



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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 Dominican Republic is 9.5 million people, with an average life expectancy of 73 years, evenly distributed between men and women. Spanish is the official language of the Dominican Republic, which has an estimated literacy rate of 87%, evenly distributed between men and women. The GDP per capita is \$8,800, with an unemployment rate of 15%. The effects of the global financial crisis and the US recession are projected to negatively affect GDP growth in 2009, with a rebound expected in 2010. Although the economy is growing at a respectable rate, high unemployment and underemployment remain important challenges. The country has long been known primarily for exporting sugar, coffee, and tobacco. However, in recent years the service sector has overtaken agriculture as the economy's largest employer due to growth in tourism and free trade zones.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the Dominican Republic general population is estimated at 1.1%. It is estimated that 59,000 Dominicans are living with HIV/AIDS. High-risk populations include commercial sex workers and their clients, and those with STIs. Among female sex workers, HIV prevalence is 3.5% in the Dominican Republic.

Military Statistics

The Dominican Republic military, known as Fuerza Aerea Dominicana (FAD), consists of approximately 53,000 active-duty personnel, about 30% of whom are used for nonmilitary operations, including providing security. The primary missions are to defend the nation and protect the territorial integrity of the country. The army, twice as large as the other services, comprises approximately 24,000 active-duty personnel. The

air force operates 2 main bases, 1 in the southern region near Santo Domingo and 1 in the northern region of the country. The navy maintains 7 aging vessels and 4 new vessels. The FAD is second in size to Cuba's military in the Caribbean. The armed forces participate fully in counternarcotics efforts. They also are active in efforts to control contraband and illegal immigration from Haiti to the Dominican Republic and from the Dominican Republic to the United States.



The rate of infection among the FAD ranges from 1.3% to 1.5%, according to the figures registered in the STI/HIV/AIDS service unit of the military hospital and the National Police.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DHAPP staff have been working in collaboration with the US MLO in Santo Domingo and the FAD. In FY08, a DHAPP program manager was hired to work in the office of the MLO and to manage the NGOs that will be funded in FY09 to work with the FAD.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

In FY08, DHAPP supported a behavioral survey for troops stationed along the Haitian border as well as for commercial sex workers in the same area. The survey, conducted by Dr. Michael Anastario of Cicatelli Associates, Inc. identified risky behaviors and STI rates. The study has not been formally released.

Proposed Future Activities

In FY09, the new program manager and 3 NGOs will support the FAD and build a comprehensive HIV/AIDS program. DHAPP received proposals from Cicatelli Associates Inc. (CAI), Fundacion Genesis, and INSALUD (Instituto Nacional de Salud). CAI will conduct a serological and behavioral assessment of HIV infection in the FAD. This project will assess specific drivers of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the FAD by providing baseline national estimates of the prevalence of HIV infection and HIV risk behaviors among FAD personnel. Fundacion Genesis will support the FAD by providing a mass media campaign for prevention education, CT services at 8 sites, and aiding in the development of an HIV/AIDS policy for the military. INSALUD will revise the health education curriculum for the FAD as well as design and implement a continuing education program in STI/HIV/AIDS for master trainers and peer educators, adapted to specific FAD needs and characteristics.

