



BENIN

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

Benin is a West African country with an estimated population of 8.5 million people and an average life expectancy of 59 years. French is the official language of Benin, which has an estimated literacy rate of 35%, unevenly distributed between men and women. The GDP per capita is \$1,500. The economy of Benin remains underdeveloped and dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade. Growth in real output has averaged around 5% in the past 7 years, but rapid population growth has offset much of this increase. Inflation has subsided over the past several years. In order to raise growth still further, Benin plans to attract more foreign investment, place more emphasis on tourism, facilitate the development of new food processing systems and agricultural products, and encourage new information and communication technology. An insufficient electrical supply continues to adversely affect Benin's economic growth, although the government recently has taken steps to increase domestic power production.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the general population of Benin is estimated at 1.2%, with approximately 59,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Most cases of HIV in Benin are spread through multi-partner heterosexual sex.

Military Statistics

The Benin Armed Forces (BAF) is composed of approximately 10,000 members, with a prevalence of 2.2%, according to a prevalence study conducted in 2005. Benin allocates 1.7% of the GDP for military expenditures. The BAF frequently supports PKOs in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Darfur, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The BAF collaborated with PSI to continue the HIV/AIDS program in Benin. The BAF Anti-HIV/AIDS Team oversees these activities, and plans and provides training as well as care and treatment for HIV-infected BAF members, their families, and civilians living near the military bases and hospitals. They have a credo: “Anyone who doesn’t have it, will never get it; Anyone who doesn’t know he has it, will know; Anyone who has it, must be treated.” BAF’s commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention is forthcoming in their efforts for their troops. They provide pre- and post-deployment HIV testing and offer a behavior incentive program for troops to remain negative during PKOs. Currently, the military hospital in Cotonou is a national teaching hospital for ART training in Benin. In addition, they provide technical assistance to the Benin National AIDS Control Program, Benin National Council for AIDS Control, Algerian police force, and WHO. The grant with PSI expired in July 2008, so the data reported are for most of the fiscal year but not all.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

BAF programs reached 4,259 troops through comprehensive prevention messages. The troops are reached through the Anti-HIV/AIDS Team and almost half of them were deploying on PKOs. Peer educators were retrained on HIV/AIDS-related community mobilization for prevention in the BAF. Each military unit has at least 1 peer educator assigned to it.

Two (2) service outlets provide PMTCT services. They provided services to 522 pregnant women, and 6 of these women were provided with a complete course of ARV prophylaxis.

Care

One (1) permanent service outlet provides CT services for the BAF, and during this reporting period, 4,119 troops received CT services including their results.

The troops who received CT for HIV were those who deployed on PKOs during FY08 and those who chose to be tested at the CT center.



Treatment

Two (2) service outlets provide ART services. By the end of July 2008, 659 individuals were receiving ART (305 men and 354 women). DHAPP provided training for many of the health care workers who treat these patients, and a CyFlow Counter for CD4 counts was purchased in 2007. It will be used for testing those diagnosed as HIV-positive during preparation for PKOs.

Other

Seventy-two (72) members of the BAF were trained in strategic information. In addition, a leadership workshop was organized for the peer educators and the Anti-HIV/AIDS team. The workshop was related to the team's annual meeting and is considered part of their institutional capacity building. In July 2008, the *2nd Annual HIV/AIDS Prevention Conference for the Benin Armed Forces* was held and attended by 78 military officers including representatives of the Anti-HIV/AIDS team, military authorities, and UNAIDS representatives.

Proposed Future Activities

The BAF has submitted a proposal to DHAPP to continue its HIV/AIDS program. Some proposed activities include a behavioral and seroprevalence study, renovation of a second CT center in Parakou, an increase in PMTCT services, and additional laboratory training for medical personnel.