

UNAIDS Office on AIDS, Security and Humanitarian Response (SHR)

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IN FOCUS: SHR AND THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNITED IN COMBATING AIDS AMONG UNIFORMED SERVICES

With one of the fastest growing economies in the world, its extraordinary contribution to the UN Peacekeeping Missions that rank the country the second in the World and uniformed services personnel that count approximately 1,9 million members, India is increasingly influencing international security and policy making. In this context, India constitutes an important partner in SHR endeavours to prevent HIV among uniformed services worldwide, therefore its Director undertook an advocacy mission in the country in the early March 2005. During meetings with high level National Authorities including the Minister of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the Minister of Defence, The Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Director of National AIDS Control Organisation, SHR Director forged their partnership in combating AIDS among Indian militaries.

"HIV presents a real danger to our young men and women in uniform and strikes at the very heart of national security – said Minister Oskar Fernandez, Convenor of the Parliamentary Forum on HIV/AIDS – although the epidemic in the country is not yet generalised, we cannot afford to be complacent"

"I am really pleased that the Indian Government decided to be at the forefront of the battle against AIDS among uniformed personnel – highlighted Dr. Kristoffersson – and its commitment to join forces with UNAIDS in ensuring long-term prevention is absolutely the only way we will win this battle".

A Declaration of Partnership delineating the commitment of the Indian Government and UNAIDS in preventing HIV among young men and women in uniform will be signed by the Minister of Defence of India and SHR Director in April 2005.

At a Glance

- ✘ SHR team hosted its first meeting for 2005 in Copenhagen in mid February 2005. During the first part of the gathering team members revised progress to date in implementing SC Resolution 1308 and UNGASS Declaration at the country and regional level and delineated the office strategy for the next coming year. The second part was dedicated to the evidence based report on AIDS and Security with focus on Russia, Asia and Latin America. The participants were presented with a skeleton outline of the report and a standard questionnaire to be used when gathering data from armed and civil forces
- ✘ Chaired by SHR, the Uniformed Services Taskforce held its meeting in Washington in March 2003. The participants representing UNAIDS, USDOD, USPHS/NIH, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Rockefeller Brothers Foundation, Population Services International, USAID, Family Health International and SARA/Tulane gave an overview of their organisations activities during the past months and agreed on organising an USTF high level meeting combined with an informal hearing with the American Congress in September 2005.
- ✘ As part of its behavioural change communication materials, SHR has produced almost 1,000,000 HIV/AIDS awareness cards; peacekeepers have received 500,000 cards, and national uniformed services 500,000 cards, and the amounts are to increase sharply in the months to come.

National Security: Uniformed Services

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

In February 2005, the **SHR Director** met with the chairman of **COMEDS** (composed of surgeon generals of NATO member states, COMEDS is the health advisory body of NATO Military Group), to brief on UNAIDS Global Initiative on Uniformed Services and establish a joint collaboration in addressing HIV among NATO Troops. Comprised of 46 member and

affiliated member countries, **NATO** is increasingly deploying troops in non traditional areas, and initiation of awareness raising and peer education activities becomes of substantial importance, considering that not any particular action with regard to HIV prevention and education has been taken so far within the organisation. The initiative was highly appreciated by COMEDS and the Director of SHR was invited to

address the forthcoming COMEDS plenary meeting, taking place in Saint Antonio, Texas in May 2005. In the meantime, SHR and COMEDS are working closely towards formulation of a Partnership Framework which will define the modalities of further collaboration.

The SHR funded project in the **Russian Federation** submitted its first interim report. Activities carried out so far include the design of the peer education course based on SHR information tools and the organisation of a series of such trainings in Saint Petersburg and the North Caucasus Military Okrug; procurement and distribution of 50,000 condoms; a KAP survey of 600 military conscripts; the formulation and approval by authorities of guidelines for organisation of prevention among young people during periodic conscription campaigns. SHR has already delivered 75,000 awareness cards in Russian, which will be soon distributed among the members of the armed forces.

Similarly, **Armenia** reported the completion of its first phase SHR funded project with implemented activities consisting in initiation of a KAP survey among 600 uniformed personnel and a series of training members of senior management and high rank officers of the Ministries of Defence, Justice and Police, master peer educators, HIV/AIDS counsellors and health care professionals including psychologists working with the Uniformed Services.

In February 2005, SHR Adviser for Europe undertook an assessment mission to **Croatia** and **Macedonia**, aiming at establishing contacts with the national counterparts and advocating for HIV prevention programmes within all facets of the uniformed services. The difficult economic transition coupled with the reforming processes aiming at downsizing the uniformed services personnel and decreasing related government spending, have left HIV prevention and care among men and women in uniform inadequately addressed. Hence, UNAIDS Focal Points and the line ministries in the respective countries are working together on proposals on HIV prevention among the uniformed services, to be submitted to SHR for co funding shortly.

SHR is working closely with uniformed services of 17 countries in the region.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In January 2005, UNAIDS represented by the Director of SHR and the Government of **Panama** represented by the Minister of Governance and Justice, Deputy Minister of Health and the Coordinator of the Social Cabinet signed a Declaration of Partnership, whereby both parties committed to work together in preventing HIV among Panama uniformed services personnel through peer education and integration of HIV/AIDS related topics into the curricula of the Maritime, Air Force and Police training schools in the country. Currently, SHR and the national counterparts are jointly implementing a programme that targets with

HIV prevention activities approximately 7,000 young men and women in uniform.

UNAIDS SHR and **CARICOM PANCAP** joined forces to combat HIV among uniformed personnel in the Caribbean, through signing a Declaration of Partnership between the Director of SHR and the Assistant Secretary General for Human and Social Development of the CARICOM Secretariat.

Project proposals from **Brazil, Panama** and **Colombia** submitted to SHR for funding have been cleared by the PRC committee and soon will start the implementation of activities; the proposal from Nicaragua has been submitted to HQ for final approval.

The Network of LAC uniformed services, unique in its kind, comprised by the UCCs, representatives from LAC COPRECOS as well as military and police force members from the Region is currently gathering relevant published data on STI/HIV/AIDS among uniformed services as part of the wider SRH research project on AIDS and Security launched in 2004.

South and East Asia

The **Asia Pacific Regional HIV/AIDS Treatment and Care Workshop for the military** was held in Bangkok from 1-4 March. Over 30 military medical personnel attended from across the region to receive training on the medical aspects of HIV/AIDS treatment and care. SHR attended the workshop informally to network with the broad range of participants.

The Peer Education Kit for Uniformed Services was translated into Chinese and 3,000 copies have been printed. These will now be used as advocacy for initiating a UNAIDS supported project with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) this year.

The **Mongolia** SHR supported project "*Prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS among military staff and young recruits (Second phase)*" was approved in late 2004 with activities commencing in January 2005. The Awareness Card for Uniformed Services has been translated into Mongolian and will be distributed as part of the Project's activities.

UNAIDS helped facilitate a study tour to Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, for the **PNG Defence Force** (PNG DF). The study tour aimed to exchange information on the current situation of the AIDS epidemic among the military in PNG and military counterparts in the region. In addition, the PNG DF intended to see how counterparts have been mainstreaming HIV and AIDS into military matters, especially in trainings of recruits and academy cadets.

The Prahari Project addressing Border Security Forces in the State of **West Bengal** was officially launched in March 2005, in a ceremony attended and addressed by the Director General BSF, the Director General of National AIDS Control Organisation, the Indian Network of PLWHA, the UN

Resident Coordinator, UNAIDS Office in India, as well as members from the BSF.

The UN Theme Group on HIV/AIDS in **Bangladesh** in conjunction with the Bangladeshi Armed forces submitted for SHR approval and funding a proposal that aims at strengthening/building capacities of the Armed Forces to respond to HIV/AIDS through awareness raising among policy and decision makers, peer education training, provision of VCCT and reinforcement of medical services.

Following the mission to New Delhi, the SHR Regional Adviser for South Asia paid a visit to **Tamil Nadu**, one of the most HIV affected states in the country. At the end of a series of meetings organised with officials from the armed and police forces as well as the National Control Programme Society (NCPS), it was agreed that SHR, NCPS and the police forces will work together in designing a proposal that aims at preventing HIV among the 200,000 policemen in Tamil Nadu.

Guided by the UNAIDS Office in **Pakistan**, the Ministries of Defence, Health and Anti Narcotic Forces are working together to design a programme that addresses HIV/AIDS among their ranks. Such project will be jointly funded by SHR and the National AIDS Programme and will be overseen by UNAIDS office in the country.

SHR is currently engaged in 13 countries in the region.

Middle East and North Africa (MENA)

The inaugural days of 2005 witnessed a joint SHR and DPKO historical mission to Khartoum, **Sudan**. The objective of this mission was to provide technical support to the newly established HIV/AIDS unit in the peacekeeping mission (see section on peacekeeping) and establish contacts with the members of the armed and civil forces. Both national groups attended a UNAIDS workshop for uniformed services held in Morocco in December 2004. As a result of this workshop and mission, the Ministers of Defence and Interior have combined their national strategic plan of action on HIV/AIDS and are now finalizing a project to be supported by UNAIDS.

Sub-Saharan Africa

A partnership forged in January 2005 was that of the **Kenyan** Department of Defense (KDOD) and UNAIDS. The KDOD are currently refining their project activities to be supported by UNAIDS in conjunction with UNODC. The aim of this project will

be to inculcate, maintain and sustain safer sexual behaviour among young military recruits.

SHR is working with the **Ethiopian** police and armed forces in an effort to rejuvenate their response to HIV/AIDS. While the Ethiopian Defence Force has a long history of HIV/AIDS activities, they have acknowledged the need for technical capacity building. Both parties will attend a workshop to be facilitated by SHR in Addis Ababa later this year.

In **Cameroon**, SHR is working with the Ministry of Defence and Military Health Research Center to finalize a programme to train peer educators and counsellors among subaltern officers, rank and file soldiers and future peacekeepers.

In **Mozambique** SHR, the UNAIDS country office and UNDP are finalising a programme which aims to build institutional capacity to fight HIV/AIDS within the Ministry of Defence, Interior and the Demining programme, through training and awareness building activities.

In **Somalia**, SHR is collaborating with the UNAIDS and UNDP country offices in integrating HIV/AIDS behaviour change education into the Rule of Law and Security Programme which aims to train 15-30,000 strong police force in the country.

In **Uganda** SHR is supporting a programme, which aims at formulating an appropriate defence sector policy, and a strategic framework within which the HIV/AIDS activities for the Ugandan Defence Force can operate.

In addition to country support, SHR is working with the Inter State Defence and Security Committee (ISDSC) of the **South Africa Development Community**. The ISDC comprises of military representatives from 14 South African countries. The aim of this collaboration is to assist the ISDSC in harmonizing HIV/AIDS programmes and policies for military forces of the SADC countries at sub-regional level.

Currently, SHR is working with 37 countries from the Africa and Middle East region to instigate or strengthen their response to HIV/AIDS among uniformed services.

Humanitarian Response: Vulnerable Populations in Crisis Settings and Humanitarian Workers

The Asian Tsunami disaster killed close to 200,000 people and displaced over 1,1 million. While the majority of tsunami relief efforts focused on lifesaving measures, such as provision of health care, water, food and shelter, UNAIDS objective was to ensure that HIV prevention and care needs didn't go unmet

and were properly addressed within the emergency response. In this context, SHR's objectives were to ensure that Tsunami response activities didn't exacerbate the vulnerability to HIV transmission for the affected populations as well as to enable provision of care and treatment services for those affected and

infected by HIV. SHR technical support at the regional level was coordinated by the Adviser for South East Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore, a consultant experienced in HIV/AIDS in crisis situations provided additional support to the UCC in Indonesia, the country most affected.

As part of this response, approximately 40,000 Awareness Cards for uniformed services, un employees and humanitarian workers were produced

along with IASC guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in emergency settings.

Currently the UCCs in Thailand, Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka are networking with UN partners and stakeholders to ensure HIV/AIDS issues are duly reflected in the rehabilitation and reconstruction work plans – by especially focusing on high risk groups, including women and children, mobile populations and humanitarian workers

International Security: Peacekeeping Operations

UNAIDS and DPKO undertook a joint mission to **Sudan** in February to assist with the strategic planning for an HIV/AIDS programme within the peacekeeping mission, in advance of the deployment of peacekeepers, and to provide technical support to the Sudanese Ministries of Defence and Interior, in collaboration with the National AIDS Control Programme.

On 24 March, The UN Security Council adopted resolution 1590, mandating the peacekeeping operation in Sudan, with a maximum authorised strength of 10,000 military personnel and 715 civilian police personnel. The Resolution welcomed ‘the efforts by the United Nations to sensitize United Nations personnel in the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases in all its established operations’. The mission HIV/AIDS adviser met with reconnaissance teams from Nepal and Zambia to discuss training requirements and mission programmes.

The training of HIV/AIDS peer educators is increasing across missions, including for example, two sessions in **MINUSTAH** (Haiti), and four in **ONUCI** (Côte d’Ivoire) for the Bangladeshi, Niger, Senegalese and Togolese battalions. HIV/AIDS Focal points in the Australian, Brazilian and Pakistani peacekeeping forces deployed in **UNMISSET** (East Timor) have delivered a series of awareness and sensitisation sessions.

In **MONUC** (the Democratic Republic of Congo), the Indian contingent deployed in Beni held an HIV/AIDS sensitisation exercise for the local community that involved key appointees, including the Governor of the province and Church dignitaries. The mission’s HIV/AIDS unit also raised \$8000 to support an NGO in Eastern Congo that cares of victims of rape, sexual abuse and violence, some of whom are HIV-positive.

In **UNMIL** (Liberia), three outreach programmes provided HIV/AIDS leadership and awareness trainings to Imams, the media and women’s groups. Similarly, **MINUSTAH** collaborated with a local NGO to hold a press conference and two workshops for journalists in Port au Prince and Hince, covering HIV/AIDS issues and reporting strategies. **UNMIK** (Kosovo) is developing a project with CARE International for HIV/AIDS capacity building, targeting nationals involved in anti-human trafficking.

The comprehensive report of the Secretary General's Special Adviser on sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations was published on 24 March (A/59/710). UNAIDS SHR and DPKO are working closely to ensure that the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse is mainstreamed in HIV/AIDS training.