

THE GAMBIA

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 Gambia is 1.7 million people, with an average life expectancy of 55 years. English is the official language of The Gambia, which has an estimated literacy rate of 40%, with uneven distribution between men and women. The Gambia has no significant mineral or natural resource deposits and has a limited agricultural base. About 75% of the population depends on crops and livestock for its livelihood. Small-scale manufacturing activity centers on the processing of peanuts, fish, and hides. The Gambia's natural beauty and proximity to Europe has made it one of the larger markets for tourism in West Africa. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1300.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in The Gambia's general population is estimated at 2.4%, with approximately 20,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The predominant mode of HIV transmission in The Gambia is heterosexual contact, with women the most affected.

Military Statistics

The Gambian Armed Forces (GAF) consists of approximately 2,500 active-duty members. The Gambia expends 0.5% of its GDP on the military. Because The Gambia's military does not conduct force wide testing so the overall prevalence rate for the military is unknown.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DHAPP has been working with the GAF to continue expanding its prevention and testing program. Oversight from the DHAPP program manager in Senegal, located in the Office of Defense Cooperation in Dakar, and a close working relationship with the US Embassy in Banjul, allow for the continued efforts of this program.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

Expansion of this program has included the incorporation of female peer educators who aim to reach military wives. Throughout the year, a total of 1,481 troops and their family members were reached with comprehensive prevention messages. Nearly a third of these people were women. Especially targeted were 600 peacekeeping troops for Darfur, who participated in prevention classes in small, intensive group settings. One hundred sixty-seven (167) peer educators were trained and various education materials were produced. The GAF has continued its public billboard campaign throughout the country.

Care

In March 2007, the newly renovated Yundum Barracks opened as the only permanent Counseling and Testing (CT) Center for troops and their family members. From March to September 2007, 445 troops and family members were counseled and tested. Trainings done in conjunction with the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital and Hands On Care allowed for 25 individuals to be trained in CT services. The medical center located at the Faraja Barracks procured laboratory equipment in order to improve the care and support services provided to the GAF.



Other

The GAF intends to create a military HIV policy. A study visit with the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces to review their current HIV policy took place in September 2007. Reviewing existing military HIV policies in Africa has allowed the GAF to begin discussing and drafting an HIV policy of its own.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal for FY08 activities from the ODC on behalf of the GAF. The objectives of the proposal include (1) continued prevention efforts for military personnel and their dependents, (2) procurement of supporting supplies for the medical center laboratory at the Faraja Barracks, (3) HIV treatment training for 1 physician through DHAPP's *Military International HIV Training Program*, (4) palliative care training for 2 nurses at the Infectious Diseases Institute in Uganda, and (5) increased counseling and testing at the Yundum Barracks.

