

Avert > HIV >

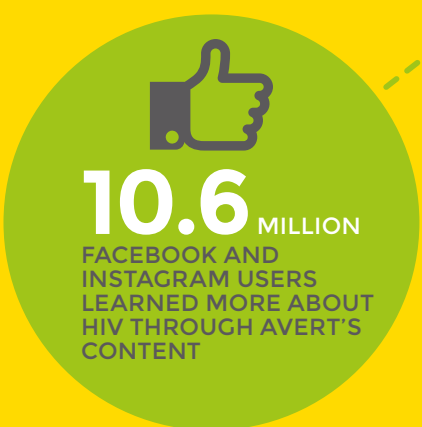
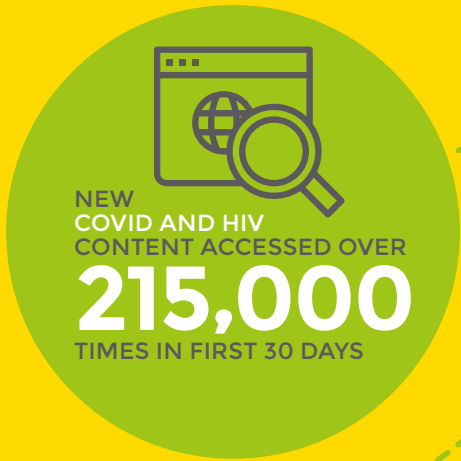
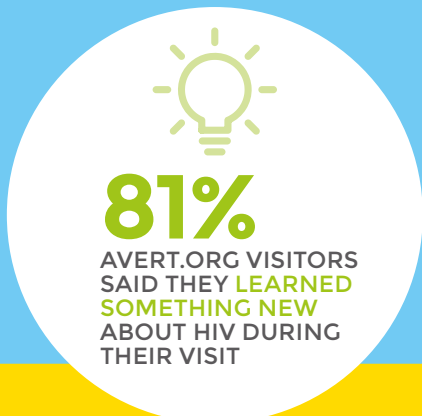
Empowering people
through knowledge >

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-2020



2019-20 HIGHLIGHTS

In FY2019-20 Avert's work continued to evolve and respond to changes in the HIV epidemic and in how people seek out and use health information. Through new digital communication campaigns and funded partnerships we worked creatively and collaboratively to empower individuals, support civil society, and underpin the knowledge needs of the wider HIV response.





'YOUNG VOICES' ANIMATIONS FOR SOUTHERN AFRICAN YOUTH WATCHED OVER

291,000 TIMES



3.1 MILLION PEOPLE ACCESSED UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR HIV PROFESSIONALS



22.4 MILLION PEOPLE EMPOWERED THROUGH KNOWLEDGE



11.8 MILLION PEOPLE GLOBALLY FOUND INFORMATION ON HIV THROUGH AVERT.ORG



1.6 MILLION PEOPLE FROM PRIORITY COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA FOUND HIV INFORMATION ON AVERT.ORG



6.4 MILLION PEOPLE IN SOUTHERN AFRICA REACHED THROUGH FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM



9,000 YOUNG PEOPLE ACCESSED HIV-RELATED SERVICES IN LESOTHO, MALAWI AND ZAMBIA



10,000 PEOPLE LEARNED THEIR HIV STATUS THROUGH HIV TESTING IN LESOTHO, MALAWI AND ZAMBIA

VISION, MISSION AND VALUES



WHO WE ARE

Avert empowers people with knowledge on HIV and sexual health. We know by increasing an individual's knowledge we increase their capability to act. We use our expertise in digital marketing, communications and behaviour change theories – and our understanding of HIV and sexual health – to reach millions of people around the world every year. With over 30 years' experience, we are the leading provider of trusted, accessible and accurate information and resources on HIV and sexual health.

OUR VISION

A world with no new HIV infections, and where those living with HIV and AIDS do so with equality and the support they need.

OUR MISSION

To ensure widespread knowledge and understanding of HIV and AIDS, in order to reduce infections and improve the lives of those affected. We will do this by promoting innovative approaches, partnerships and action to inform and empower.

OUR VALUES

We believe in individuals' inalienable right to health, and their right to make informed choices around their sexual health. We take a sex-positive approach and aim for everything we do, and how we do it, to be underpinned by our set of core values.



- **EVIDENCE-BASED** We are a non-profit knowledge organisation, committed to providing reliable, accurate, and high-quality information on HIV and sexual health – based on sound evidence – which can save lives and improve the global response.
- **RESPONSIVE** We are responsive and adaptable to changing trends in the HIV epidemic and in technology to ensure our work remains insightful and relevant, and to maximise our impact.
- **TRUSTWORTHY** We have more than 30 years of experience working in the HIV response. We pride ourselves on our honesty, transparency and responsibility – to those we support and to those who support us.
- **CREATIVE** We understand the power of new approaches to support change and to reach those who need to know about HIV. We are future-focused and solutions-oriented, and think creatively to bring new insights to the sector.
- **PEOPLE-ORIENTED** We put people at the centre of what we do and how we do it – supporting, valuing, engaging and involving them. We aim to be accessible, inclusive and friendly in everything we do.
- **COLLABORATIVE** We believe by working in partnership we can pool skills and resources, share learning, and have greater impact.



OUR STRATEGY IN SHORT

2019-20 was the final full year of our strategy *Investing For Impact* which had a focus on creativity and collaboration to reach more people that need to know about HIV. Our strategy had four response areas that supported our desired change, but we took the decision at the start of 2019 to incorporate the work under our fourth response area 'challenging stigma and other barriers' into the delivery of our three remaining areas. We did this having reflected on the previous year's work and in recognition that **challenging stigma and other barriers is core to all our work. The three response areas for 2019-20 were:**

RESPONSE 1

Promote knowledge and education on HIV

RESULT Knowledgeable people are making informed choices.

RESPONSE 2

Harness innovation to reach those that need to know

RESULT Most at risk populations can access targeted HIV information.

RESPONSE 3

Support civil society responses that inform and empower

RESULT Civil society delivers effective programmes and demonstrates their value.

Our work supports change, so people have the knowledge and freedom to live healthy lives and make choices to protect themselves and others from HIV in an environment free from stigma.

This Annual Report sets out our progress in these areas.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR AND CEO

RISING TO NEW CHALLENGES



The start of the new decade marked a milestone year in the global HIV response. UNAIDS had set ambitious targets to galvanise and direct global efforts through to 2020. These targets were for 90% of people living with HIV to know their status; 90% of those people to be on treatment; and 90% of those on treatment being virally suppressed (90-90-90). While enormous progress was made, the targets were not achieved in 2020 and the global response remains off-track. This global failure to achieve the UNAIDS targets was not the result of lacking the tools needed – rather it was the result of systemic inequalities, poor leadership and under resourcing.

The start of the new decade also saw the arrival of COVID-19. This new virus caused a global pandemic that required unprecedented measures to be taken around the world to fight its spread and protect life. COVID-19 is still causing huge levels of disruption and suffering to people's lives and threatens to undo many of the gains achieved across the HIV response, global health and development.

Working against this challenging backdrop Avert continued to play a vital role as a trusted, evidence-based knowledge organisation focused on delivering high quality HIV and sexual health literacy information and resources. We are proud of the impact we had during the financial year 2019-20 and how in the last quarter of the year we were able to quickly respond to COVID-19. Our COVID-19 and HIV content was quickly white-listed by Google ensuring we could get accurate, trusted information out to support people at a time of great need.

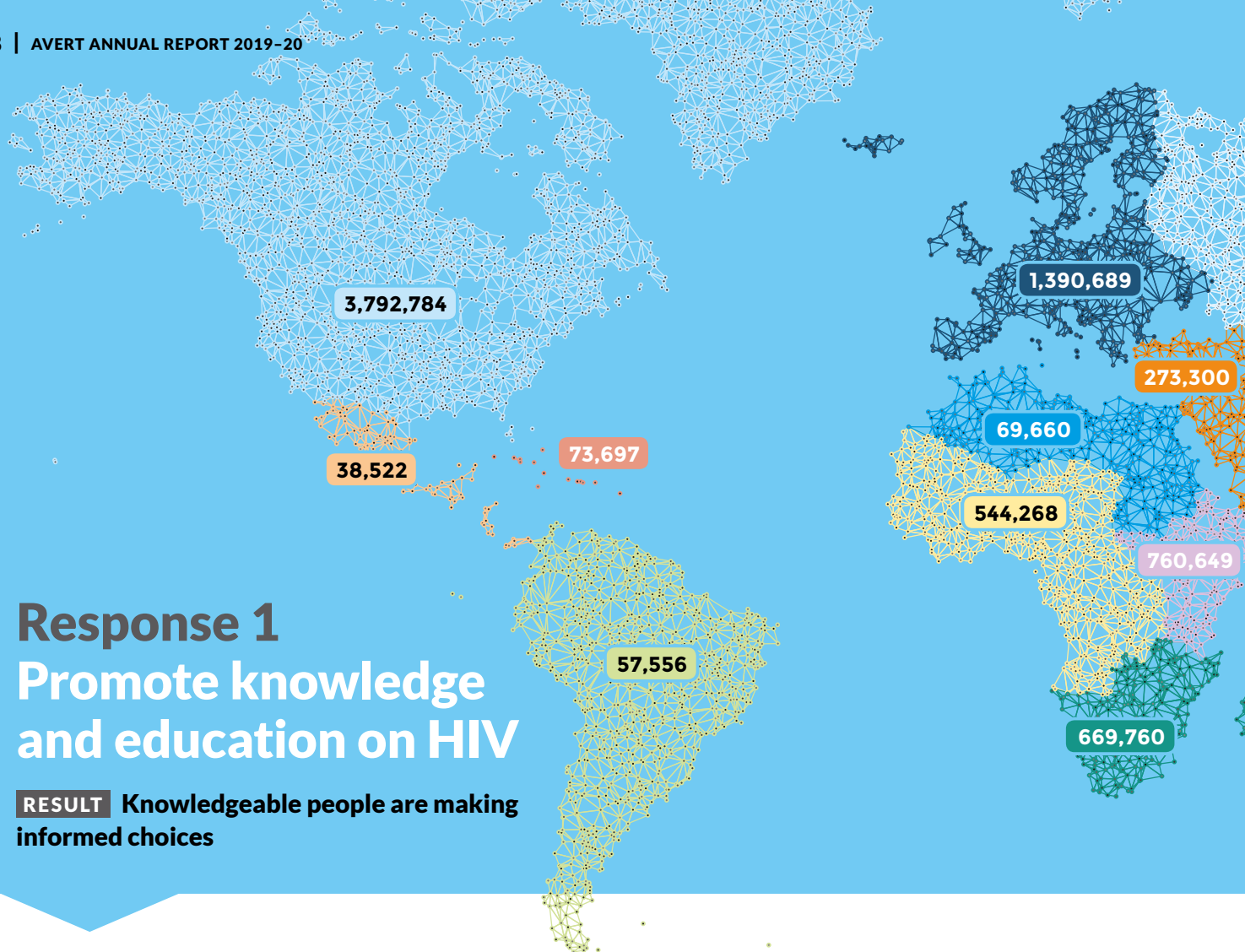
Prior to COVID-19, this had been an exciting year for Avert as we successfully launched a new mobile resource for community health workers, continued to grow our audiences across all our communication platforms, and started work on several new projects focused on developing targeted communications.

We recognise the ongoing challenges and action required in the HIV response and remain acutely aware of the role that health literacy and high-quality, evidence-based information and education resources plays. We see enormous potential ahead to address health inequalities through targeted digital health communications that empower people to take action and engage in the health and community services they need.

We would like to acknowledge and thank all our staff, supporters and partners for their hard work and dedication over the past year. We are extremely grateful to the funders who invested in Avert, supporting new work and research which has allowed us to grow. We look forward to building on this in the year ahead and moving confidently into a new strategic period with their support.

Sarah Hand
Chief Executive

Prof. Simon Forrest
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Response 1

Promote knowledge and education on HIV

RESULT Knowledgeable people are making informed choices

We prioritised engaging young people in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as launching a new resource to support the information needs of community health workers in Southern Africa

Over 1.7 million people became infected with HIV in 2019, so increasing knowledge to build health literacy, promote positive behaviours and increase uptake of services remained a central part of ending the HIV epidemic. Our website Avert.org remained at the centre of our knowledge and education work, with over 11.8 million people reading our accessible, sex-positive content. Our core content pages about the basics of HIV, how HIV is transmitted and prevented, HIV testing, and living healthily with HIV, were viewed over 11.2 million times. In our site user surveys, 81% of respondents said they learned something new during their visit and 56% also reported that they were more likely to take a specific health action as a result of engaging with our content.

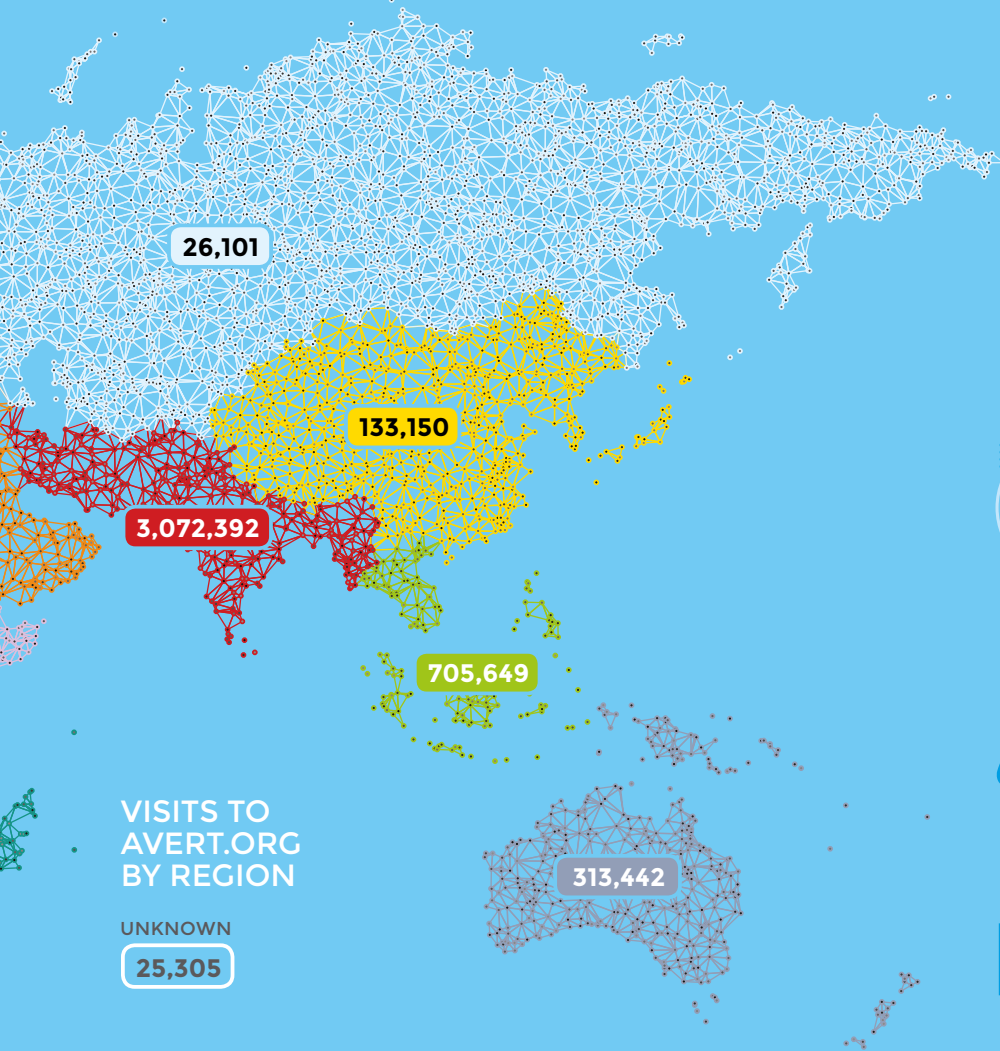


Thank you so much guys, really gave me important information that I'll carry with me throughout my life. Thank you, continue the great work.

Social media user

Internet access and mobile phone ownership continued to increase rapidly in sub-Saharan Africa and we maximised opportunities to reach and engage these new audiences, particularly young people. Young women and girls in the region continued to be the most affected by HIV and accounted for 59% of all new infections in the region in 2019, with 4,500 adolescent girls and young women becoming infected every week. Our use of social media to create conversations and give people information on HIV and sexual health enabled us to reach 10.6 million people through Facebook and Instagram, including 6.4 million people in sub-Saharan Africa. Our HIV Basics videos, promoted as part of our World AIDS Day campaign, continued to be some of our best performing content on YouTube with thousands of views each month, and reaching over 1.6 million people on Facebook and Instagram.

Avert.org also continued to be a vital resource for a range of professionals working across the HIV response, providing trusted information and materials they could rely on to support their work. This referenced and peer-reviewed content, covering science, social issues, programming, and global country overviews – supported by hundreds of infographics – was accessed by 3.1 million users. In addition, our news articles were viewed over 526,000 times.



80%
ACCESSED
AVERT.ORG ON
MOBILE



1.27 MILLION
ENGAGEMENTS ON
FACEBOOK AND
INSTAGRAM IN SUB-
SAHARAN AFRICA



3.14 MILLION
PEOPLE VISITED
AVERT'S CONTENT FOR
HIV PROFESSIONALS



2.18 MILLION
ENGAGEMENTS WITH
AVERT'S SOCIAL MEDIA
CONTENT

VISITS TO
AVERT.ORG
BY REGION

UNKNOWN
25,305

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

With financial support from Gilead Sciences, in January 2020 Avert launched a new mobile resource for community health workers in Southern Africa, Boost, designed to support them with their information and knowledge needs as they work with their clients. Community health workers are a vital part of the health system in many low- and middle-income countries and are often the first point of contact for community members seeking information on a range of health, welfare and social issues.

Despite this essential role, it is widely recognised that they often lack access to up-to-date, accessible information to support their work and improve their practice in their communities. Boost was co-created with over 100 community health workers to address this problem. Moving from concept to launch in just 12 months, the project began with an in-depth scoping and engagement process across Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. New partnerships were established with two local organisations in Zimbabwe who supported as case study partners, allowing us to work with their community health workers to test assumptions and ideas, and develop a product fit for purpose and for the context.

Boost covers a range of topics from the basic facts about HIV, through to TB, family planning and much more. Its launch in early 2020 coincided with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and in response an additional unit on COVID-19 was added for community health workers to use with their clients. This ensured accurate information was available and community health workers could help dispel the growing number of myths surrounding the new virus.

Boost continues to gain transaction across the region with an increasing number of organisations piloting the tool. We have been hugely encouraged with the positive feedback from organisations such as Grassroot Soccer, VSO and the Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation on the quality and usability of the tool. We are continuing discussions with these organisations and others to look for ways to integrate Boost as a support tool in more community health workers' daily work. The formal evaluation of Boost was delayed due to the impact of COVID-19, however learning from current users continues and we remain hopefully the evaluation will be completed in 2021.

TOTAL VISITS TO AVERT.ORG
11,946,924

Response 2

Harness innovation to reach those that need to know

RESULT Most at risk populations can access targeted HIV information

Our work in 2019-20 continued to explore new ways to reach and support those most affected by HIV

Population groups most at risk of HIV, such as young women in southern Africa, or young gay men or other men who have sex with men, often face discrimination and live in fear of judgement from their families, their communities and their healthcare services. Digital communication presents new ways to reach these populations with targeted, accurate, and unbiased information, giving them the privacy they often need to seek out answers to the questions they don't feel able to ask a health worker – questions like, “Am I at risk of HIV?” or “Is PrEP right for me?”.

To help address this need for targeted and engaging content, Avert continued to invest and grow our highly successful Young Voices project reaching young people in Southern Africa, and expanded the content available on our Gay Health Hub. This content builds knowledge and supports empowered choices and informed actions.

Last year our co-created Young Voices content reached 1.7 million young people aged 15-24 in Southern Africa through social media, with over 291,000 young people watching the Young Voices videos – keeping up the high viewing rates of the previous year. In partnership with Frontline AIDS and REPSSI we also secured new funding to translate the Young Voices materials into Swahili, benefiting young people in east Africa. We also worked again with young people in the region to explore and develop new Young Voices themes, which launched in FY2020-21.

We continued our collaboration with gay social networking app Hornet to develop content for gay and bisexual men. The successes of treatment as prevention, U=U (undetectable=untransmissible) and pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) remain important messages that can benefit the lives of gay men and men who have sex with men. The final piece of content developed together with Hornet focused on the importance of pleasurable sex while staying safe. This builds on strong evidence supporting an holistic approach to sex and health literacy, with pleasure being an important part of this. Overall during the year we reached over 130,900 people through social media on LGBT issues and had 22,350 page views of our gay health content.

How

Undetectable =

Untransmittable

is shifting **sexual dynamics**

At the start of the year we also secured funds through an innovation grant award to work with digital technology firm Praekelt. The project, Ringa Nathi (which means 'talk to us' in Zulu), focused on developing a new digital solution to support treatment adherence and well-being among young adults living with HIV in South Africa. Young adults living with HIV often struggle to stay in treatment and support programmes, especially as they move through adolescence and start new relationships. This affects their longer-term health and HIV prognosis. The first phase of the project worked through a user-centred design process to find creative ways to provide the support they need, and answers to their questions and concerns, while maintaining their privacy and anonymity. Alongside a WhatsApp-based technical solution, a four-week programme of content was co-created to be used by trained facilitators to guide discussions and build understanding, confidence and skills on HIV, sexual health and relationships. We are currently working with a number of partners to implement the programme.

YOUNG VOICES
CONTENT
REACHED

1.7 MILLION

YOUNG PEOPLE
AGED 15-24
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA THROUGH
SOCIAL MEDIA



Response 3 Support effective civil society responses which inform and empower those in the hardest hit areas

RESULT Civil society delivers effective programmes and demonstrates their value



9,000

YOUNG PEOPLE IN MALAWI, ZAMBIA AND LESOTHO ACCESSED HIV AND SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES

2019-20 marked a shift in the way Avert supports local HIV responses

This year marked our final year of grant support to three community-based organisations that we had been supporting for the past 5-10 years. Avert, Umunthu (Malawi), BISO (Zambia) and Phelisanang Bophelong (Lesotho) had planned together for this withdrawal of grant support over the previous two years, allowing time for the organisations to prepare and where necessary consider new funding support from other donors.

In 2019-20 our grant support enabled over 9,000 young people in Malawi, Zambia and Lesotho to access HIV and sexual health services, and supported over 10,000 people, including pregnant women to get tested for HIV. All three organisations play vital roles in their local communities and have built up sustainable projects that are part of local integrated responses.



“What I love most about Boost is that it is simple but very educating & it will help me so much in my field.”

- Loveness, community health worker in Zambia



Avert recognises the key role played by community-based organisations and we are extremely proud of the support we have offered over the last 15 years to over 20 organisations across Southern Africa and India. The decision to withdraw from this specific area of support was taken in recognition of the growing level of funding now available to organisations in their own countries, the increasing level of governance and contractual support required when working as a grant maker, growing pressure on our own unrestricted funds, and the need for Avert to have a stronger more coherent strategy aligned to the needs of the epidemic.

Avert would like to acknowledge the excellent and valued work carried out by all the organisations we have supported over the past 15 years. Many thousands of people have received vital support and services as a result of their work and our funding. We are pleased that the last three organisations we have been working with in recent years – Umunthu, BISO, and Phelisanang Bophelong – have all been using our support to build sustainable targeted projects as part of wider community responses.

While Avert is no longer funding community-based organisations through this type of grant support, we are continuing to partner with, and invest our own funds in, digital communication projects with local and national organisations in areas hard hit by HIV.



OUR DIGITAL RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS, BOOST, WAS LAUNCHED IN JANUARY 2020 IN ZIMBABWE. FOR MORE DETAILS SEE PP. 8-9.

MAINTAINING AN EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION

In the face of COVID-19 and other external changes Avert remains focused on how we can best support the HIV response

Avert has continued to deliver against its current 2017–2021 strategic framework *Investing For Impact*. However, much has changed both externally and internally since this strategy was first developed.

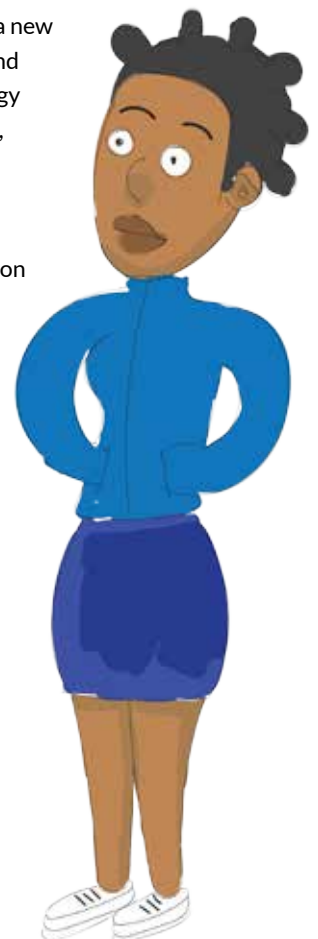
Externally, it is clear that HIV prevention needs to remain a priority to reduce new infections and support sustainable HIV responses. Advances in digital technologies, internet access and phone ownership have also continued to grow, presenting new opportunities to support health literacy and informed sexual health choices.

Internally, our grant-making programme has now come to an end and we have started to build new types of partnerships with a range of organisations that share complementary aims and objectives. We have also shifted our priority towards co-created, targeted communication products and are diversifying our income base to support new partnerships working on this priority area.

We are clear that we need to remain flexible and responsive to the changes happening around us and have a strategy in place that demonstrates this, supports our fundraising and partnership work, and maximises our impact.

NEW STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

As a result, work started in 2020 on a new strategy that we hope to complete and launch in early 2021. The new strategy will build on our health literacy work, supporting efforts to prevent new infections and ensuring those living with HIV have good physical and mental health. A strong focus will be on forging new strategic partnerships with other public, private and third-sector organisations working in digital health, HIV, sexual health and with key affected population groups.





- We will build on our learning and expertise in health literacy to support the HIV response's knowledge needs.
- We will continue our work to ensure frontline community health workers, educators and primary healthcare practitioners in lower resource settings – particularly East and Southern Africa – have the information resources they need to support their work, improve their practice, and support action.
- We will continue to invest and improve in our monitoring and evaluation work to ensure we are gathering data to show impact, to enable course correction when necessary, and to maximise learning.
- We are committed to support more user-led content across our digital channels, facilitating and catalysing conversations and creating content that empowers and gives voice to those living and affected by the HIV epidemic.
- We will work with industry experts to help us use and adapt technology and digital innovation in a way that ensures ever increasing numbers of people around the world can access the information they need and want on HIV and sexual health.

ONGOING IMPACT OF COVID-19

COVID-19 will continue to have a significant impact on the international health and development sector, and so will remain an ongoing concern to the charity in the short to medium term.

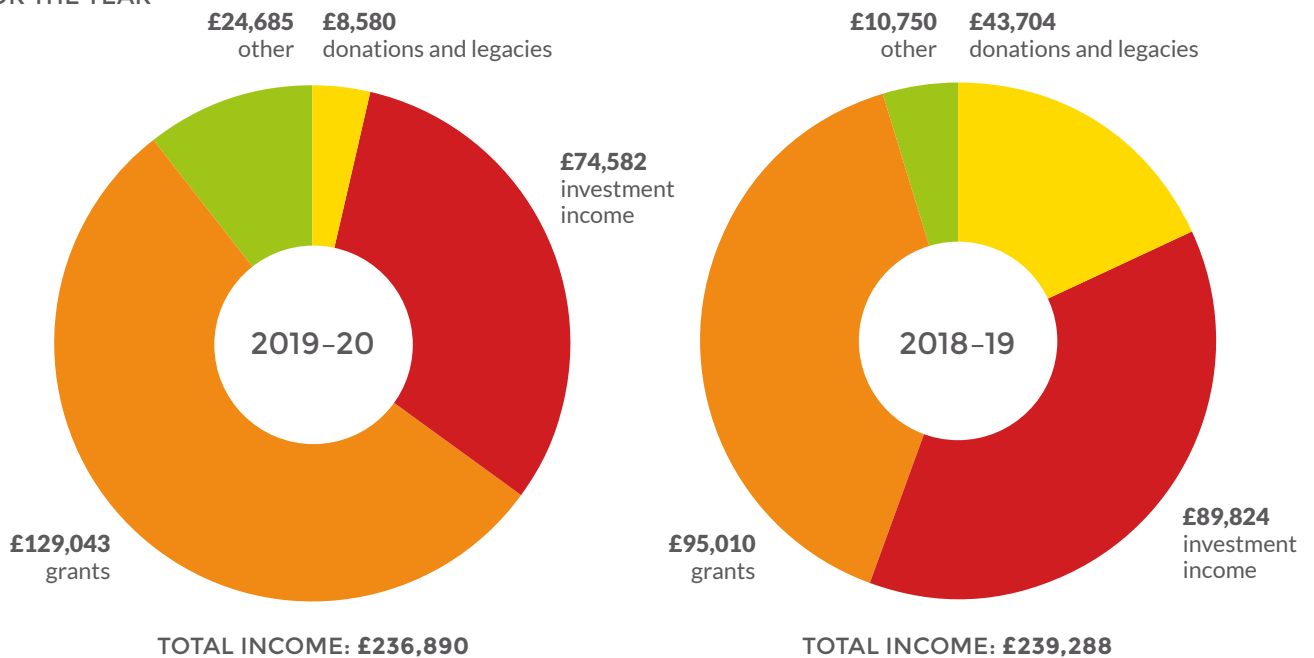
- We will continue to take measures to ensure the well-being and safety of our staff.
- We will stay engaged with developments, specifically on the relationship between COVID-19 and HIV and the communities and populations we serve.
- We will continue to invest in developing and updating digital information resources on COVID-19 and HIV.
- We will continue to monitor the impact the pandemic's response is having on the charity's investments and the wider donor environment and use this information to inform strategic expenditure and operational decisions going forward.

We are aware that fundraising will continue to be a challenge as COVID-19 increases demands for funds across the sector while potentially decreasing the resources donors have available. We will continue to consider this in our income forecasting. Despite the overall global impact and priority of COVID-19 we have assessed and agreed that a continued strategic focus on HIV and sexual health remains relevant and necessary.



FINANCIAL SUMMARY

TOTAL INCOME FOR THE YEAR



Avert would like to acknowledge and thank all the individual donors who continue to support our work as well as thanking Gilead Sciences, Mercury Phoenix Trust, ViiV Healthcare Positive Action for Children Fund, and Vitol Foundation for their grant support and partnership.

AVERT (LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Charity number 1074849
Company number 03716796

TRUSTEES
Prof. Simon Forrest (Chair)
Anna Becker
(appointed 30 January 2020)
Sebastian Dunn
(resigned 25 July 2019)
Emily Hughes
Carole Leach-Lemens
(appointed 24 October 2019)
Beryl Mutonono-Watkiss
(appointed 24 October 2019)
Sam Price
Lynne Slowey
Andrew Walker

PRINCIPAL AND REGISTERED OFFICE
Platf9rm, Tower Point,
44 North Road
Brighton BN1 1YR

BOARD SECRETARY
Kerry Pike

COMPANY SECRETARY
Prof. Simon Forrest

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS
Sarah Hand – Chief Executive

BANKERS
CAF Bank Ltd
25 Kings Hill Avenue, Kings Hill
West Malling, Kent ME19 4JQ

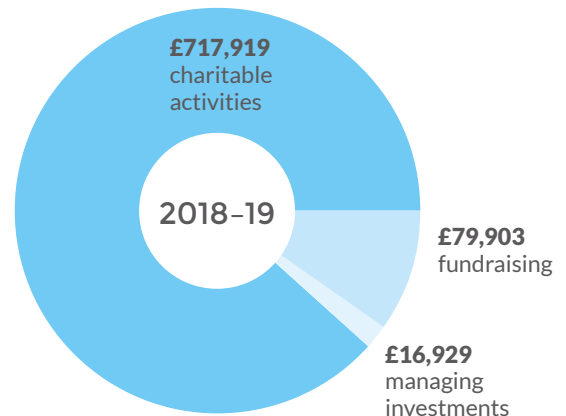
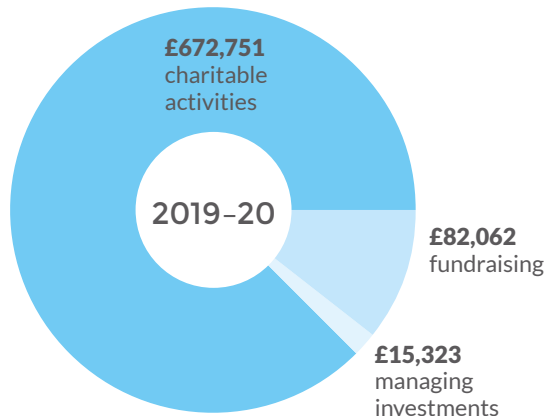
Barclays Bank Plc
Leicester LE87 2BB

INVESTMENT MANAGERS
J M Finn & Co
4 Coleman Street, London EC2R 5TA

AUDITORS
Blue Spire Chartered Accountants
Cawley Priory, South Pallant,
Chichester PO19 1SY
(appointed April 2019)

SOLICITORS
Irwin Mitchell
Belmont House, Station Way
Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1JA

TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR



£127,201 R2: Reaching target populations
£103,540 R3: Supporting civil society

£157,437 R3: Supporting civil society
£77,098 R4: Challenging barriers

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST OUR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES

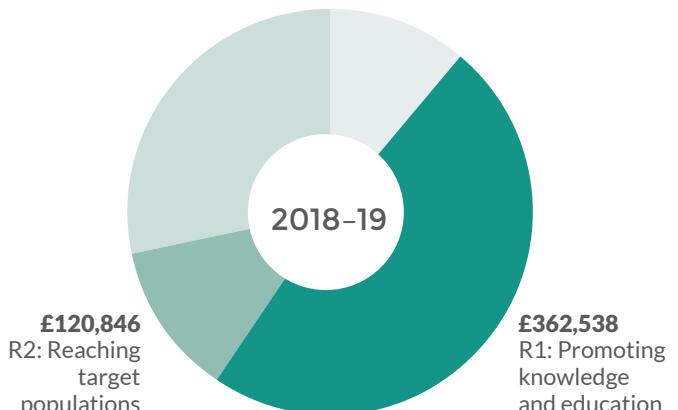
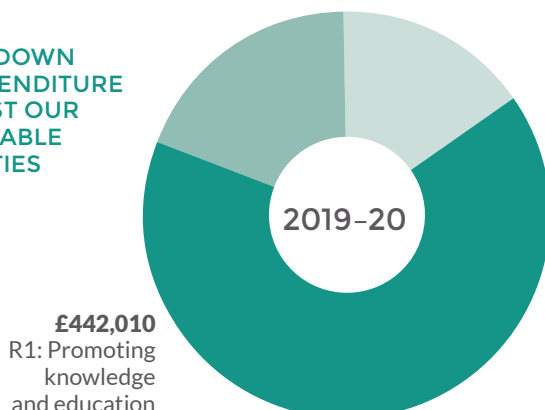


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Avert > HIV >

Empowering people
through knowledge >

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