

SAO TOMÉ & PRINCIPE

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 Sao Tomé and Príncipe (formerly Congo-Brazzaville) is estimated to be 193,413 million people, with an average life expectancy of 67.3 years. Portuguese is the official language of Sao Tomé and Príncipe, which has an estimated literacy rate of 79.3%, unevenly distributed between men and women. This small, poor island economy has become increasingly dependent on cocoa since independence in 1975. Cocoa production has substantially declined in recent years because of drought and mismanagement, but strengthening prices helped boost export earnings in 2003. The recent discovery of oil in the Gulf of Guinea is likely to have an impact on the country's economy. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,200, with 54% of the population living below the poverty line.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The HIV prevalence rate in the Sao Tomé and Príncipe general population is estimated at 2.4%. Little is known about numbers living with HIV/AIDS and risk factors in this small population.

Military Statistics

The Armed Forces of Sao Tomé and Príncipe (FASTP) are estimated at approximately 600 active-duty troops, with Army, Coast Guard, National Guard, and Presidential Guard branches. Recently, the first strategic plan for HIV/AIDS prevention in the military was approved for 2006–2010.

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 January 2006, a team from JHCP traveled to Sao Tomé and Príncipe to meet with local military health authorities and the military HIV/AIDS program team. Early discussions took place regarding proposed project activities and the implementation plan. Other local part-

ners involved in HIV/AIDS prevention activities in Sao Tomé were included in the meetings to discuss possible collaboration, in order to strengthen the project, avoid duplication, and ensure its sustainability.

Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the FASTP 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 Principe.) 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

The program in Sao Tomé and Principe is newly proposed; no reporting data were collected during the current fiscal year.

