

**REPUBLIC OF
CONGO**

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 the Republic of Congo (formerly Congo-Brazzaville) is estimated to be 3.7 million people, with an average life expectancy of 52.8 years. French is the official language of the Republic of the Congo, which has an estimated literacy rate of 83.8%, unevenly distributed between men and women. The Republic of Congo was once one of Africa's largest petroleum producers, but with declining production new offshore oil discoveries will be necessary to sustain its oil earnings over the long term. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,300.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the Republic of Congo general population is estimated at 5.3%. The Republic of Congo has approximately 120,000 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. The primary identified risk factor in the population is unprotected heterosexual contact.

Military Statistics

The Congolese Armed Forces (FAC) is estimated at approximately 10,000 members. The Republic of Congo allocates 1.0% of the GDP for military expenditures. In 2003, with funding from DHAPP, the first HIV surveillance was conducted for the FAC in the capital city of Brazzaville, revealing a prevalence rate of 4.3%.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

The Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (JHCP) has been providing technical assistance to the militaries of Central Africa (including Republic of Congo) 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.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the FAC 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 four 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 of 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

The FAC reported impressive early results of their prevention programming, in collaboration with JHCP. During the fiscal year, 307 troops were reached with comprehensive prevention messages (299 men, 8 women), and another 50 were trained in the provision of these messages. One medical provider was trained in blood and injection safety, and another 3 received training in prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

DHAPP looks forward to expanded programmatic efforts in the Republic of Congo.

