

LIBERIA

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 Liberia is 3.3 million people, with an average life expectancy of 41 years. Liberian is the official language, and the literacy rate is estimated at 58%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Civil war and government mismanagement have destroyed much of Liberia's economy, especially the infrastructure in and around Monrovia. Many businesses fled the country, taking capital and expertise with them, but with the end of fighting and the installation of a democratically elected government in 2006, some have returned. The GDP per capita is \$500.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The current HIV prevalence rate in Liberia's general population is 1.7% among adults, resulting in an overall prevalence rate of 32,000 individuals living with HIV in Liberia.

Military Statistics

The size of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) has drastically decreased from 14,000 to 2,000 troops in recent years. With assistance from the US DoD, the new troops are well trained and well equipped, and most importantly, will protect Liberia's people and respect their human rights. Liberia expends 1.3% of the GDP on its military.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The AFL and staff from OSC at the US Embassy have begun an HIV prevention program. In FY08, an in-country program manager was hired to oversee the activities. DHAPP staff have provided technical assistance, and the program continues to prosper.

Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Liberia 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 2006, 2007, and 2008, with 2006 and 2007 funds released for expenditure during early FY09. Although still in negotiation, the current proposal for these funds includes procuring microscopes, a biochemistry machine, rapid test kits and other basic equipment, and supplies and reagents needed for HIV infection prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

In FY08, 39 military personnel were trained in HIV/AIDS prevention, with a focus on basic facts, modes of transmission, distinguishing myths/facts, and common socioeconomic factors associated with the spread of the disease. Participants were trained in proper condom use, importance and identification of accessibility of condoms. The Barrack Clinic was selected as the first site for condom distribution and a total of 6,000 condoms were distributed. Twenty-two (22) combat medics were trained in STI



prevention and treatment using the national guidelines for the management of STI. They were also provided with the skills to serve as peer educators for the promotion of faithfulness, with an emphasis on the reduction of sexual partners.



Twenty (20) combat medics were trained in the proper handling and disposal of used needles and syringes. Sharps containers placed at service sites are being used by AFL service providers. Health care providers have been taught not to recap used needles and to exercise universal precautionary measures, such as hand washing, gowning, masking, and proper sterilization.

Care

The AFL has 2 CT centers, and during FY08, 3,660 troops, family members and civilians were counseled and tested and received their results.

Proposed Future Activities

In FY09, the Community Empowerment Program, a Liberian NGO, will be brought on board as an implementing partner to support the AFL's program. They will provide prevention support to the AFL. In addition, OSC and DHAPP will coordinate the construction of a medical clinic, which will include a laboratory for the AFL.