



DoD HIV/AIDS Prevention Program Status Report:

Namibia



BACKGROUND

Introduction/General Information

The Namibian population is estimated to be just over 1.8 million people, with life expectancy estimates ranging from 40 to 51 years. English is the official language in Namibia, but Afrikaans is the most prevalent; the estimated in-country literacy rate is 38%, disproportionately distributed between males and females. Namibia has a well-developed mining industry and a per capita income exceeding the sub-Saharan African average. However, approximately half of the population continues to rely on subsistence agriculture for survival; annual per capita income estimates for Namibia range from \$1,890 to \$4,500.

Country HIV/AIDS Statistics and Risk Factors

It is estimated that 22.5% of the adult population in Namibia is either HIV infected or has developed AIDS. The number of people estimated to be living with HIV ranges from 160,000 to 230,000. Identified significant risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact with multiple partners, a high incidence of sexually transmitted infections, perinatal transmission, and extensive migration.

Military HIV/AIDS Information

The size of the military in Namibia is estimated at approximately 15,000. Namibian National Defense Forces (NDF)

has not performed systematic screening of personnel, and prevalence statistics are therefore unavailable. Current force-wide rates are believed to be similar to those found in the civilian population.

PROPOSED PROGRAM

The Namibia Ministry of Defense submitted to DHAPP a prevention plan titled *Making Uniformed Services Healthy and Socio-Economically Productive in the Context of HIV/AIDS in Namibia and SADC Countries*. Namibia requested funding assistance for several objectives, including development of a program of behavioral and clinical surveillance, a program of voluntary counseling and testing (VCT), production and distribution of HIV/AIDS prevention materials, and support for educational programs designed to reach military personnel throughout the country.

In order to develop a program of behavioral and clinical surveillance, Namibia proposed conducting behavioral research with active-duty personnel to determine their degree of HIV/AIDS knowledge and their perception or understanding of their own degree of risk. In addition, under the proposal, VCT would simultaneously be made available and promoted within the same group in order to provide baseline prevalence data for the program. Namibia would develop guidelines and provide comprehensive training for personnel selected to assume responsibility for the VCT program. In support of personnel discovered to have contracted

HIV, they would develop a program to provide both psychosocial support and AIDS-disease related healthcare.

Using data developed during the surveillance phase of the project, Namibia proposed to implement an HIV/AIDS education and training program for both military personnel and their dependents. The curriculum would be designed to be situationally and culturally relevant and sensitive, and would focus on self-protection and protection of others, as well as providing information designed to ease the stigma for HIV-positive persons. A part of the program would include training select influential military personnel to become “agents of change” who would provide HIV prevention messages to others.

Finally, to support the prevention campaign, Namibia proposed developing a unique social marketing program for condoms, which would assist demobilized personnel in setting up condom marketing and distribution enterprises.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

Military-to-Military

DHAPP staff visited Namibia during November 2001 for the purpose of an in-country assessment. Coordination with the US Embassy, Population Services International (PSI), and the NDF was established. It was determined that Namibia’s HIV prevention proposal should take a regional approach, and that the proposal should be submitted via the Defense Attaché Office. The proposal received by the Program office was focused on a Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) regional center, and has yet to be coordinated with the other SADC countries and US embassies and field offices. DHAPP awaits a country plan from the Namibian military, but understands that there are many barriers to effective coordination between the defense attaché and the military members at this time.



DHAPP funds sponsored a drama group and a mass social marketing campaign for HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.

Contractor-Based Assistance

Namibia is the recipient of aid from an external contractor funded by the DHAPP. In 2001, PSI was awarded a DHAPP contract to develop and implement a prevention program in conjunction with the NDF. The program featured a social marketing campaign supporting condom use. The goal of the program was to reduce HIV transmission among Namibian forces by promoting safer sex practices among military personnel, including increased condom use integrated with changes in HIV/AIDS attitudes.

PSI created a comprehensive marketing campaign that included the production and use of an educational training film, development of a training drama group, and interpersonal communication workshops.

The film, used by peer educators to train military personnel, was designed for the local military environment and is both situationally and culturally relevant. The drama groups performed interactive, educational, real-world plays with HIV education messages as well as messages encouraging condom use. In order to provide workshops that featured interpersonal communication, drama groups frequently worked with very small audiences, involving audience members directly in the production. PSI also created a peer education program that included training and support for educators. Working in conjunction with the drama groups, the peer education component of their program was designed to continue and expand after PSI concluded the Namibian program.

Complementing the marketing campaign in Namibia was a multi-media mobile unit that toured military facilities throughout the country to present HIV/AIDS education, teach proper condom use, and distribute condoms. The unit had the capacity to educate large audiences.

Finally, in order to assure the condom accessibility promoted by their program, PSI simultaneously established a distribution system throughout the county's military facilities, including a network of vendors and vendor support.

PROGRAM IMPACT

Master Trainers and Peer Educators

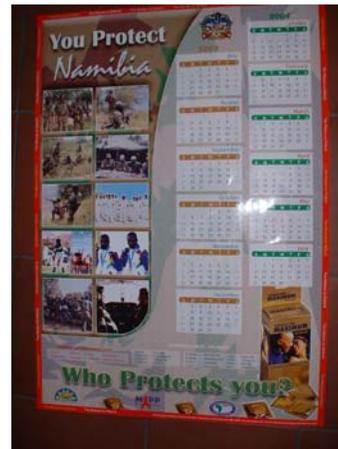
Master training programs recently began. To date, 23 peer educators have been trained.



Peer Educator presented HIV prevention lectures to NDF troops.

Number of Troops Trained

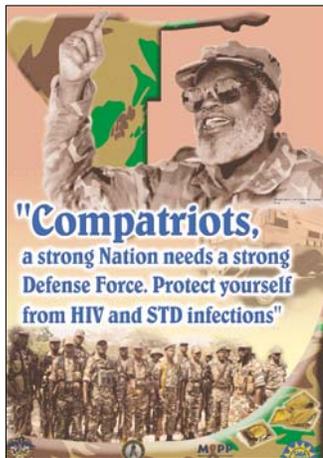
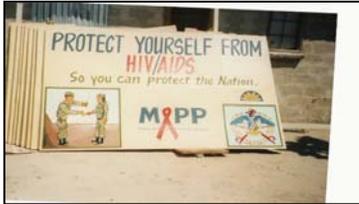
The Military Action and Prevention Program has trained over 4,320 soldiers. Due to increased condom accessibility and the emphasis placed on HIV prevention and condom use, more than 200,000 condoms have been sold.



Using DHAPP funds, PSI developed this calendar to promote safe sex and condom use.

Potential Number of Troops Affected

Through the use of a focused social marketing campaign over 15,000 troops have been reached.



Billboards were used to large numbers of people with HIV/AIDS prevention and education messages.

Mass Awareness

Combined with social marketing efforts, 18 mass awareness campaigns have been conducted by using mobile video units to reach troops in outlying areas. Interactive dramas and educational videos (termed edutainment) are excellent ways to involve audiences and make them more receptive to HIV/AIDS education and prevention messages.



Pictured are two scenes from the edutainment video "Remember Eliphaz," which has been used extensively in educating NDF troops in HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention.