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SUCCESS STORY

Open for Business: LINKAGES Partners Bring Antiretroviral Treatment to an HIV Testing Site in Papua Province, Indonesia



Dr. Ivan Limargo (FHI 360, LINKAGES Papua) discusses logistics management with pharmacy staff at PKR

Photo credit: Yvonne Maniboey (FHI 360, LINKAGES Papua)



The LINKAGES clinical service unit team discusses care and treatment with staff at PKR

Photo credit: FHI 360, LINKAGES Papua

At one time, if you wanted to get tested for HIV in a facility welcoming to key populations in Jayapura City, Papua province, Indonesia, you may have found yourself with nowhere to go. Then in 2013, Pusat Kesehatan Reproduksi (Center for Reproductive Health), a clinic now known as PKR, was established by the Municipality Health Office to provide stigma-free HIV-related services to key populations. This development was more than opportune for men like Ag,* a 30-year-old MSM who had been reluctant to learn his HIV status in existing facilities.

In 2014, Ag went to PKR, with its knowledgeable, warm, nonjudgmental staff, and he agreed to be tested. Upon learning that he was positive, however, he was referred to RSUD Abepura Hospital because PKR was not equipped to offer antiretroviral treatment (ART). But for Ag, as for many other members of key populations, the referral was not ideal. The hospital was an open and busy place, and not an especially friendly environment for key populations.

Dr. Hesti Purikasari, a doctor at PKR, noted that, “Both men who have sex with men and female sex worker groups, our targeted beneficiaries, [had] long been requesting to get ARV [antiretroviral] care and treatment here, as they feel more comfortable, especially considering the confidentiality issue.”

Lost before they start

Indeed, the number of HIV-positive key population members who are receiving ART services is low in Papua. In 2016, only 38.8 percent who tested positive for HIV at PKR actually accessed treatment at the referral hospital. Aware that far too many HIV-positive individuals were being lost between testing positive and initiating ART, staff of PKR and LINKAGES— the USAID- and PEPFAR-funded Linkages Across the Continuum of HIV Services for Key Populations Affected by HIV project — sought to equip PKR with the capacity to initiate ART on site. In this way, retaining HIV-positive people like Ag in treatment might be more easily accomplished.

Preparing for a change

Staff from PKR, RSUD Abepura hospital, the District Health Office, and the LINKAGES clinical services unit assessed PKR's readiness to provide ART and set up an on-the-job training for PKR's small cadre of personnel, facilitated by LINKAGES and a team from hospital. For three days in February 2017, PKR administrative staff, pharmacists, and health services providers

* Pseudonym



Dr. Helena Picarima (FHI 360, LINKAGES Papua) assists PKR staff with patient records data

Photo credit: Yvonne Maniboey (FHI 360, LINKAGES Papua)

were all matched to hospital counterparts for training in record keeping and reporting requirements, logistical issues related to

ARV stocking and dispensing, and clinical management of HIV patients. When the training ended, RSUD Abepura provided PKR with a one-month supply of ARVs to be replenished monthly as part of a continuing partnership.

"I'm really happy that finally PKR can provide ART treatment through the support and assistance of LINKAGES" said Sri Rahayu Suryani, a senior nurse at PKR. "Previously, we always referred HIV-positive patients to the hospital even though they wanted to stay here for care and treatment. We have learned a lot from the on-the-job training, especially about ARVs. Now, we feel more confident in providing care and treatment services."

A new era

Today, PKR is a busy community health center that welcomes 30 to 50 people each day for STI testing and treatment, HIV testing — and now, ART. After the on-the-job training was completed in February 2017, a milestone was reached when two people were initiated on ART at PKR. In March, the number increased by 14, when key population patients from RSUD Abepura hospital transferred to PKR's treatment services.

PKR's new service has made it possible for individuals to be tested and treated at one location, a place where they feel welcomed and comfortable. "I have been on ARV treatment at PKR for two months now," said Ag. "I feel much more comfortable, as I can consult on everything with the PKR staff. They are like my family. I have also been telling my friends about it and encouraging them to come to PKR to get tested and on treatment as needed."