

Capability Statement: Our Work with Key Populations



Founded in 1995 to spur the development of preventive HIV vaccines, today AVAC is a widely respected voice in the global response to HIV/AIDS and the push for global health equity. Advocacy by and with Key Populations is central to AVAC's work to accelerate an end to the HIV epidemic and advance global health equity.

Through robust domestic and global partnerships with Key Population (KP) individuals and organizations, AVAC mobilizes for inclusive programs, policies and practices for LGBTQ individuals, sex workers, people in prisons and people who use drugs. AVAC and its partners work to address exclusion and discrimination against Key Populations and criminalization that endanger KP health and wellbeing. AVAC connects KP representatives with decision-makers to move forward HIV prevention, decriminalization and gender justice agendas.

AVAC has longstanding trusted relationships with a wide spectrum of stakeholders—from policymakers to civil society advocates, industry to academics, product developers to program implementers, and beyond. AVAC is viewed as a credible source of information, sharing vital science and research to distill and translate it for affected communities. At the same time, AVAC plays an important role in connecting KP individuals and KP-led organizations to scientists, industry leaders, policy makers and the media to ensure that responses are community-led and that innovative, user-centered prevention options are developed and delivered ethically, expeditiously and equitably.



Representatives from AVAC Partner organization LITE (Lesbians, Intersex, Transgender and Other Extensions)

The greatest strengths of AVAC's KP work lie in:

- Being a trusted and credible convener with a unique ability to translate the evidence and perspectives of various partners, including scientists, civil society, industry, academics and policy makers alike.
- Supporting the ability of Key Population individuals, organizations and coalitions to advocate for highly effective HIV prevention, particularly in African countries at the center of the HIV epidemic.
- Increasing Key Populations' participation in the HIV clinical trial research process, design, literacy and result dissemination amongst KP communities.
- Supporting Key Population campaigns to repeal criminalization policies and to implement gender diversity and other rights-based protections at the national level.
- Accelerating the development, global delivery, equitable access and uptake of innovative products for HIV prevention among the populations and communities that need them most.
- Leveraging more than 25 years of expertise in HIV advocacy, research engagement and evidence translation to advance integrated solutions to other issues focused on global health equity, including sexual and reproductive health rights, STIs, tuberculosis, COVID-19 and pandemic prevention preparedness and response.

AVAC's Core Pillars:



Translate: *Bridging science and community through communication.* In the world of HIV and global health equity writ large, there is often a gap between science and product development and community perspectives and voices. Bridging “language” and communication among diverse stakeholder groups is essential to ensure that user needs inform research, product development and delivery systems, and that research findings and emerging evidence are shared with communities, advocates and implementers to enable effective use.



Advocate: *Mobilizing for inclusive and impactful programs, products and policies.* We advocate for a policy environment that supports and adequately finances equitable access to HIV prevention—research, services, interventions and products with communities at the center. AVAC supports and fortifies a robust network of bold and informed advocates and coalitions to advance inclusive, effective, people-centered policies and programs.



Catalyze: *Cultivating and sustaining partnerships to spur advances in HIV prevention and nimbly apply those to emerging health needs and issues.* Effective coordination and balanced partnerships are key to creating a policy environment, accelerating ethical product development and advocating for equitable access to emerging health solutions. We help to shape, uplift and leverage an ecosystem of diverse and committed partners and coalitions that collectively advance HIV prevention and global health equity.

AVAC's three strategic pillars work together to influence the life cycle of biomedical research from early-stage studies to large-scale rollout and eventual impact with a strong track record of success. This model is built on community-owned, rights-based, research-literate strategies implemented by a global network of informed and engaged health advocates. AVAC and its Key Population-focused partners work collaboratively to mobilize for inclusive and KP-led programs, products and policies that address the needs of KPs—who continue to be criminalized, discriminated against and, subsequently, at high risk of HIV while medically underserved.

AVAC works with Key Populations to advocate for effective HIV prevention and treatment options and greater health equity.

AVAC partners with KP advocates to bring community voices, sustained attention and greater accountability to science, policy, funding, media, health services and regulatory processes. This network of partners and their strategic advocacy ensure that HIV prevention is on local, provincial, national and global agendas. AVAC translates clinical research and complex science into clear, accurate, actionable information and materials that can be used to strengthen evidence-based advocacy.

- AVAC helped found the Key Populations-Transnational Collaboration (KP-TNC), which brings together Key Population consortia in Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania, Malawi, South Sudan, Zanzibar, Mozambique and Zambia. The KP-TNC is a community of practice that strengthens KP-led and -focused advocacy for HIV prevention and treatment options and health equity through peer support and regional solidarity. The KP-TNC is also a south-south learning platform that facilitates peer support for strengthening the platforms for KP movements in its member countries.

AVAC is working to provide mentorship, facilitation and funding to support the development of a regional advocacy platform to engage with national governments and global funding mechanisms. AVAC provided trainings on data for advocacy, GFATM and PEPFAR engagement, and resource mobilization, along with mentorship for developing strategic plans and establishing operational and governance structures.



Members of the KP-TNC meet with PEPFAR Amb. Nkengasong

- AVAC, with collaborating partners, co-convenes and -hosts a Global KP Advisory Group to inform research advocacy, elevate and address the needs of KPs, and monitor and hold decision-makers accountable to KP communities, particularly those who are most at risk but traditionally marginalized.
- The AVAC Advocacy Fellows Program fosters a network of deeply informed, skilled and confident advocates to strengthen and expand advocacy for HIV prevention locally, regionally and globally. The Fellows program identifies emerging champions, including Key Populations, among mid-career advocates, supports their efforts, honing their skills and shaping national agendas for HIV policy and programs. Since 2009, AVAC has provided technical and financial assistance to nearly 100 global advocates who have gone on to change policy, champion community perspectives, help strengthen healthcare systems, demystify HIV prevention research and insist on fairness and transparency locally, regionally and globally.
- AVAC's PxROAR and CureROAR programs, including specific programs for both KP and trans populations, train US, European and African partners in HIV cure and prevention research and implementation advocacy. The program provides mentorship, peer support, networking opportunities, technical support and financial assistance with the goals of educating members on the science and implementation of HIV prevention and cure research, and providing a platform for specific advocacy campaigns including rights-based struggles to dismantle structural barriers such as criminalization and antigender legislation.

AVAC supports partners for global health advocacy

AVAC works with Key Population-led civil society partners to support skills-building in advocacy, strategic planning and organizational governance.

- Through COMPASS, AVAC works with KP partners in Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe to provide strategic and tactical support and funding for partner campaigns focused on influencing HIV programs, policies and funding. Campaigns include ensuring access to HIV prevention services to people in prisons, expansion of MAT services, ensuring access to quality HIV and health services for LGBTQ+ communities through SOGIE trainings for health care providers and law enforcement, and advocacy to push back against laws criminalizing KPs (PWID, LGBTQ+) .
- AVAC has facilitated KP peer trainings and mentorship for 100+ KP-led CSOs on governance, advocacy and strategic planning to better position them to receive KP-focused implementation funding from PEPFAR.
- AVAC has developed and implemented an innovative Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) model for global health advocacy. AVAC has deep experience and field-tested MEL training modules and tools that can be adapted for use in a wide array of global health topics. AVAC works with local partners to build skills, tools and systems to incorporate MEL within their advocacy work.



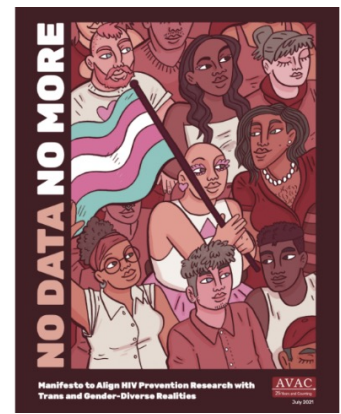
An AVAC partner speaks at an operational skills-building training for KP-led organizations

AVAC ensures that communities are at the center of global health responses

Communities' support for prevention must be earned. AVAC helps build trust among researchers, funders and communities to speed the ethical development and delivery of new prevention options.

AVAC partners with a robust network of bold and informed advocates to advance inclusive, effective, people-centered policies and programs. AVAC advocates for a policy environment that supports and adequately finances equitable access to services, tools and products. AVAC pays particular consideration to ensuring Key Populations are fully included, heard and valued within coalitions and partner networks.

- AVAC’s team, with leading health advocates from the transgender and gender-diverse communities, has mapped existing research gaps and priorities to [develop an HIV prevention research agenda](#) shared with leading research institutes, networks and funders. Trans and gender-nonconforming people are inadequately represented in HIV research and national strategic plans, though they carry disproportionate HIV risk. AVAC’s TG ROAR program uses the agenda as a tool for engagement with donors and research networks and sites to fulfill the Manifesto’s vision of an HIV prevention agenda for trans people. The Trans-Inclusivity Scorecard is an advocacy tool for scoring clinical trials and implementation studies according to indicators set forth in the Manifesto.
- [The Good Participatory Practice \(GPP\) Guidelines](#), developed by AVAC and UNAIDS and adapted for use beyond HIV, provide trial funders, sponsors and implementers with systematic guidance on how to effectively engage with all stakeholders, including Key Populations, in the design and conduct of biomedical research. AVAC promotes the adoption of GPP in research, convening consultations, trainings and workshops.



The AVAC-supported Transgender Research Manifesto

AVAC and partner advocacy spurs product innovation and availability

AVAC works to ensure that biomedical options are not just developed but actually delivered as feasible options for those who need them most.

- The [Biomedical Prevention Implementation Collaborative \(BioPIC\)](#) works with partners and stakeholders to support the rapid, successful introduction of cabotegravir long-acting PrEP (CAB-LA) and other emerging HIV prevention products. BioPIC’s work with CAB-LA is focused on identifying implications for potential users, health systems and payers.

Promote policies that ensure the human rights of key populations

Evidence shows that KP criminalization and other punitive laws are barriers to HIV prevention and epidemic control. AVAC plays a key role in global HIV funding and policy development and is expanding upon this policy work to be more inclusive of KP’s needs. AVAC’s Policy Advocacy and Global Movement programs continue to integrate KP-informed voices to further influence the US State Department, WHO and UNAIDS, PEPFAR and Global Fund, and national governments for the rollout of rights-centered prevention programs for KPs in a legally conducive environment.

To stay updated on the state of the HIV prevention field and on AVAC programs, [sign up for our e-mail newsletters](#), follow AVAC on Twitter [@HIVpxresearch](#) and find more at [www.avac.org](#).