



# 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**

Benin is a West African country with an estimated population of 8 million people and an average life expectancy of 54 years. French is the official language of Benin, which has an estimated literacy rate of 35%, unevenly distributed between men and women. The gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is \$1,500, with 37% 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. An insufficient electrical supply continues to adversely affect Benin's economic growth, although the government recently has taken steps to increase domestic power production. The recently elected president of Benin has begun a high profile fight against corruption and has strongly promoted accelerating Benin's economic growth.

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

The HIV prevalence rate in the 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 composed of approximately 10,000 members, with a prevalence of 2.2%, according to a prevalence study conducted in 2005. Benin allocates 1.7% of its GDP on military expenditures. The BAF frequently supports peacekeeping operations (PKOs) in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Darfur, Haiti, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## PROGRAM RESPONSE

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

The BAF collaborated with Population Services International and DHAPP to continue the HIV/AIDS Program in Benin. The BAF Anti HIV/AIDS Team oversees these activities, and plans and provides training as well as care and treatment for HIV-infected BAF members, their families, and civilians living near the military bases and hospitals. They have a credo: “Anyone who doesn’t have it, will never get it; Anyone who doesn’t know he has it, will know; Anyone who has it, must be treated.” BAF’s commitment to HIV/AIDS prevention is forthcoming in their prevention efforts for their troops. They provide pre- and post-deployment HIV testing and offer a behavior incentive program for troops to remain negative during PKOs. Currently, the military hospital in Cotonou is a national teaching hospital for antiretroviral therapy (ART) training in Benin. In addition, they provide technical assistance to the Benin National AIDS Control Program, Benin National Council for AIDS Control, and the World Health Organization.



## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

### **Prevention**

The BAF program reached 5,790 troops through comprehensive prevention messages. The troops reached are those involved in PKOs during the period: 1,345 troops in Cote d’Ivoire, and 2,923 troops in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The remaining (1,522) were reached through the Anti-HIV/AIDS Team. Ninety-four (94) peer educators were trained on HIV/AIDS related

community mobilization for prevention in the BAF. Each military unit has at least one peer educator assigned to it. They were also given skills to use the HIV/AIDS integrated communication plan designed by Ministry of Defense's HIV/AIDS Team. Two (2) service outlets provide prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) services. They provided services to 1,259 pregnant women, and 48 of these women were provided with a complete course of antiretroviral prophylaxis.



### Care

One permanent service outlet provides counseling and testing (CT) services for the BAF, and during this reporting period, 5,135 troops received CT services including their results. The troops who received CT for HIV were those who deployed on PKOs during FY07 (4,268 troops) and those who were tested at the Voluntary Counseling and Testing Center.



### Treatment

Two (2) service outlets provide ART services. By the end of March 2007, 417 individuals were receiving ART, 163 men and 254 women. DHAPP provided training for many of the health care workers who treat these patients, and a CyFlow Counter for CD4 counts was purchased in January 2007. Its intended use was for testing those diagnosed as HIV-positive during preparation for PKOs. Data for the second half of FY07 was unavailable.

### Other

Forty-two (42) members of the BAF were trained in strategic information. In addition, a leadership workshop was organized for the peer educators and the Anti HIV/AIDS team. The workshop was related to the team's annual meeting and is considered part of their institutional capacity building. Forty-eight (48) peer educators were reached through this activity. It was an opportunity to train the participants on HIV-related community mobilization for prevention. The capability acquired during the workshop will be strengthened through training on the anti HIV/AIDS integrated communication plan. Another activity related to the institutional capacity building is the team-building workshop intended for senior members of the HIV/AIDS team, and 7 individuals were reached through this activity.

### Proposed Future Activities

The BAF has submitted a proposal to DHAPP to continue their HIV/AIDS program. Some proposed activities include a behavioral and seroprevalence study in late 2008, renovation of a second VCT Center in Parakou, an increase in PMTCT services, and additional laboratory training for medical personnel.

