

LAOS

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

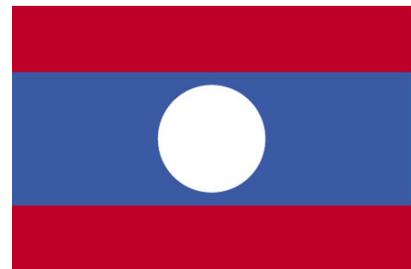
BACKGROUND

Country Statistics

Laos is one of the few remaining one-party Communist states. Laos began decentralizing control and encouraging private enterprise in 1986. The results have been astounding, boasting growth of approximately 6% per year from 1988–2008. Despite this high growth rate, Laos remains a country with an underdeveloped infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. Electricity is available in urban areas and in many rural districts. Subsistence agriculture, dominated by rice, accounts for about 40% of the GDP and provides 80% of total employment. A value-added tax regime, which began in early 2009, should help streamline the government's inefficient tax system. With these changes, Laos's goal of graduating from the UN Development Programme's list of least-developed countries by 2020 could be achievable. The estimated population of Laos is 6.8 million people, with an average life expectancy of 57 years. Lao is the official language of Laos, but French, English, and various ethnic languages are also widely spoken. The country has an estimated literacy rate of 69%, which is unevenly distributed between men and women. The GDP per capita is \$2,100.

HIV/AIDS Statistics

The estimated HIV prevalence rate in Laos's general population is 0.2%. Laos has approximately 5,400 individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Identified risk factors include in-country migration, and high-risk sexual practices including sex trafficking and prostitution. Heterosexual contact is the principal mode of transmission.



Military Statistics

The Lao People's Armed Forces (LPAF) is estimated at approximately 30,000 active-duty troops. Rates of HIV are unknown in the LPAF. Laos expends 0.5% of the GDP on the military.

PROGRAM RESPONSE

In-Country Ongoing Assistance

USPACOM and its implementing agent, COE, have initiated collaboration with the LPAF.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

In July 2008, DHAPP, USPACOM and COE staff traveled to Vientiane, Laos, to conduct a needs assessment of the LPAF for future programming. The team met with US Embassy staff, the CDC, various NGOs, and several Laos's governmental agencies such as the MOH.

