

LESOTHO

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 Lesotho is 2.1 million people, with an average life expectancy of 40 years. English is the official language of Lesotho, which has an estimated literacy rate of 85%, unevenly distributed between men and women, interestingly with women having higher literacy rates (95%) than men (75%). The economy is still primarily based on subsistence agriculture, especially livestock, although drought has decreased agricultural activity. The GDP per capita is \$1,600.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

AIDS is the number one killer of the Basotho people, with 23,000 dying each year of the disease. The estimated HIV prevalence rate in the Lesotho general population is 23.2%, resulting in approximately 260,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS in Lesotho, one of the highest rates in the world. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Lesotho Defense Force (LDF) is estimated at approximately 2,000 members. Lesotho expends 2.6% of the GDP on the military. No HIV prevalence data are currently available for LDF members, but a seroprevalence study is being planned.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

DHAPP staff are active members of the PEPFAR Lesotho Country Support Team and have provided technical assistance in preparing the FY09 COP. In FY08, an in-country program manager was hired to oversee programmatic activities and work with implementing partners. PSI began working with the LDF in 2005, with activities focused on training peer educators among military personnel, prevention programs that emphasized CT and correct and consistent condom use, and training CT counselors. The activities have led to increased demand for CT services among military personnel.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Lesotho was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory equipment, and supporting reagents and supplies related to the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. This award was appropriated for FY06, FY07, and FY08, and FY06 was released for expenditure during FY08. Current proposals for these funds are still in negotiation. The LDF is working with the CDC, a PEPFAR-funded laboratory technical assistance provider, and the Lesotho Ministry of Health to improve, move, and reorganize the current laboratory at the Makoanyane Military Hospital. Once the full laboratory plan has been developed, which ties into the National Laboratory Plan, DHAPP will procure all laboratory equipment and supplies that are identified in this process.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

The LDF and PSI worked diligently on peer education training during the year, and 54 individuals were trained or retrained. PSI is working toward a train-the-trainer model so that LDF capacity is built and sustainable over time. Since most of the year was spent on training, peer education sessions only reached 224 troops. The LDF supported 16 condom service outlets and it was estimated that 86,000 condoms were distributed.

The LDF supported 2 outlets providing PMTCT services. During the year, 276 pregnant women were provided with PMTCT services, 60 of whom received a complete course of ARV prophylaxis. The follow-up mechanism for infants of mothers who tested HIV positive and received prophylaxis has improved in the last 2 years.

A male circumcision study protocol has been fully developed and is currently being reviewed by several institutional review boards (both in the US and Lesotho). The proposed study will provide information regarding the prevalence of various types of male circumcisions being done in Lesotho, which will assist with service planning.

Care

In January 2008, the LDF Wellness Center officially opened, so 2 service outlets provide HIV-related palliative care services to LDF personnel and their families. The LDF Wellness Center not only provides palliative care services but also CT services. The center is located close to a road with public transportation, and there has been an increase in the number of attendees for CT as well as other clinical services. During the fiscal year, 470 individuals were provided with HIV-related palliative care (178 men, 292 women). Of these, 21 received treatment for TB.

Three (3) outlets provided CT services for military personnel. The mobile CT unit went out twice during the year and was able to provide additional CT services to sites outside of the 2 fixed outlets. Four hundred nine (409) troops or family members were tested for HIV and received their results. The mobile unit also assisted in an outbreak of flu at the Oxbow base during the year.



Treatment

One (1) service outlet provides ART for LDF members and their families. At the end of the year, 359 troops and family members were provided with ART. One hundred six (106) clients were newly initiated on ART during the year. Four (4) individuals, including 1 physician, 1 nurse clinician, and 2 ART nurses, were trained in the delivery of ART services.

Currently, 1 laboratory has the capability to perform HIV testing and CD4 counts. The laboratory will move from its current location to the old site of the ART clinic. FMF funds will be used to procure the new equipment necessary for the lab.

Other

There are two major areas of strategic information being addressed within the LDF and they are to support the LDF's medical Services and a mobile clinic. In particular, an effort is under way to implement an electronic health record system for the LDF. A pilot program will begin shortly, and results from the pilot will be used to determine rollout plans. Planning has started for an HIV prevalence and behavioral risk survey. The results of which will be used to tailor prevention programs and to plan clinical services.

Three (3) individuals attended strategic information training offered through PEPFAR. Several workshops were held on the LDF HIV/AIDS policy for 224 LDF officers.

Proposed Future Activities

Continued HIV programming for LDF members was proposed to the PEPFAR Lesotho Country Support Team. All proposed activities were included in the FY09 COP. Some of these activities include continued prevention efforts, increased CT services, a seroprevalence study for the LDF, and a male circumcision study.