



CAMEROON

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

Because of its modest oil resources and favorable agricultural conditions, Cameroon has one of the best-endowed primary commodity economies in sub-Saharan Africa. Still, it faces many of the same serious problems of other underdeveloped countries, such as a top-heavy civil service and a generally unfavorable climate for business enterprise. Cameroon's estimated population is 18 million people, with an average life expectancy of 53 years. English and French are the official languages of Cameroon, which has an estimated literacy rate of 68%, with uneven distribution between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$2,300, with 48% of Cameroonian people living below the poverty level.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Cameroon's general population is estimated at 5.4%. Cameroon has approximately 510,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Cameroon Armed Forces (CAF) comprises approximately 26,000 members. Cameroon allocates 1.3% of the GDP for military expenditures. Since 1990, 4 HIV surveillance studies have been conducted in the military; the most recent study, conducted in 2005, revealed a military prevalence of 11.3% - twice the rate in the general population.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (JHCP) has continued its efforts to provide technical assistance to the CAF in order to improve its HIV/AIDS prevention programs.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Cameroon was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory equipment, supporting reagents, and other supplies related to the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. This award was appropriated for FY03, FY05, and FY06. Funding for FY03 and FY05 was released for expenditure near the end of FY05 and the beginning of FY07, respectively. To date, funding for the FY03 appropriation has been used to procure a CD4 counter, ELISA reader and washer, hematology analyzer, chemistry analyzer, microscope, incubator, and other supporting lab equipment, reagents, and supplies. Plans for FY05 funding procurements are currently under way.

Prevention

Throughout FY07, 77 educational sessions took place, and approximately 2,437 troops were reached with prevention messages. During the various prevention efforts, approximately 11,000 condoms were distributed to troops. Peer education training was given to 10 female troops during the South West Province Women's AIDS Meeting in Limbe. This activity was part of the National AIDS Week of events for the military. Sensitization activities, such as a football match between land forces and gendarmerie in the city of Ngaoundere, were used to sensitize the public about HIV/AIDS.



Also during this reporting period, a chief was appointed for the new HIV Information and Prevention Center at Ngaoundere military base. Logistics in this center were reinforced with new equipment such as audiovisual CDs. One supervision visit was conducted at the Ngaoundere military base by the HIV program manager of the military.



Care

Voluntary counseling and testing activities were organized during National AIDS Week. Throughout the fiscal year, a total of 239 troops were counseled and tested. In addition, the report from the 2005 Military HIV Seroprevalence Study was officially released in the presence of the Minister of Public Health and the US Ambassador in Cameroon.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the CAF for activities during FY08. The proposed activities are (1) conduct an HIV surveillance along with a knowledge, attitudes, and practices survey in all 10 garrisons in Cameroon, with a total sample size of 2,500 troops; and (2) conduct refresher training for 250 peer educators and 50 counsellors in military garrisons.