



# RUSSIA



# 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 Russia is 141 million people, with an average life expectancy of 66 years. Russian is the official language of Russia, which has an estimated literacy rate of 99%, evenly distributed between men and women. Russia ended 2007 with its ninth straight year of growth, averaging 7% annually since the financial crisis of 1998. Although high oil prices and a relatively cheap ruble initially drove this growth, since 2003 consumer demand and, more recently, investment have played a significant role. Over the last 6 years, fixed capital investments have averaged real gains greater than 10% per year and personal incomes have achieved real gains more than 12% per year. During this time, poverty has declined steadily and the middle class has continued to expand. Russia has also improved its international financial position since the 1998 financial crisis. The federal budget has run surpluses since 2001 and ended 2007 with a surplus of about 3% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP per capita is \$14,600, with 16% of Russian people living below the poverty level.

#### HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Russia's general population is estimated at 1.1%, with approximately 940,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The most vulnerable populations in Russia include intravenous drug users, commercial sex workers, and men who have sex with men. Intravenous drug use is thought to be the major factor fueling the epidemic. In some areas, HIV prevalence among intravenous drug users may be as high as 65%.

### **Military Statistics**

The Russian military consists of approximately 1.1 million active-duty members. Russia expends 3.9% of the GDP on the military. Military HIV prevalence rates are unknown.



### **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

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

DHAPP staff worked with members of the Russian military to conduct an international HIV military conference in Moscow in September 2007. Representatives from 11 European countries attended the conference.

### **OUTCOMES & IMPACTS**

In late September 2007, the Russian military hosted in Moscow the 4th annual military HIV Prevention Conference, *International Cooperation for the Prevention of HIV Infection Among Military Servicemen: Problems and Prospects*. The conference was also supported by the Russian Ministry of Defense, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), Population Services International, and the Global Fund. In attendance were 140 military medical professionals from 11 countries as well as 2 DHAPP staff members and 1 representative from the US DoD European Command. Presentations and discussions focused on policy issues, such as mandatory HIV screening for recruits, mandatory periodic force wide testing, fitness for duty, and HIV diagnosis and treatment.

Contributions by the Ministry of Health, the Russian Federal AIDS Center, and UNAIDS strongly reinforced the urgent priority of addressing the epidemic. Presentations from military medical professionals from countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States demonstrated innovative military HIV policies and a strong commitment to HIV prevention despite very limited resources.



### Proposed Future Activities

Proposed activities were submitted to the Russia Country Team, and were included in the FY08 COP.