



Statement of Solidarity with the Nigerian Key Population Community on the Murder of their Leader, Christopher Ikpu Terfa: A Call for unity, solidarity, and government protection

6 August 2024

The Key Population Consortia Transnational Collaboration (KP-TNC) stands in solidarity with the Nigeria Key Population Health Rights Network (KP-HRN), Nigeria's KP leadership and community, and the global KP community as we grapple with the news of the tragic death of Christopher Ikpu Terfa, Chair of the Nigeria KP HRN and a member of the KP-TNC leadership team.

We also are deeply shocked by the shooting of his two colleagues and the brutal killing of Area Mama, a trans woman and rights activist killed in Abuja. The KP-TNC calls on allies to join us in elevating strength, love, and solidarity for the Nigeria Key Population Community during this time of great grief to them. We also commend the Nigerian KP community for standing firm together and not allowing this adversity and heavy storm to divide them.

"In our hour of suffering, as targets of murderous violence, and in the face of hate, we must stand, we must come together, we must unite," said Amaka, former co-chair of Nigeria KP Consortium. "From each other, we will draw strength, wisdom, and grace to not only survive as a community but to rise in our dignity, and to fight for a future free from violence for KP communities across Nigeria and around the world." In an all together signed statement the KP-HRN co-chairs (George, Pally, Peter and Bryan) indicated "Christopher Ikpu Terfa's death is a stark reminder of the dangers faced by individuals who dare to stand up for human rights and the dignity of all people, especially the leaders of KP communities. The legacy left by Chris places a call to action for the African communities and the Global community to continue the fight against injustice and to work towards a world where everyone can live free from fear and violence."

The KP-TNC brings together KP Consortia from eight countries: Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zanzibar to work together in building a regional KP movement and strengthen relationships between KP Consortia, their governments, development partners, regional organizations, the African Union, PEPFAR, The Global Fund and other stakeholders. Christopher was a man of integrity, an inspired leader, a trusted voice, and a committed advocate for KP's welfare. His leadership in convening stakeholders and civil society through his Country KP Secretariat and the KP-TNC advanced access to lifesaving HIV treatment and prevention tools for key populations throughout Nigeria and beyond. His impact and work to ensure rights and health access and equity to KPs in his country, regionally and globally will continue to sustain his legacy for eternity.

“The community-based, KP-led organizations reflected in the KP-TNC have been instrumental to reaching the final mile in the HIV response,” said Solomon Wambua, chair of KP-TNC, and coordinator of Kenya KP Consortium. “Their knowledge and advocacy have ensured that KP communities, too often disconnected from care, receive the support they need and gain access to HIV treatment and prevention. Discrimination, criminalization, persecution and murders lead not only to the loss of dedicated leaders like Chris, enervation of community members and human rights advocates but also sets back the HIV response gains achieved over the years. It’s urgent for KP leaders across the region to work together with stakeholders to reduce related risks and continue advancing HIV gains made so far despite the. We also request governments and global partners to ensure that KP communities and their advocates are free from fear of harm and violations of all kinds.”

“As AIDS advocates, we must take this moment to unite and protect KP communities, condemn hate and violence, and dismantle discriminatory policies, which have escalated attacks against LGBTQIA+ people,” said Sibusiso Malunga, secretariat coordinator of the KP-TNC and former Zambia KP Consortium Co-Chair. “Before these killings continue to savage KP communities, we call on governments, allies, and the global health community for assistance and protection. We also request these great and valuable allies not only to raise their voices against violence, but also to set aside resources for violence prevention and response against the KP community.”

We at KP-TNC are thankful to the Nigerian government, UNAIDS, GFATM and PEPFAR and all stakeholders for providing support to the Nigerian Key Population Community. This support has been quite valuable and instrumental in pushing ahead the HIV response gains in the country. We also commend the Nigerian Key Population Leadership and Community for standing united during this difficult time. We however still take this opportunity to make various requests as follow:

- The Nigerian Key Population Community continue remaining united and address this difficult moment with grace giving Chris and the departed compatriots a well deserved send off.
- The Nigerian Key Population and Human Rights Network takes steps to fill up the gap left by the death of Chris to ensure that there is no leadership gap. It is quite important that service considerations, consensus, grace and collegiality guide the choice of the next leader.
- We appeal to the Nigerian Government to ensure that the investigations being conducted are thorough and detailed so that the killers of Chris, his compatriots and Area Mama are brought to book. We also call on the UN and other partners to support the government on the investigation of these murders.
- The KP Community Partners, stakeholders and government are requested to provide psycho-social support to the leaders of the KP communities of Nigeria and to the families Chris, his compatriots and Area Mama. The psychological burden on them has been immense.
- Resources to address the safety and security of KPs are set aside. They include resources on violence prevention and response and on emergency preparedness.
- Support detailed safety and security vulnerability landscaping for KP-Communities in all the KP-TNC countries so as to inform the required resource investments.
- Funding is provided to regional organizing for KP communities so as to assist in providing a voice for KPs of particular countries that may find themselves in distress and hence have no ability to raise their voices.

While Christopher is being buried today, the 6th September 2024, while we mourn this great loss, we reiterate our call to the Nigerian Government to bring the perpetrators of these heinous crimes to justice so as section 33 of its constitution and to the UN charter section 3 that provided for the right to life are upheld. Moreso it is important to ensure that the security of all people at risk is taken seriously. Rest in peace and power Christopher Ikpu Terfa, Area Mama, and all individuals that are targeted because of their work in defending human rights.