



TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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 Trinidad and Tobago is 1 million people, with an average life expectancy of 67 years. English is the official language of Trinidad and Tobago, which has an estimated literacy rate of 99%, with even distribution between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$21,700, with 17% of the population living below the poverty level. The country is one of the most prosperous in the Caribbean, thanks largely to petroleum and natural gas production and processing. Tourism, mostly in Tobago, is targeted for expansion and is growing. However, the government is currently coping with a rise in violent crime.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the general population is estimated at 2.6%, with 27,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Currently, the Caribbean Region has the second highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the world. Cultural beliefs, a diverse and migratory population, commercial sex workers, tourism, and other concerns have fostered a climate that contributes to the increasing rate of infection. The stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS are also significant problems in the country.

Military Statistics

The Trinidad and Tobago Defense Force (TTDF) consists of approximately 3,000 personnel. Trinidad and Tobago allocates 0.3% of the GDP for military expenditures. No estimates of military HIV prevalence rates are available.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The Center for Disaster and Humanitarian Assistance Medicine (CDHAM), the implementing agency for the United States Uniformed Services University of Health Sciences, conducted a series of 3-day workshops for the TTDF. CDHAM worked on the trainings in conjunction with Population Services International (PSI) and the Society for Family Health (SFH).

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention

Two 3-day trainings took place in February and June 2007. These trainings covered a spectrum of topics, including HIV/AIDS 101, psychosocial issues, stigma and discrimination, risk factors, international safety precautions, sexually transmitted infections, and the behavior change communication process. The training in February was attended by more than 40 members of the TTDF Air and Coast Guard, the Volunteer Defense Force, and the Regiment, including many senior officers. The training session in June drew approximately 90 participants. The trainings were conducted by members of PSI and SFH. These trainings are expected to become mandatory in the near future for all members of the TTDF.

Care and Treatment

Since 2002, the government of Trinidad and Tobago has offered HIV/AIDS treatment to its citizens free of charge. Testing services for HIV/AIDS are also provided free of charge at all government health centers.

Other

The TTDF is in the process of drafting an official policy on HIV/AIDS. TTDF members have already begun awareness training to promote healthy lifestyles, fight discrimination in the workplace, and combat the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

Proposed Future Activities

Prevention activities will continue in the next fiscal year. In addition, CDHAM will be working in collaboration with the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research to conduct a Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices Seroprevalence study among TTDF. Renovations for an HIV laboratory are also planned for this next fiscal year. DHAPP looks forward to continued progress in the fight against AIDS with the TTDF.

