

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 40.1%, 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 GDP per capita is \$1,200.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in The Gambia's general population is estimated at 0.9%, with approximately 7,500 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The predominant mode of HIV transmission in The Gambia is heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Gambian Armed Forces (GAF) consists of approximately 2,500 active-duty members. The Gambia spends 0.5% of GDP for military purposes. Because The Gambia's military does not conduct force wide testing, 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 OSC 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 800 troops and their family members were reached with comprehensive prevention messages. Especially targeted were recruits. The GAF has continued its public billboard campaign throughout the country. Currently there are 9 strategic condom distribution outlets. However, more outlets will be expanded to make this service more accessible to soldiers and their families.

Care

In March 2007, the newly renovated Yundum Barracks opened as the only permanent CT center for troops and their family members. Laboratory technicians have recently been deployed to the Fajara and Farafenni barracks to begin basic laboratory services. This has increased the GAF's CT centers from 1 to 2. In FY08, 916 troops were counseled and tested.

One nurse from the GAF attended palliative care training at IDI in Kampala, Uganda. A physician from the GAF attended *MIHTP* training in San Diego in August 2008.



Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal for FY09 activities from the OSC in Dakar on behalf of the GAF. The objectives of the proposal include continued prevention efforts for military personnel and their families, palliative care training for 2 nurses at IDI, and increased counseling and testing at the various CT centers. Research Triangle Institute International submitted a proposal on behalf of the GAF to conduct a seroprevalence and behavioral survey.

