

Rapid Response Under Pressure – Developing Papua New Guinea’s Community-Led Outreach During an HIV Crisis

In 2025, Papua New Guinea’s Government declared an HIV crisis, and the Key Populations Advocacy Consortium (KPAC) stepped up to support a significant scale-up of the front-line response. KPAC brings together six national community-led organisations, each serving a different community: Friends Frangipani represents sex workers; Kapul Champions represents men who have sex with men; Hetura Network represents transgender and gender-diverse people; Youth Lead Rise represents young people across key and affected populations; Community TB Advocacy represents people living with and affected by tuberculosis; and WABHA represents women affected by HIV/AIDS. What began as a solution to collectively build resources and improve HIV service delivery now needed guidance in how to become more sustainable and inclusive in an increasingly complex health care environment.

Through partnership with Health Equity Matters, KPAC underwent a detailed organisational capacity assessment in late 2024, and from this, developed an organisational strengthening plan, to be delivered over 2.5 years. In the first 12 months, KPAC’s assessment rating nearly doubled (from 64 to 122 out of 176) through a revised constitution, a board now meeting monthly under new terms of reference, a donor-compliant accounting system, a whole suite of organisational policies and procedures, and a three-year strategic plan. That progress has strengthened KPAC’s national credibility, improved coordination and influence in country-wide HIV programs and allowed the organisations to scale up community-led services to fill critical gaps.

In the same year as the crisis, more than 2,060 people accessed testing at the Sunset Community Health Hub, over 50 peer outreach workers were supported in coordinating HIV prevention activities in the National Capital District, 202 people started pre-exposure prophylaxis treatment and 52 started antiretroviral therapy.

‘People trust us because we are part of their community. They know we understand, and they know we will not judge them. That is why they come to us for testing when they would not go anywhere else. To see someone start treatment who might never have been reached, that is why we do this work.’

– Rogenia, Youth Lead Rise peer outreach worker and KPAC Board Member

The work in Papua New Guinea shows how representative community organisations, when well supported, can deliver quality, equitable outreach and become important voices in the national HIV response even in periods of intense stress.

With continued funding, KPAC can build on this momentum through the crisis, delivering even more effective community-led HIV services and policies that reflect the needs of the people most affected by HIV in Papua New Guinea.