



UNAIDS Office on AIDS, Security and Humanitarian Response

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IN FOCUS: UNAIDS launches its Global Initiative on “Engaging uniformed services on the fight against HIV/AIDS”

One of the most ground breaking aspects of the Declaration of Commitment adopted by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS (UNGASS) in June 2001 is its recognition of the implication of HIV/AIDS on national and international security. On 22 September 2003, during the one day follow up to UNGASS to review and assess progress made in implementing the Declaration of Commitment, UNAIDS hosted a high level panel on HIV/AIDS and Security where it launched its Global Initiative on “Engaging uniformed services in the fight against HIV/AIDS.”

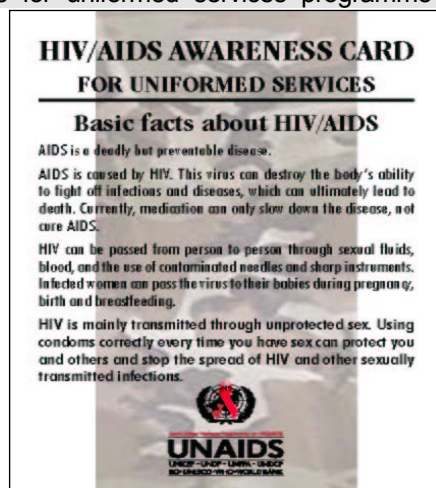
Through this Initiative, UNAIDS has already facilitated partnerships in 36 countries worldwide and has now launched several important tools to support and sustain activities which address HIV/AIDS among uniformed service personnel. These include:

Guide for Developing and Implementing HIV/AIDS/STI Programming for Uniformed Services: This guide is designed to provide an overview of HIV/AIDS/STI programming options for uniformed services programme planners.

Peer Education Kit for Uniformed Services: This Kit contains modules which provide an overview of what is peer education, how to train peer educators and carry out effective training sessions. Exercises on sexual violence, alcohol and substance abuse and stigma and discrimination are also included.

HIV/AIDS Awareness Card for Uniformed Services: In light of the success of the HIV/AIDS awareness card for peacekeepers, SHR has produced a similar card targeting national defence and civil defence personnel. The cards are disseminated in the local languages

Interactive World Map: This provides a forum whereby interested partners can access and share information on activities and policies to address the epidemic among uniformed services.



Also launched at this occasion was the UNAIDS document entitled “**On the Frontline: A review of policies and programmes to address HIV/AIDS among peacekeepers and uniformed services**”. The UNAIDS Case Study on “**HIV/AIDS prevention and care among armed forces and UN peacekeepers: The case of Eritrea**” launched at ICASA in Nairobi was also presented at this briefing.

The UNAIDS Global Initiative was officially launched by the Executive Director of UNAIDS Dr. Peter Piot who stated that “...if we succeed in making uniformed services across the world leaders in delivering that solution, then we will have gone a long way towards our shared goal of reversing the AIDS epidemic.”

Integral to the success of this briefing were the experiences shared by representatives from the Ministry of Defence in Thailand, the Navy Medical Centre of Brazil and Family Health International, all of whom were commended for their pioneering work in addressing HIV/AIDS among uniformed services.

National Security: Uniformed Services

Eastern Europe and Central Asia

As of September 2003, SHR has developed partnerships in 14 countries, where there are project activities ongoing in 7 countries in this region. Some of the highlights include:

Latvia, a project is about to begin and is intended for HIV/AIDS and STI prevention in the National Armed Forces of the Republic of Latvia, with particular emphasis on young recruits and peacekeepers.

Belarus has completed a phase 1 project and already a training programme on STI/HIV/AIDS has been

integrated to the Curricula of the Military Academy and the other regular training activities.

Moldova, a project on Prevention of STI/HIV/AIDS in the Armed Forces reported on the identification of a Project Task Force and 30 trainers who will assist in the development and pre-testing of IEC materials.

Armenia is in the process of preparing a project proposal that integrates HIV/AIDS training activities in the military and in police training institutions.

Lithuania has been carrying out HIV/AIDS health education activities in its uniformed services, but is now developing a complete training set to cover both military and police services.

Russia has provided a full-scale project proposal on training of Russian military on HIV/AIDS awareness. This project is being reviewed by UNAIDS.

Additionally, SHR is currently involved to prepare new project activities with Estonia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkey. Ongoing project activities facilitated by UNAIDS also include Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

South and East Asia

SHR continues to establish sound partnerships with various countries in South and East Asia:

Myanmar is about to embark on a comprehensive project which aims to increase the awareness on HIV/AIDS prevention among uniform services particularly among the police personnel and their families.

Lao PDR is in the early stages of a project with Lao police and military, particularly young trainees and recruits aged between 17 and 25.

India's project targeting the border security force in certain states of India is currently being approved by the Indian government.

UNAIDS also presented its work at a **Workshop for Military Medical** staff held in Bangkok in September 2003. The participants included military medical staff from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Mongolia, and Viet Nam. Jointly organised by the US Center of Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance and the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences (AFRIMS) of the Royal Thai Army, the workshop focused on HIV/AIDS prevention, behavioural change and VCT as well as practical training in laboratory work.

UNAIDS has also supported Family Health International by supplying the recently launched HIV/AIDS awareness card for uniformed services in both Thai and Indonesian languages. The cards will constitute an important awareness raising component in projects to address HIV/AIDS prevention for uniformed services in both **Thailand** and **Indonesia**.

UNAIDS is also facilitating activities with uniformed services in Cambodia, Philippines, Viet Nam and Sri Lanka.

Latin America and the Caribbean

In late June, Mr. Ulf Kristoffersson, Director of SHR, was invited for country consultations in Guatemala, Chile and Uruguay and obtained full political support for the planned initiatives to address HIV/AIDS among the uniformed service personnel. As a direct result of these meetings, working groups on uniformed services have been formed in both Chile and Uruguay.

Uruguay, the project will include police and military personnel, young recruits and peacekeepers.

Chile, the project will initially focus on young recruits.

Guatemala, a project proposal on HIV/AIDS in the military is currently being developed by the military officials.

In September 2003, the Director of SHR and the SHR regional focal point for Latin America, participated in a meeting with the **Brazilian Armed Forces**. The meeting was instrumental in strengthening the collaboration between the UNAIDS/SHR and the Latin American Commission on Aids Prevention and Control (COPRECOS).

UNAIDS is also working in Honduras, Cuba, Colombia, Guyana and Haiti to address HIV/AIDS among Uniformed Services.

Sub-Saharan Africa

As of September 2003, UNAIDS SHR is involved in 14 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Below is a brief summary of targeted interventions supported by SHR in each of these countries:

Burundi, the project targeting young recruits will soon be coming to an end and entering a possible second phase subject.

The **Angolan** Armed Forces have submitted the first draft of a project proposal on HIV/AIDS awareness among troops located in the highest risk zone bordering Namibia (Canene).

The **Central African Republic** project proposal on HIV/AIDS prevention among young recruits in the armed forces has just begun implementation in August 2003.

The **Democratic Republic of Congo** is also about to embark on activities on HIV/AIDS prevention in the Armed Forces with the support of UNAIDS.

Proposals pending UNAIDS approval include VCT management within the Eritrean Defence Force (EDF) and HIV/AIDS prevention activities within the armed forces of the Congo.

A unique project has been proposed by the **Nigerian** Armed Forces to target future peacekeepers with a comprehensive HIV/AIDS pre-deployment training, especially important when considering that a recent

study showed that 42% of Nigerian soldiers are involved in peacekeeping missions at some point.

Following the UNAIDS SHR East Africa Workshop, in July 2003, the armed forces of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda have been developing project proposals on HIV/AIDS in the uniformed services, and the complete proposals are to be submitted to SHR for approval.

The **All Africa Military and HIV/AIDS workshop** organized by the US Department of Defence in Botswana from 8-11 September brought together high level military representatives from all over Africa to discuss ways of improving prevention interventions. It was a constructive workshop where most countries were able to identify next

steps, share experiences and lessons learned and establish key partnerships with UNAIDS.

The **13th International Conference on AIDS, STIs in Africa (ICASA)** was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21-26 September. Engaging uniformed services in the fight against HIV/AIDS was an important feature during the meeting which drew upon experiences from across Africa to demonstrate the need for stronger leadership and commitment from governments and senior officers to strengthen the fight against AIDS in the ranks.

UNAIDS is also providing technical support to the development of proposals in Rwanda, Malawi and Swaziland and the Ivory Coast.

Humanitarian Response: Vulnerable Populations in Crisis Settings and Humanitarian Workers

IASC Task force on HIV/AIDS in Emergencies

The Taskforce recently completed the first redraft of the Guidelines for HIV/AIDS interventions in Emergencies Settings. The results of an extensive peer review are now being incorporated into the document. The Taskforce has also established a sub working group on Advocacy led by UNAIDS which is currently developing tools/messages to advocate for increased political commitment and increased accountability among donor governments and the international community to fight HIV/AIDS in emergency settings.

Gender in Conflict Zones

UNAIDS/SHR has supported the activities of the HIV/AIDS gender advisor in Sierra Leone for another year. UNIFEM has been working closely with SHR on the development of similar initiatives

in both Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

ICASA

The 13th International Conference on AIDS, STIs in Africa (ICASA) was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 21-26 September. The need and urgency to respond to HIV/AIDS in emergency settings drew much attention especially regarding the long term benefits of incorporating HIV education and STI treatment into all phases of emergency responses. Whether in the context of resettlement in Angola, demobilization in Sierra Leone, ongoing fighting in Sudan or food insecurity in southern Africa, with HIV/AIDS presenting a major challenge in emergency situations or HIV/AIDS as the emergency, there is a strong call for a new and more immediate approach of finding practical ways to respond to HIV/AIDS in such contexts.

International Security: Peacekeeping Operations

Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO)

The Office of Mission Support (OMS) HIV/AIDS policy adviser has been meeting individually with a number of Member States and key troop contributing countries to review DPKO's draft HIV testing policy for peacekeepers.

The report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on Liberia highlighted HIV/AIDS in a number of different contexts, including the increased risk in conflict and post conflict environments and that HIV/AIDS awareness should be included in demobilization programmes. The report also stressed the importance of having an HIV/AIDS policy adviser to coordinate activities in the Mission area for the prevention of HIV transmission among civilian and military personnel and host communities. DPKO and UNAIDS are working together to identify the best candidate.

UNMISSET started a month long programme of positive living testimonies by an HIV –positive Ugandan Captain/counsellor. The reception has been very positive with a significant increase in the number of people requesting voluntary counselling and testing.

DPKO has been working closely with the Zambian Permanent Mission to the UN to arrange for the temporary release from duties with UNAMSIL of an experienced HIV/AIDS counsellor and trainer in order to facilitate the training of counsellors in UNMEE. The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General in UNMEE, Angela Kane, and the HIV/AIDS policy adviser, Michael Munywoki, attended the ICASA conference for the launch of the UNAIDS case study on the lessons learnt from the experience of the Eritrean Defence Force and UNMEE. Commenting on the Mission's successful HIV/AIDS programme, Ms Kane said that the Mission wanted "to give the message that we can actually help prevent the spread of AIDS, and not contribute to it."