

CONGO- BRAZAVILLE

DHAPP

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HIV/AIDS
PREVENTION PROGRAM

REDUCING THE INCIDENCE OF HIV/AIDS
AMONG UNIFORMED PERSONNEL IN
SELECTED AFRICAN NATIONS AND BEYOND

WINNING BATTLES IN THE WAR AGAINST HIV/AIDS

BACKGROUND

Country Statistics

The population of Congo-Brazzaville is estimated at 3 million, with an average life expectancy of 52.3 years. French is the official language of Congo-Brazzaville, which has an estimated literacy rate of 83.8%. Since 1993, Congo-Brazzaville has endured a series of civil wars that have caused a great amount of destruction. The economy is based mainly on oil and forestry. The annual per capita income is approximately \$800.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 4.9%, with an estimated 90,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. A prevalence study conducted in 2003 found wide variations in HIV rates by region; the highest rates were found in the south. Men between 35 and 49 years of age had higher HIV rates than any other group. Identified significant risk factors for HIV in Congo-Brazzaville include unprotected heterosexual contact, significant poverty, and contact with commercial sex workers.

Military Statistics

There are no reliable estimates available for the size of the armed forces. The HIV rate for the military in Congo-Brazzaville is estimated at 4%.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

Continuing with efforts established in 2002 and 2003, the Walter Reed Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (WRJHC), targeted Congo-Brazzaville for their continued work. Their efforts there focused on training of 2 medical personnel in STI care using the syndromic approach and facilitated medical care of AIDS patients in the target population, according to national policies and international guidelines. Other efforts were made to encourage behavioral communication change among military personnel and their family members by training 200 peer educators. Further efforts were made to im-



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prove and encourage both HIV preventive behaviors and the protection of persons living with HIV/AIDS in the target group through 75 educational sessions organized by peer educators. Lab efforts targeted improving skills in the use of rapid tests for the diagnosis of HIV in the military health centers by training 2 laboratory technicians. Mass awareness emphasizing behavior change related to STI/HIV/AIDS resulted in the production and distribution of 2,000 pamphlets and 200 artificial penises, 115 photo flip charts, 2,000 posters and 2,000 uniforms for peer educators.

Proposed Future Activities

A proposal was received from Johns Hopkins University on behalf of the military of Congo-Brazzaville for the 2006 fiscal year. The proposal describes a combined project that also includes Chad, Gabon, and the Central African Republic. The overall goal of the proposed project is to decrease HIV infection in military personnel through the integration of community mobilization, behavior change communication activities, and peer education and condom distribution. Other aspects of the project include conducting a knowledge, attitudes, practices and behavior survey, as well as an HIV seroprevalence study.

An additional proposal was received for Congo-Brazzaville. The objectives of this proposed project include establishing laboratories for HIV/AIDS testing in 3 military hospitals (Brazzaville, Point Noire, and Dolisie), establishing 3 integrated counseling and testing (CT) centers, training CT counselors, conducting an HIV prevention campaign in the military camps (abstinence, be faithful, and the correct and consistent use of condoms), training military physicians and laboratory staff, and conducting HIV surveillance.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

Prevention/Care/Treatment

The Walter Reed-Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program is committed to providing technical assistance to Central African militaries to improve their HIV/AIDS prevention programs. To meet this objective, a statement of work was refined for efforts in Cameroon, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Chad, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. During the latter part of FY05, initial efforts took place in Cameroon, as well as Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, and Chad, with emphasis on sexually transmitted infection treatment and care, training military peer educators, and training laboratory technicians on the use of rapid testing kits. Early FY06 efforts will involve Sao Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and will expand upon the efforts commenced during FY05. DHAPP anticipates successful programs in all seven Central African militaries and is progressing toward these important targets in prevention and care.

In addition, ongoing efforts in Congo-Brazzaville have led to the training of 200 military and family peer educators, two physicians in STI management and HIV-related palliative care, and two laboratory technicians.

