

## **EQUATORIAL GUINEA**

# **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**

Equatorial Guinea's population is estimated to be 540,100 people, with an average life expectancy of 49.5 years. Spanish and French are the official languages of Equatorial Guinea, which has an estimated literacy rate of 85.7%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Equatorial Guinea has experienced rapid economic growth due to the discovery of large offshore oil reserves, and in the last decade has become Sub-Saharan Africa's third largest oil exporter. Forestry, farming, and fishing are also major components of the gross domestic product (GDP). GDP per capita is \$50,200, the second highest in the world.

#### **HIV/AIDS Statistics**

The HIV prevalence rate in Equatorial Guinea's general population is estimated at 7.9%. Equatorial Guinea has approximately 60,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

#### **Military Statistics**

The Equatorial Guinean Armed Forces (EGAF) is estimated at approximately 2000 members. Equatorial Guinea allocates 2.1% of the GDP for military expenditures. No HIV surveillance has been conducted in the military, but it is estimated to be similar to the general population.

### **PROGRAM RESPONSE**

#### **In-Country Ongoing Assistance**

The Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (JHCP) has been providing technical assistance to the militaries of Central Africa in the implementation of HIV prevention and surveillance activities. Evaluation from the first four countries in the region to work with JHCP (Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, and Republic of Congo) shows considerable progress in education, training, and surveillance, as well as development of a more sustainable approach to preventing infectious diseases among troops and their families.

In April 2006, DHAPP staff conducted a field visit to Equatorial Guinea. Technical assistance was provided to the local military team in preparation for the official launching ceremony of the first activity on their action plan, at Moulia military base. During the visit, DHAPP staff assisted the EGAF HIV team with renovation and installation of equipment in the new HIV/AIDS information center at the military infirmary, and with training the HIV/AIDS information center manager. In addition, DHAPP staff helped train 41 troops and 15 family members during the peer education session.

### Foreign Military Financing Assistance

Equatorial Guinea was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory and medical equipment. This award was allocated for fiscal year 2003 and 2005, and 2003 funding was released for expenditure during FY05. Although still in negotiation, the plan is to use FY03 funds to procure HIV test kits.

### Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the EGAF for activities during FY07. The application included eight countries in the Central African region, and built on the successful work accomplished by JHCP in the region over the past 4 years, aiming to develop a more comprehensive strategy for fighting HIV/AIDS in the region's militaries. Specifically, funding was requested to extend the ongoing program into four additional central African countries (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe.) Continuous efforts were proposed to monitor the rate of HIV in the already established countries (Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, and Republic of Congo), as well as to conduct refresher training for trained peer educators in these four countries. Using the same survey methodology already established in these four countries, will provide, for the first time, the ability to reliably compare military HIV rates across all eight countries in the region.

The proposal was reviewed by a scientific review board and will be submitted to the DHAPP Board of Directors for funding decisions.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACT

### Prevention

In early prevention efforts, the following activities have been approved by the Minister of Defense: training of 100 peer educators, HIV surveillance for 500 people in Malabo, training of four laboratory technicians in HIV testing, training of ten medical personnel in HIV care, production and distribution of educational materials, regular peer educational sessions in the various units, and distribution of condoms. A capacity-building technical session is planned for 11-15 December 2006 in Malabo during which JHCP experts will discuss forthcoming project activities with the local military HIV/AIDS technical team.

