



## GABON

# 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**

Gabon's estimated population is 1.49 million people, with an average life expectancy of 54 years. French is the official language of Gabon, which has an estimated literacy rate of 63%, unevenly distributed between men and women. Gabon has a per capita income 4 times that of most sub-Saharan African nations. The oil sector now accounts for 50% of the gross domestic product (GDP). The GDP per capita is \$13,800. This has offset a sharp decline in extreme poverty; however, because of high income inequality, a large proportion of the population remains poor. Gabon depended on timber and manganese until oil was discovered offshore in the early 1970s.

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

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

#### **Military Statistics**

The Gabonese Armed Forces (GAF) is a small, professional military estimated at approximately 5,000 members. Gabon expends 3.4% of its GDP on the military. In 2007, with funding from DHAPP, the second HIV surveillance study for the GAF was conducted in Libreville, revealing a prevalence of 4.3%. Results of the study have been officially released by the Gabonese Ministry of Defense.

## PROGRAM RESPONSE

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

The Johns Hopkins Cameroon Program (JHCP) has been providing technical assistance to the GAF through the implementation of HIV prevention and surveillance activities.



### **Foreign Military Financing Assistance**

Gabon was awarded Foreign Military Financing funding for the acquisition of laboratory equipment, and supporting reagents and supplies related to the diagnosis and treatment of HIV/AIDS. This award was appropriated for fiscal years 2003, 2005–06, and 2003 funding was released for expenditure during FY05. To date, funding for 2005 has been used to procure laboratory supporting supplies and reagents.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

### **Prevention**

Peer educators who had been trained last year at the Mouila military base in Southern Gabon organized prevention education sessions. In total, 37 educational sessions were held in the military camps, and a total of 754 troops were reached with comprehensive prevention messages.



## Care

A second HIV survey and behavioral study was conducted among the troops in Libreville, the capital city of Gabon; the first study was held in 2003. In total, 985 troops were tested for HIV during May 2007. Laboratory tests were conducted at the military hospital in Libreville. HIV prevalence was 4.3%, and results were released by the Gabonese Ministry of Defense.

## Proposed Future Activities

DHAPP received a proposal from JHCP on behalf of the GAF for activities during FY08. The main objectives of the proposal are to conduct refresher training of peer educators and counselors in military garrisons, produce and disseminate behavior change communication materials, and reinforce education on HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

