

RWANDA

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

Rwanda is a poor rural country with about 90% of the population engaged in (mainly subsistence) agriculture. It is the most densely populated country in Africa and is landlocked, with few natural resources and minimal industry. Primary foreign exchange earners are coffee and tea. The estimated population of Rwanda is 10 million people, with an average life expectancy of 50 years. Kinyarwanda is the official language of Rwanda, which has an estimated literacy rate of 70%, evenly distributed between men and women. The GDP per capita is \$900.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in Rwanda's general population is estimated at 2.8%, a decline from recent years. Rwanda has approximately 130,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) is estimated at approximately 30,000 troops. Rwanda expends 2.9% of the GDP on military expenditures. A seroprevalence and behavioral study was started in FY08 and data collection is ongoing for the RDF.



PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The RDF HIV/AIDS program is a collaborative effort between the RDF, the DAO at the US Embassy, PSI, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science Center for AIDS Research, Education and Services (Drew CARES), and DHAPP. Working in the US DAO an in-country program manager coordinates activities between the implementing partners and the RDF. DHAPP staff members provided technical assistance to the RDF during in-country visits throughout FY08. The purpose of the trips included review, assistance, and preparation of the PEPFAR FY09 COP, as well as military-specific planning and technical assistance to the RDF and US Embassy personnel. DHAPP staff members represent the RDF as members of the PEPFAR Country Support Team, and have been involved in every level of country planning, ensuring that RDF programs are adequately addressed.

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Prevention

During FY08, PSI's military behavior change communication program continued trainings, peer education activities, and supporting the 19 well-functioning anti-AIDS clubs. This year, PSI/Rwanda focused on reaching high-risk populations living in the surroundings of military brigades and battalions. As a result, most military anti-AIDS clubs now also have civilian members (mainly female partners of the soldiers), and organize sensitization events for the population living near the battalions. All of these clubs have trained peer educators. Abstinence and being faithful messages were discussed with soldiers during peer education activities and interpersonal communication activities organized by the trained anti-AIDS clubs. During the third quarter, a message development workshop was conducted to refresh message material and integrate gender and alcohol messages. Infidelity when living apart from a wife or girlfriend was discussed at length during this workshop and seen as a major risk factor contributing to the spread of HIV by the soldiers themselves. The new messages developed in the workshop are now being incorporated and produced into new Information, Education, and Communication materials. In FY08, a total of 1,013 peer educators were trained or retrained and

64,990 individuals were reached with comprehensive prevention messages.

The knowledge of transmission prevention has empowered HIV-positive soldiers in the RDF to spread the word to others. One group of HIV-positive RDF soldiers created their own music group, and they travel throughout their community, openly sharing their HIV status and encouraging others to protect themselves from possible infection.

Two (2) PMTCT outlets provided services to 278 pregnant women, including CT. Thirty-four (34) women received a complete course of ARV prophylaxis, and 42 health workers were newly trained or retrained in the provision of PMTCT services.

Care

Seven (7) service outlets provided HIV-related palliative care to military members and their families. During the year, 2,652 individuals including RDF members were provided with HIV-related palliative care, and 42 individuals were trained in the provision of care by Drew CARES.

Drew CARES established 5 new CT centers at the brigade level. In FY08, a total of 8 CT centers provided HIV testing for RDF personnel. During FY08, 10,410 individuals were tested for HIV and received their results, including RDF members and their dependents. Since several CT centers were newly established, training for 123 individuals occurred in FY08. All HIV-positive clients were referred to surrounding public clinics or Kanombe Military Hospital in Kigali through the Medical Brigade Doctors for follow-on services.

Other

A seroprevalence and behavioral study was started in FY08 for the RDF and data collection is ongoing. Data collection should be completed in FY09.



Treatment

Drew CARES acted on behalf of the RDF as its implementing agent for ART. During FY08, 7 outlets provided ART services to RDF personnel, their families, and civilians in the surrounding area. Four hundred twenty-four (424) individuals were newly started on ART, and 1,582 individuals were receiving ART by the end of the reporting period. Forty-two (42) military health workers were trained in the provision of ART.

Proposed Future Activities

In addition to the ongoing successful efforts of in-country PEPFAR partner PSI in RDF prevention program implementation, DHAPP collaborated with Drew CARES to expand it's work in Rwanda. Drew CARES is working with the RDF in HIV-related palliative care and treatment services, as well as CT services for the RDF. PSI and Drew CARES, on behalf of the RDF, submitted proposals for continuation of their programs to the Rwanda Country Support Team, which were included in the FY09 COP.

