

NAMIBIA

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

Namibia's estimated population is 2 million people, with an average life expectancy of 43 years. English is the official language of Namibia, which has an estimated literacy rate of 85%, evenly distributed between men and women. The economy is heavily dependent on the extraction and processing of minerals for export. Mining accounts for 20% of the gross domestic product (GDP). Rich alluvial diamond deposits make Namibia a primary source for gem-quality diamonds. Increased fish production and mining of zinc, copper, uranium, and silver spurred growth in 2003–07, but growth in recent years was undercut by poor fish catches and high costs for metal inputs. The GDP per capita is \$5,200, with 56% of Namibians living below the poverty level.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Namibia's general population is estimated at 19.6%. Namibia has approximately 230,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Namibian Defense Force (NDF) is estimated at approximately 15,000 troops. Namibia expends 3.7% of the GDP on military expenditures. There are no official figures for HIV prevalence in the NDF.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The NDF developed the Military Action and Prevention Programme (MAPP) and it is a joint implementation between DHAPP and the NDF. The DHAPP in-country project manager and project coordinator manage the implementing partners that work with the NDF: Population Services International and the University of Washington International Training and Education Center for HIV (I-TECH). DHAPP staff members provided technical assistance to the NDF during in-country Core Team visits. The purpose of each trip included review, assistance, and preparation of the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) Namibia Country Operational Plan (COP) for FY08, as well as military-specific planning and technical assistance to the NDF and US Embassy personnel. DHAPP staff members represent the NDF as members of the PEPFAR Core Team, and have been involved in every level of country planning, ensuring that NDF programs are adequately addressed.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

MAPP reached 7,831 soldiers with prevention messages through out the year, and 4,699 soldiers with abstinence and being faithful messages at military bases across the country. Of these soldiers reached, 3,863 were male and 836 were female. Included in these figures are the participants from the Social Marketing Association (SMA)-led "officer only" prevention sessions during the year; 2 sessions held at 261 Battalion in Rundu (47 men and 6 women), 1 session at Mpacha (20 men), and 1 session at Arty (16 men and 10 woman). The sessions were conducted in order to increase levels of participation in HIV/AIDS programs among high-ranking military officials. Typically, topics discussed included HIV/AIDS basic facts, abstinence, and being faithful messages, correct and consistent condom use, voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), and sexually transmitted infections.

A total number of 3,132 soldiers were reached with messages focusing beyond abstinence and faithfulness, such as condom promotion, proper and consistent

condom use, and condom negotiation skills. Of these soldiers reached, 2,574 were male and 558 were female. Other topics like prevention of mother-to-child transmission, antiretroviral therapy (ART), and stigma and discrimination were also covered. Different strategies used to deliver the message included dramas, health talks, and video shows, while materials such as posters, leaflets, booklets, and flyers were also distributed. For all base sessions, an evaluation form was used as a self-assessment tool to assist the SMA MAPP prevention teams to improve on their performances.



Condoms were distributed at 40 outlets including canteens and reception areas at the military bases. A total number of 303,412 condoms, along with Ministry of Health and Social Services (MoHSS) condoms were distributed at all bases and ministry buildings. Another military-themed and branded condom, the “Protector,” was concept tested. SMA has developed a condom distribution strategy for the NDF that will involve soldiers in the distribution.

The last quarter of FY07 was devoted exclusively to abstinence and being faithful messages from SMA MAPP education teams, which increased consistency in messaging. Fifteen (15) chaplains and 2 medics were trained on abstinence and faithfulness by a team of chaplains from the South Africa National Defense Force. The training focused on Combating HIV/AIDS Through Spiritual and Ethical Conduct. Military chaplains are expected to advocate for abstinence and faithfulness during counseling sessions as well as during church services.

This year, a vehicle was donated to the Namibian Ministry of Defense by the then US Ambassador to Namibia to be used by the Ministry's Directorate of Medical Services, in particular, the HIV/AIDS Coordination Team. The vehicle will help facilitate the team's implementation of MAPP, including monitoring the impacts of MAPP at the bases. Along with the donation of the vehicle, additional materials, including condoms, survival handbooks, MAPP playing cards, pins, and MAPP posters with HIV/AIDS prevention education information, were also donated for the NDF contingent to use in peacekeeping missions. This high visibility event was reported on national television and in the national newspapers.



The MAPP team at the Grootfontein Army Headquarters (AHQ), which is run by soldiers, started an active drama and a choir group composed of soldiers. Some of the dramas performed by these soldiers were recorded on video and are being used in the waiting area at the VCT Center and during drama sessions. These groups have started visiting other military bases to deliver HIV/AIDS messages, a significant achievement in terms of soldiers taking ownership of MAPP.

The Grootfontein AHQ VCT and SMA MAPP staff organized a World AIDS Day event at Grootfontein military base on 2 December 2006. The event was well attended: approximately 600 people spent the day at the activity site. Different activities, such as sports, drama competition, and a film show, were used to present HIV/AIDS messages.

Care

I-TECH has met with the MoHSS program administrator for palliative care, to get insight into the provisions of palliative care in Namibia in general and the linkages to the military services in particular. The MoHSS palliative care

program has been in existence since July 2006. As yet, no national palliative care policy or guidelines are in place. However, there is strong collaboration with the MoHSS home-based care program, the African Palliative Care Association, Catholic AIDS Action, and the US Agency for International Development. An advocacy task force meeting was organized in July 2007 and palliative care training for nurses has started. DHAPP's in-country program coordinator participated in the July meeting. Four (4) NDF personnel were trained to provide HIV palliative care: 2 trained on nutrition management for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and 2 in opportunistic infections management.

The 2 VCT Centers at the Grootfontein AHQ and the Remember Eliphaz Education Centre (REEC) in Rundu continue to provide counseling and testing to NDF members and their families. Efforts were made to attract people to go for testing by hosting promotional events where free promotional materials, such as T-shirts and lanyards, were provided to those who visited the center for testing. A total of 795 people were counseled, tested, and received their results at the 2 centers during FY07. A total number of 493 (368 male and 125 female) were from Grootfontein, and 302 (230 male and 72 female) were from the REEC VCT Center. Preparations have been made to open a new VCT Center at the Walvis Bay Naval Base in October 2007.

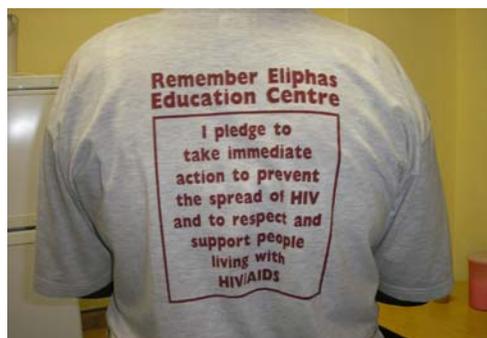
The NDF chief undertook a familiarization visit to the Grootfontein AHQ in February 2007. As a way of motivating all military personnel to go for counseling and testing, he was tested for HIV at the AHQ and disclosed his status during a parade at the same venue. His disclosure was hailed as a positive sign of leading by example. During the same parade, he introduced a soldier who disclosed his HIV status publicly. This soldier is among the very first NDF members to come out publicly about their HIV status. His disclosure has attracted a lot of attention from other soldiers, and he is now actively involved in community mobilization within the military and is part of the drama group at Grootfontein AHQ. A total of 24 other soldiers have expressed their willingness to disclose their status and are currently receiving counseling and psychosocial support before their disclosure.

Three (3) quality assurance supervision visits for both counseling and rapid testing at the two centers were successfully conducted during the first 3 quarters. Twenty-one (21) soldiers were trained in the VCT foundation course to prepare them to be counselors and rapid testers.

Other

Six (6) NDF personnel were trained in a 2-day VCT data management information system course. This training was conducted in an effort to build the sustainability of VCT services in the NDF and the capacity of NDF personnel to manage their own data. In addition, the Supply Chain Management System organized training for 2 more NDF personnel on logistic management system design. The purpose of this training was to improve the logistics management at VCT Centers, which is expected to be transformed from the current manual logistic system into an electronic system.

Remember Eliphas Part Two, a film specifically addressing stigma and discrimination in the military was launched in July 2007 and was broadcasted twice on national television. This film is a follow-up to *Remember Eliphas Part One*, which stressed the importance of counseling and testing. The film has attracted interest from both the military and general public.



A training schedule for NDF health care workers was compiled and shared with the MoHSS Directorate of Medical Services. A total number of 9 military health care workers were trained to provide HIV-related care and treatment, including prevention education for HIV-positive patients. One (1) NDF health care worker

was trained in Integrated Management of Adolescent and Adult Illness in August. Six (6) NDF health care workers were trained in September 2007, 2 in adherence counseling, 2 in nutrition management for PLWH, and the NDF doctor as well as 1 pharmacist-assistant trained in adult ART.

Furthermore, 1 VCT site manager and 2 senior counselors were trained in management and leadership to build their capacity, while 1 site manager and 1 senior counselor were trained in VCT clinical supervision. This training was an effort to improve the management skills of site managers and their senior counselors to increase the quality of VCT services.

The NDF HIV/AIDS policy is still in its draft form and it is still under review but is expected to be approved in FY08.

Proposed Future Activities

Ongoing successful NDF and partner programming was expanded to include additional aspects of comprehensive prevention, care, and treatment for military members and their families. All proposed activities were submitted to the Namibia Country Team, and were included in the FY08 COP.

