

EL SALVADOR

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 El Salvador is 7 million people, with an average life expectancy of 72 years. Spanish is the official language of El Salvador, which has an estimated literacy rate of 80.2%, evenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$5,200, with 31% of the population living below the poverty level. A 12-year civil war, which resulted in some 75,000 deaths, was brought to a close in 1992 when the government and leftist rebels signed a treaty that provided for military and political reforms.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the general population of El Salvador is estimated at 0.9%, with approximately 36,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The most frequent mode of transmission is through heterosexual intercourse (77%). According to an epidemiological report from the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance (MSPAS), through the National STI/HIV-AIDS Program from 1984 to December 2006, 7,746 AIDS cases and 10,272 HIV cases have been reported, totaling 18,018 cases. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS estimates a 40% to 50% under-recording in the country. Of the 18,018 cases recorded, the age group most affected is those aged 20–34 years, accounting for 51% of all cases. The ratio of men infected to women infected is 1.7. In 2006 HIV/AIDS was the second highest cause of hospital deaths in men and women aged 25–59 years, and was the third cause of hospital deaths in men and women aged 20–24 years (May 2007, Ministry of Health, *The Fight Against AIDS in El Salvador, a National Commitment*).

Military Statistics

The El Salvadoran Armed Forces (ESAF) consists of approximately 10,000 members. The ESAF, primarily made up of young men and women aged 18-49 years, has a 12-month service obligation. In 1987, the first HIV case in the armed forces was detected. From that first case until 2005, 383 cases of HIV/AIDS were reported in the ESAF. In 1994, the ESAF Medical Command approved a directive for a policy, standards, and procedures plan to regulate research, control, and surveillance of HIV/AIDS in El Salvadoran armed forces personnel. El Salvador expends 5% of the GDP on military purposes. Military HIV prevalence rates are unknown.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DHAPP staff have been in communication with US DoD Southern Command to re-energize the program in El Salvador. In fiscal year 2007, no funding was sent to El Salvador.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

No programmatic activities took place in the ESAF during the current reporting period. DHAPP looks forward to future collaboration with El Salvador.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received two proposals for activities in FY08 on behalf of the ESAF. The first, from Population Services International, with the goals of introducing behavior change communication, training staff in counseling and testing services, and providing educational material to troops on the importance of knowing one's HIV status.

The second proposal came from the US Embassy, with the goals of making HIV/AIDS testing available in all armed forces units, providing awareness and prevention support to troops, and providing the best possible care to those infected with HIV/AIDS.

