

FACT SHEET



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
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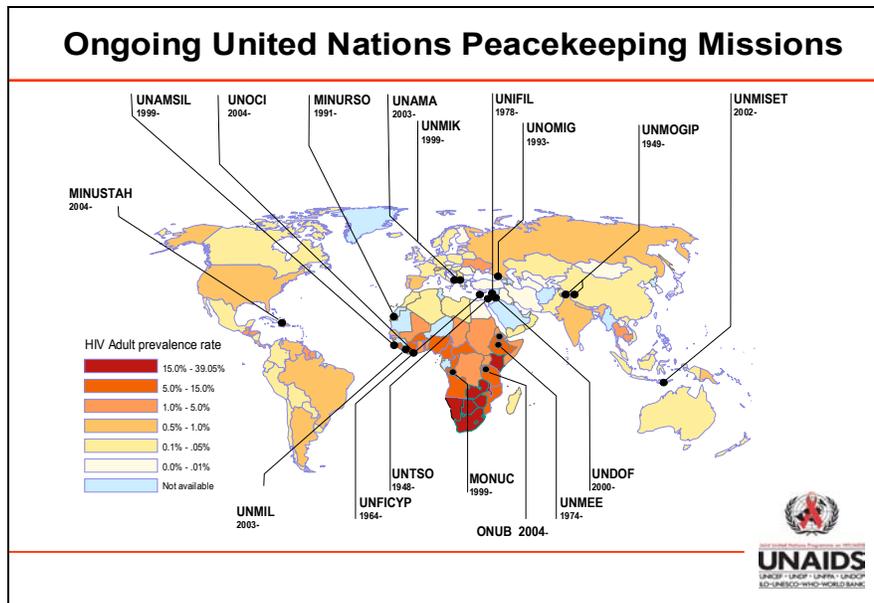
HIV/AIDS AND PEACEKEEPING

Recognising that conflict and post conflict areas are high-risk environments for the spread of HIV, UN Security Council Resolution 1308, July 2000, underscores the importance of HIV/AIDS awareness training and prevention initiatives for peacekeepers.

In January 2001, UNAIDS signed a Cooperation Framework with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), to assist with the development of a comprehensive HIV/AIDS policy within the Department.

Awareness Training

DPKO has developed training modules on HIV/AIDS to form part of pre-deployment training for troop contributing countries. Further pre-deployment training is offered by DPKO on request. HIV/AIDS awareness is also included in induction upon arrival in the mission area. As part of its global awareness strategy for uniformed services, in June 2001 UNAIDS and DPKO launched an 'HIV/AIDS Awareness Card for Peacekeeping Operations' as a practical training tool for peacekeepers. This plastic card contains an inner condom pocket and outlines the basic facts about HIV/AIDS and the code of conduct for peacekeepers. It is available in ten languages — Arabic, Bengali, English, French, Hindi, Kiswahili, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Urdu.



(June 2004) World Map on HIV epidemic and UN peacekeeping missions

Integrated Gender Approach

In response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, October 2000, on the impact of armed conflict on women, UNAIDS and UNIFEM have been collaborating to strengthen an integrated gender approach and AIDS awareness training for uniformed services, including international peacekeepers.

HIV/AIDS Policy Advisers

There are currently four mission HIV/AIDS policy advisers – in MONUC, UNAMSIL, UNMEE and UNMISSET. Supported by UN Volunteers, they provide HIV/AIDS awareness training in the mission area; other peacekeeping operations have HIV/AIDS focal points. UNAIDS is funding the position of an HIV/AIDS policy adviser in DPKO headquarters to develop policy and coordinate and facilitate field initiatives. Condoms are provided for peacekeepers and post-exposure prophylaxis kits are available for occupational exposure to HIV. DPKO ensures the safety of blood and blood products in field hospitals by using supplies from sources that meet WHO standards.

HIV/AIDS Trust Fund

Using contributions raised by UNAIDS, DPKO has set up an HIV/AIDS Trust Fund. It will initially be used to strengthen voluntary confidential counselling and testing (VCCT) facilities in missions, to support collaborative local projects between peacekeepers and vulnerable groups, to collect baseline data through mission assessments and HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitude and practice surveys and to facilitate training for HIV/AIDS policy advisers and focal points.

HIV Testing for UN Peacekeepers

UNAIDS convened an Expert Panel on HIV Testing in UN Peacekeeping Operations in Bangkok, Thailand, on 28-30 November 2001. Its report strongly supported a policy of VCCT as opposed to mandatory HIV testing. In accordance with current medical and human rights guidelines, the UN does not require that troops at any time be tested for HIV in relation to deployment as peacekeepers. In January 2004 the DPKO announced its policy on HIV testing, expressing its support for Voluntary Confidential Counselling and testing (VCCT), and outlining the responsibility of the missions to provide access to PEP kits.

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UN Peacekeepers Providing HIV/AIDS Awareness Training

The UN peacekeeping mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) has taken the lead in providing training on how to tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic sweeping Africa. It has trained troops from both countries, as well as its own peacekeepers, to instruct fellow soldiers and civilians on how to combat the virus and prevent its spread.

The head of mission, the Secretary-General's Special Representative Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, said UNMEE was fighting a war against the virus. "We are responding to the global war against the HIV/AIDS pandemic by undertaking this training of trainers course," he said, in a speech to troops from the Eritrean Defence Force (EDF). "As in any war that is being fought with the objective of winning and/or neutralising the enemy, knowledge about its capabilities, resources, tactics and limitations, become critically important."

The troops, who have graduated from the training scheme, will use their skills to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS and introduce protection programmes. They have been given literature to help educate their communities when they return home.

Legwaila said fighting the virus was akin to peacekeeping – to save lives and stop destruction.

"By 2003, ensure the inclusion of HIV/AIDS awareness and training, including a gender component, into guidelines designed for use by defence personnel and other personnel involved in international peacekeeping operations while also continuing with ongoing education and prevention efforts, including pre-deployment orientation, for these personnel."

UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS, Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, 27 June 2001

UNAIDS Office on AIDS, Security and Humanitarian Response
UN Nordic Office, P.O. Box 2530, 3 Midtermolen, 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark
Tel: 45 35 46 71 43 Fax: 45 35 46 71 41 Email: shr@unaids.org