

# SAO TOMÉ AND 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 estimated population of Sao Tomé and Príncipe is 206,000 people, with an average life expectancy of 68 years. Portuguese is the official language of Sao Tomé and Príncipe, which has an estimated literacy rate of 85%, unevenly distributed between men and women. This small, poor island economy has become increasingly dependent on cocoa since achieving 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 GDP per capita is \$1,400.

#### HIV/AIDS Statistics

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



#### Military Statistics

The Armed Forces of Sao Tomé and Príncipe (AFSTP) are estimated at 600 active-duty troops, with army, coast 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**

JHCP has been providing technical assistance to the militaries of Central Africa, including Sao Tomé, in the implementation of HIV prevention and surveillance activities.

## OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

### **Prevention**

During FY08, the JHCP continued to work with the military in Sao Tomé in order to prepare the local team for implementation of selected activities. This process has been very slow due to lack of human resources dedicated to health in general and specifically to HIV/AIDS in the military. Following discussions with the Ministry of Health, it had been suggested and agreed upon to use the assistance of the National AIDS Control Program in Sao Tomé to implement planned activities in the military during FY08, due to the lack of human resources within the military. It is expected that local military will have learned from this first program how to sustain activities in the various units in the future.

### **Proposed Future Activities**

DHAPP received a proposal from the Global Viral Forecasting Initiative (Dr. Nathan Wolfe, formerly of JHCP, is the founder and principal investigator) on behalf of the AFSTP. It included the harmonization of key tools used for the intervention and evaluation of HIV/AIDS prevention programs in Central Africa subregion militaries (Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, Republic of the Congo, Democratic, Central African Republic, Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and Equatorial Guinea). Other plans included having representatives from the AFSTP attend a subregional workshop in Cameroon, with participation of military representatives from each of the aforementioned countries, and drafting subregional strategic guidelines for HIV/AIDS prevention in the military.