



# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

# 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 estimated population of the Dominican Republic is 9.5 million people, with an average life expectancy of 73 years, evenly distributed between men and women. Spanish is the official language of the Dominican Republic, which has an estimated literacy rate of 87%, evenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product per capita is \$9,200, with 42.2% of the population of the Dominican Republic living below the poverty level. The country has long been known primarily for exporting sugar, coffee, and tobacco. However, in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer due to growth in tourism and free trade zones. Although the economy is growing at a respectable rate, high unemployment and underemployment remains an important challenge. The country suffers from marked income inequality; the poorest half of the population receives less than one fifth of the gross domestic product, while the richest 10% enjoys nearly 40% of the national income. The Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) came into force in March 2007, which should boost investment and exports and diminish losses to the Asian garment industry.

#### **HIV/AIDS Statistics**

The HIV prevalence rate in the Dominican Republic general population is estimated at 1.1%. It is estimated that 66,000 Dominicans are living with HIV/AIDS, which is the leading cause of death among Dominican women of reproductive age. Nearly three quarters of all reported HIV cases occur in men. High-risk populations include commercial sex workers and their clients, and those with sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

### **Military Statistics**

The Dominican Republic military known as *Fuerza Aerea Dominicana* (FAD) consists of approximately 44,000 active-duty personnel, about 30% of whom are used for nonmilitary operations, including providing security. The primary missions are to defend the nation and protect the territorial integrity of the country. The army, twice as large as the other services, comprises approximately 24,000 active-duty personnel. The air force operates 2 main bases, 1 in the southern region near Santo Domingo and 1 in the northern region of the country. The navy maintains 7 aging vessels and 4 new vessels. The FAD is second in size to Cuba's military in the Caribbean. The armed forces participate fully in counter-narcotics efforts. They also are active in efforts to control contraband and illegal immigration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and from the Dominican Republic to the United States.

The rate of infection among the FAD ranges from 1.3% to 1.5%, according to the figures registered in the STI/HIV/AIDS service unit of the military hospital and the National Police.



### **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

#### **In-Country Ongoing Assistance**

The Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), implementing agency for the United States Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, has been collaborating with the FAD on its HIV prevention program. Collaborations have occurred around identifying risky behaviors within the FAD.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

CDHAM has been developing a behavioral survey for troops stationed along the Haitian border as well as for commercial sex workers in the same area. The survey will identify risky behaviors and STIs. Some renovations were made to FAD health facilities with support from DHAPP.

## **Proposed Future Activities**

CDHAM, along with the FAD, and the US Agency for International Development will be conducting the behavioral survey this year.

