

Box 3.4.2 HIV/AIDS and Peacekeeping

The UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) has set a precedent in the UN's efforts to assess the impact of its programs to address the risk of peacekeepers contracting or spreading HIV. It was the first operation to have an HIV/AIDS policy adviser from the start of a mission. In May and June 2005, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) collaborated on an HIV/AIDS knowledge, attitude, and practice survey, interviewing 667 UNMIL uniformed peacekeepers, including military observers, civilian police, and personnel from eight different contingents. The survey found:

- Eighty-eight percent of respondents stated that they had been tested at some point in their lifetime; 80 percent had been tested specifically in preparation for deployment to Liberia, of which only half had received any counseling with the test. Even within given contingents, differences were reported on whether the

test had been mandatory or voluntary.

- Ninety-one percent had received pre-deployment HIV/AIDS training and, of personnel who had been deployed for at least a month, 88 percent had received training in the mission area. However, peer education programs were very weak.
- Overall, 76 percent of respondents were considered to have a comprehensive knowledge of HIV; this was determined on their ability to correctly identify three ways to prevent the transmission of HIV and also reject three misconceptions on transmission.

The need to address HIV/AIDS was originally underlined in Security Council Resolution 1308 of June 2000, which focused attention on the potential links between the disease and instability. This has led to a wide variety of initiatives:

- In 2001, the UNAIDS and the DPKO signed a collaboration framework to coordinate strategies and technical support;

and in 2003, the UNAIDS seconded an AIDS adviser to the DPKO headquarters.

- In 2005, the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly approved a post for an AIDS policy adviser within the DPKO. All peacekeeping operations have either AIDS advisers or, in the case of smaller missions, focal points.
- HIV/AIDS is included in pre-deployment training guidance and materials and UNAIDS has developed a peer education kit and provides HIV/AIDS awareness cards in twelve languages.
- Responses to HIV/AIDS are also being mainstreamed into UN-mandated functions, such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs and training for national police forces.
- In the past year, efforts have been made to link increased awareness of sexual exploitation and abuse and HIV/AIDS education for peacekeepers.