

## BENIN

# 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 Benin is estimated to be 7.86 million people, with an average life expectancy of 53.0 years. French is the official language of Benin, which has an estimated literacy rate of 33.6%, unevenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,100, with 33% of people in Benin living below the poverty level. The economy of Benin remains underdeveloped and dependent on subsistence agriculture, cotton production, and regional trade.

#### HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in general population of Benin is estimated at 1.8%, with approximately 87,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Most cases of HIV in Benin are spread through multi-partner heterosexual sex and mother-to-child transmission.

#### Military Statistics

The Benin Armed Forces (BAF) is estimated at approximately 7,500 members. Benin allocates 2.3% of the GDP for military expenditures. A seroprevalence study conducted in 2005 still appears to provide the most updated military prevalence rates, currently estimated to be 2.2%.

### PROGRAM RESPONSE

#### In-Country Ongoing Assistance

During fiscal year 2006, DHAPP collaborated with the BAF and Population Services International (PSI)-Benin to support vital HIV prevention and care activities for military personnel and their families. Successful implementation of behavior change communication strategies in the BAF was completed, using data from the behavioral sentinel surveillance. The first national HIV/AIDS prevention conference for the BAF took place and included 110 military attendees. A military health center in Parakou has undergone renovations that will lead to its use for counseling and testing (CT) for military members. Finally, CT services at Cotonou were made possible through the purchase of CD4 counters and viral load equipment, in addition to training center personnel.



### Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from PSI/Benin on behalf of the BAF, for HIV prevention activities during FY07. The primary objective of the proposal includes building on the successes of BAF programs by expanding training of medical and lay personnel to provide prevention, care, laboratory, prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT), and treatment services to military members and their families. Special emphasis will be placed on increasing access to CT services for service members in the northern and central regions of the country by opening another CT center, and providing mobile CT services. The proposal was reviewed by a scientific panel and will be presented to the DHAPP Board of Directors.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACT

### Prevention

The BAF continued its outstanding prevention programs during FY06, reaching 2617 military members and their families (2020 men, 597 women) with comprehensive prevention messages and training another 20 personnel to provide those messages. Four service outlets provided PMTCT services, and 1138 pregnant women were provided with those services, including one treated with a complete course of antiretroviral prophylaxis in a PMTCT setting.



### Care

Three service outlets provided HIV-related palliative care to BAF personnel and their families. Sixteen military members (10 men, 6 women) were provided HIV-related care, including 4 who were treated for tuberculosis.

Three CT centers provided services to BAF members and their families. During FY06, 2787 individuals were tested for HIV and received their results (2220 men, 567 women).

### Treatment

Six service outlets provided antiretroviral therapy (ART) for BAF members. During the fiscal year, 1519 individuals had ever received ART (570 men, 584 women, 188 boys, 177 girls). Eleven health care workers were trained in ART.