



LESOTHO

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 Lesotho is 2 million people, with an average life expectancy of 40 years. English is the official language of Lesotho, which has an estimated literacy rate of 85%, unevenly distributed between men and women, interestingly with women having higher literacy rates (95%) than men (75%). The economy is still primarily based on subsistence agriculture, especially livestock, although drought has decreased agricultural activity. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,500, with 49% of people in Lesotho living below the poverty level.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the Lesotho general population is estimated at 23.2%, resulting in approximately 270,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Lesotho. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) is estimated at approximately 2,000 members. Lesotho expends 2.6% of the GDP on the military. No HIV prevalence data are currently available for LDF members but a seroprevalence study has been proposed for FY08.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

Population Services International (PSI) began working with the LDF in 2005, with activities focused on training of peer educators among military personnel, prevention programs that emphasized counseling and testing (CT) and correct use of condoms, and training CT counselors. The activities have led to increased demand for CT services among military personnel. DHAPP staff are an active members of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Lesotho Country Team and have provided technical assistance for country operational planning for FY08.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Lesotho was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory equipment, and supporting reagents and supplies related to the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. This award was appropriated for FY06 and has not yet been released for expenditure.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

The LDF and PSI worked diligently on their prevention programming and reached 1,300 troops with comprehensive prevention messages. Peer education training continued and 20 individuals were reached. The LDF supported 13 condom service outlets.

The LDF supported 2 outlets providing prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. During the year, 385 pregnant women were provided with PMTCT services, 185 of whom received a complete course of antiretroviral prophylaxis. This is an increase from last year. The follow-up mechanism for infants of mothers who tested HIV positive and received prophylaxis has improved. Two (2) nurses were trained in the provision of PMTCT services according to national standards.

Care

One (1) service outlet provides HIV-related palliative care services to LDF personnel and their families. During the fiscal year, 595 military personnel were provided with HIV-related palliative care (308 men, 287 women). Of these, 140 received treatment for tuberculosis. Three (3) nurses attended training on the provision of HIV-related palliative care including tuberculosis therapy.

Three (3) outlets provided CT services for military personnel. A mobile clinic will soon be functioning and able to provide additional CT services to sites outside of the 3 fixed outlets. Three hundred ninety (390) troops or family members were tested for HIV and received their results (279 men, 111 women). PSI trained 10 medical personnel to provide CT services according to national standards.

Treatment

One service outlet provides antiretroviral therapy (ART) for LDF members and their families. At the end of the year, 330 troops and family members were provided with ART (218 men, 112 women). Seventy-five (75) clients were newly initiated on ART during the year. One (1) laboratory has the capability to perform HIV testing and CD4 counts. Two students are attending long-term laboratory training at the Lesotho National Health Training College.



Other

One (1) LDF member and 3 nurses attended strategic information training offered through PEPFAR.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received 2 proposals on behalf of the LDF for FY08 activities. The first proposal was from PSI and the primary objectives were to increase CT services including properly trained staff, continue training and recruiting peer educators, and increasing laboratory capabilities for LDF. The second proposal was submitted by Research Triangle Institute and its objective was to conduct a seroprevalence survey for the LDF.

