

Making an impact on reach and behaviour change through use of oral traditions by traditional leaders in the Papuan Highland region of Jayawidjawa in Papua, Indonesia

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Introduction

There is a generalised HIV epidemic in the Indonesian provinces of Papua and West Papua.

HIV prevalence in the general population in the Central Highlands of Papua is higher compared to the rest of the province (IBBS 2006 and 2013 prevalence 2.9% highlands and 2.4% other areas, respectively), with a population of predominantly indigenous Papuans living in villages and settlements.

Annual surveys of participants in programs supported by the HIV Cooperation Program for Indonesia (HCPI) show that high percentages have casual sexual partners (2013 survey: Papua Men 48%, women 35%; West Papua men 30%, women 9%); there have been significant declines since 2009 but there are still challenges.

Developmental challenges and geographical isolation reduce access to schools, resulting in low literacy, as well as limited use of the Indonesian language in remote areas.

Communal and traditional kinship ties have remained strong with customs, rituals and oral traditions being maintained.

Description

Since 2012, Yayasan Usaha Kesejahteraan Masyarakat Desa Indonesia (YUKEMDI, *Foundation for Rural Community Welfare Effort Indonesia*) in collaboration with HCPI has worked directly with indigenous Papuans of Jayawijaya district using

- cultural events;
- advocacy meetings with traditional leaders;
- workshops to explore indigenous responses to the HIV epidemic and its impact.

40 trained district facilitators and 105 trained volunteers disseminate HIV and AIDS information to Papuans in the villages using methods and activities identified by the communities themselves, including story-telling; funerals or ceremonial gatherings; events including weddings, birthdays, parties, completion of new buildings; worship events; and mutual aid activities like tending gardens.

Results

Working with volunteers from customary villages has allowed YUKEMDI to greatly expand its reach to Papuans in the highlands. Anecdotal evidence and observation indicate reduced stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV and AIDS and reduced misperceptions about the disease.

	2011	2013
Number of people reached	10,000	118,354
Program participants who had HIV test (program participant annual survey)	No question in survey	51%
Consistent condom use with casual partners in last year (program participant annual survey)	5%	13%

Table 1: Results of YUKEMDI client surveys, 2011 and 2013



Figure 1: A man in the Jayawidjawa highlands reads a pamphlet provided by YUKEMDI



Figure 2: A YUKEMDI program participant

Conclusions

YUKEMDI volunteers and facilitators come from Indigenous communities and are intimately familiar with the customs and character of the community, recognize indigenous symbols, and can communicate effectively. Using well-trained volunteers who can adapt their approaches based on their local knowledge is a cost-effective approach that can be refined and expanded to other areas in Papua and West Papua and in other areas with isolated indigenous populations.



The HIV Cooperation Program for Indonesia is an initiative of the Australian Government in partnership with the Government of Indonesia and is managed by GRM International and the Burnet Institute.

