

GABON

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

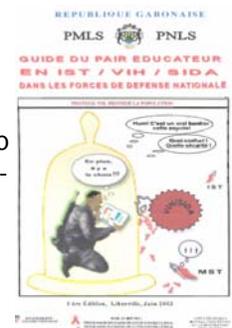
BACKGROUND

Country Statistics

The population of Gabon is estimated to be 1.4 million people, with an average life expectancy of 55.7 years. French is the official language in Gabon; literacy is 63.2%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Despite being made up of more than 40 ethnic groups, Gabon has escaped the strife afflicting many other West African states, making Gabon one of the more prosperous and stable countries in Africa. The oil sector now accounts for 50% of the gross domestic product. The annual per capita income estimate is \$5,900.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the general population is estimated to be 8.1%, with an estimated 48,000 people living with HIV/AIDS. Identified risk factors include high-risk heterosexual contact, and sexual contact with commercial sex workers.



Military Statistics

The size of the armed forces is approximately 5000. As of this annual report, no information regarding HIV prevalence in the military was available.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

Continuing with efforts established in 2002 and 2003, the Walter Reed Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (WRJHC), targeted the capital city of Gabon for their continuing work. Their efforts there focused on the training of 2 medical personnel in sexually transmitted infection (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 to encourage behavioral communication change among military personnel and their family members included the training of 200 peer educators. Further efforts were made to improve 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 two 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.



Foreign Military Financing Activities

Gabon was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. Plans for this funding include the purchase of HIV diagnostic equipment and supplies.

Proposed Future Activities

A proposal was received from Johns Hopkins University on behalf of the Gabonese military for the 2006 fiscal year. The proposal describes a combined project that also includes the Central African Republic, Chad, and Congo-Brazzaville. 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 on behalf of the military of Gabon. Specific objectives of this proposal include enhancing laboratory infrastructure, training of master trainers and peer educators, conducting HIV awareness and education for the troops, conducting training of soldiers prior to peacekeeping missions, expanding and promoting counseling and testing functions, enhancing laboratory capabilities, and conducting condom distribution.

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 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.

Ongoing work in the Gabon military included the training of 200 military and family member peer educators in the comprehensive prevention message, the training of two physicians in STI management and palliative care, and the training of two laboratory technicians.

