTCs, military parades, and information education communication (IEC) materials. Condom distribution occurs across the UPDF through twelve (12) condom distribution centers.

Care

Thirteen (13) CT centers have been established, covering all of the major military bases, with more than 8,000 persons tested in 2006. CT has been successfully expanded to routine counseling and testing (RTC). Prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) is being offered at five UPDF sites, with training of midwives and nurses in three of the sites. The CT program is directly linked to care, with palliative care, including drugs for opportunistic infections (OIs), provided for the estimated 15,000 to 20,000 HIV infected military personnel and family members.

Treatment

ART is now provided through PEPFAR and Global Fund support at eight UPDF sites, serving 1,800 military personnel, spouses, and children. Two laboratory technicians were trained in the measurement of CD4s. In late 2006, the UPDF AIDS Control Program developed a manual for UPDF commanders, entitled '*Basic Facts on Anti-retroviral Drugs*', as a literacy tool for line commanders. This not only addresses critical facts about HIV prevention and care, but also specifically describes the central role of the military leadership in an effective AIDS control program. It is expected that this manual can be translated for use to other African militaries.

