

Built to Last – Strengthening Local Leadership in Papua New Guinea’s HIV Response

In Papua New Guinea, the front line of the HIV response isn't a government clinic but a handful of community-led organisations serving people that mainstream services cannot reach. For years, many of these groups ran on limited systems and unreliable funding. To change that, three national organisations came together to form the Key Populations Advocacy Consortium (KPAC): Friends Frangipani, representing sex workers; Kapul Champions, representing men with diverse sexuality; and Igat Hope, representing people living with HIV. The consortium eventually grew to six members, including groups representing people living with and affected by tuberculosis, women affected by HIV/AIDS and young people living with HIV. Working cooperatively as KPAC, these organisations could now pool their reach and negotiate as one.

As the consortium found its feet, Health Equity Matters partnered with KPAC to help it become a durable, credible national institution. The collaboration strengthened the foundations from within, embedding local advisers in governance, finance and IT, building financial management systems and guiding the board and management through a full review of the organisation’s constitution and governance. Every step was designed to leave KPAC stronger and more independent rather than more reliant on outside help.

‘Our organisations understand these communities because we come from them. What has changed is that we finally have the strength to match that understanding – to manage our own funding, take our seat at the national table and lead in a way that lasts. This belongs to our communities now, and we intend to build on it.’

– Cathy Ketepa, KPAC Chairlady and Coordinator of Friends Frangipani

In August 2025, KPAC held its first-ever Annual General Meeting, endorsing a legally compliant constitution and confirming its board. On a structured assessment of its organisational health, its score rose from 36% to 69% in a single year. KPAC is now recognised by the National Department of Health, the National AIDS Council Secretariat and donors as a key national actor. It has even begun to broaden its income base, developing a resource-mobilisation strategy and winning new funding of its own. That transformation was already well under way when the Minister for Health declared an HIV emergency in July 2025 – far enough along for KPAC to help lead the national response.

KPAC shows what a community-led organisation can achieve with the right foundations in place. Continued funding means Health Equity Matters can help KPAC extend its members’ reach across the entire country and strengthen many more community-led organisations the same way.