

Annual report 2016-2017





WE REACHED 8.2 MILLION PEOPLE THROUGH AVERT.ORG WITH ENGAGING DIGITAL CONTENT TO INFORM AND EMPOWER.

2016–17 HIGHLIGHTS

Avert is a UK-based organisation that has been working at the forefront of HIV education for the past 30 years. Through our award-winning educational website, digital channels, and partnerships with local civil society organisations working in some of the hardest hit countries, we reached over 9 million people in 2016–17 with information, tools and resources that empower them with knowledge to take action on HIV.



OF AVERT'S VALUED CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL HIV RESPONSE.

4Y STRATEGY

WE DEVELOPED A NEW THEORY OF CHANGE AND FOUR-YEAR STRATEGY ALIGNED TO THE UNAIDS FAST TRACK GOALS.







WE INCREASED GRANTS TO OUR FOUR NGO PARTNERS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA FROM £111,473 TO £150,970, ENABLING THEM TO REACH OVER 50,000 PEOPLE WITH ESSENTIAL TESTING, TREATMENT AND PREVENTION SERVICES. ⁴⁴ All of the information that I have viewed and printed out from this website has been a tremendous help to me. I say thank you to your agency for this opportunity to learn more about what I will be doing on my job to assist others with information about HIV and other STIs. 77

Avert.org user

OUR VISION

Avert's vision is 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

We work 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.

VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGIC AIMS

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS 2016-17

Aim 1: To provide information and education on HIV and AIDS to a global audience to influence change – we believe that providing trusted, impartial, reliable and relevant information is key to preventing HIV and to improve the lives of those living with HIV and AIDS.

Aim 2: To work with other organisations in countries most affected by HIV to enable them to be more effective and far reaching in their community action – we believe that equal partnership and sharing of information and resources makes a lasting difference.

See our 2017–2021 strategy *Investing for Impact* for our new strategic result areas.

It is 30 years since Avert started working to understand HIV and ensure that vital information reaches people who most need it. Much has been achieved since then by us and many others, and we take pride and heart that 19.5 million people are now on life-saving treatment.

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

Avert's commitment to ending AIDS has been very evident this anniversary year as we launch our new strategy, *Investing for Impact*. This spells out how we will invest and act, based on what is most relevant and useful to the wider AIDS response today and tomorrow.

This will build on the impressive impact we had in 2016–17, reaching over 9 million people with information and education content, and reaching over 50,000 people with vital services including HIV testing, through the NGO partners we support.

This success is made possible by our excellent staff and leadership, our partners, and our supporters. As a Board we thank you all for your commitment to us and the HIV response. We are absolutely clear that Avert will continue to build on its strengths and be prepared to innovate and adapt in response to the changing demands of the epidemic.

We look forward to delivering on *Investing for Impact* and providing the financial stability and sustainability that enables us to continue to form new partnerships and alliances to support our shared ambition of ending AIDS.

Simon Forrest Chair of the Board of Trustees

OUR VALUES

EVIDENCE-BASED

We are an independent charity with no political or religious agenda. We are committed to providing quality information on HIV – based on sound evidence – which can save lives and improve the global response.

RESPONSIVE

We are responsive to changing trends in the HIV epidemic and in technology to ensure our digital information and education offering and our partners' work remains relevant.

TRUSTWORTHY

We have more than 30 years of experience providing quality information on the HIV epidemic that individuals know is correct and current. We have developed relationships based on trust with our international partners to help advance their work and impact.

INNOVATIVE

We understand the power of new approaches, information channels and technologies to support change and will promote innovation to reach those who need to know across all we do.

COMMITTED

As long as there is a need Avert will endeavour to make a valuable contribution to the prevention of HIV and the ending of AIDS.

REPORT FROM THE CEO EMPOWERING PEOPLE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

Avert has for the past 30 years focused on ensuring people have the knowledge and information they need to make informed, empowered choices. As the epidemic evolves, we continue to see increasing knowledge and supporting civil society as the key priorities for us in supporting the wider UNAIDS goals and, in particular, to ensure that those who are most vulnerable and need information and knowledge most have access to it. It is clear from our own work and the latest data on new infections that we cannot take for granted that people who need to, know about HIV, or know where to access the information and services they need. Knowledge is power – and when empowered with the right knowledge people can prevent HIV.

Now is the time to invest in the HIV response, so we do not lose the fragile gains made, so in 2016–17 we set out to increase our reach and impact. We increased our funding commitments to our four NGO partners working in southern Africa and invested in innovative digital content and marketing focused on those countries and those populations most vulnerable. Our exciting new strategy provides the framework for continued innovation and focused growth.

Just got tested for HIV/AIDS today.I really appreciate the great job teaching and counselling you are doing. 77

Avert Facebook fan







Our digital content reached over 9 million people coming from countries in every corner of the world. We know that a key audience for HIV information is young people under 24. Digital health information is a vital and increasing channel to reach this group and to build awareness and self-efficacy – sometimes in the absence of health workers or parents to talk to. So we worked hard to ensure our information is accessible, engaging and easy to understand. (See page 8 for more evidence that this approach is working.)

We increased our commitment to our NGO partners and helped them to reach populations most at risk, in areas under served by local or international support. They continued to play a vital role in the response. They put the grants we provide to great use, starting new work and trying out new approaches to reach young people, in particular, and to ensure that people have access to quality HIV testing and treatment services.

To ensure we continue to invest our resources and efforts in areas that will have the most meaningful impact on the epidemic, this year we developed a new Theory of Change and four-year strategy aligned to the UNAIDS Fast Track Plan. The strategy clearly articulates our rationale for the areas we will focus on and what we hope to achieve. We will not be able to achieve our strategic aims alone. It is essential that we work more closely with other HIV organisations, donors, technical experts, digital health agencies and researchers to ensure we forge new partnerships and strengthen our funding base.

We are a small, proud organisation whose strength lies in our excellent, committed staff and Trustees, our flexible, responsive way of working, and our ambition and belief that we can bring about significant change with limited resources. Our work last year has again shown this. As we look ahead to the new strategic period we remain confident that we will continue to have an impact on those we reach in the most efficient and effective way possible.

Sarah Hand Chief Executive

2016–17 ACHIEVEMENTS

OBJECTIVE 1: TO PROVIDE INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ON HIV AND AIDS TO A GLOBAL AUDIENCE THROUGH AVERT.ORG AND OTHER DIGITAL PLATFORMS

In 2016–17 Avert.org maintained its position as one of the most popular HIV information sites on the web reaching 8.2 million individuals. They visited the site 10.4 million times, viewing over 16 million pages. Avert also invested in its social media channels, developing them to become not just an integrated part of our online presence, but a source of informative, educational content in their own right. Our content-led approach across all channels helped us gain the confidence of more people around the world who came to our digital platforms for reliable, up-to-date information they could trust.

AVERT.ORG REACH NUMBER OF VISITS: TOP 20 COUNTRIES

CANADA 277,400

US 3.04M

- Wow... I really enjoyed reading this. It is organized... well laid out... not too complicated. Almost felt like whoever wrote this was directly talking to me. Thanks a lot and be blessed. 77
- ⁴⁴ Thanks so much, this has inspired and motivated me to move forward in life. 77

Avert.org users







During the year we worked hard to ensure Avert.org was marketed to those for whom it is most relevant. We also increased the quality and range of information available – resulting in visitors spending on average 19% longer reading pages than the year before.

While we continued to ensure Avert.org is relevant to people all around the world who need to know about HIV and sexual health – with our public information pages read over 11 million times during the year – we started to focus on increasing our reach in regions most affected by HIV, particularly across Africa. As a result we attracted 7.5% more visitors from across Africa last year, and are continuing to engage this audience in the year ahead. Young people remain disproportionately affected by HIV, so we developed engaging, youth-focused materials on key topics such as HIV testing, HIV myths, and sex and STIs. As over 40% of our visitors are aged under 24, we also shared personal stories that we received from young people around the world on their experiences of stigma, testing, sex, and living with HIV. This has been as an effective way to bring about reflection, increase understanding, and inspire hope.









AVERT'S HIV TIMELINE



THE INFOGRAPHICS HUB'S WHY TEST FOR HIV?

Avert.org attracts not just individuals wanting to find out information for their own health and wellbeing, but also professionals working in the HIV response. Our updates and new content on the dedicated professionals section covering science, programming, social issues, and country profiles reached 1.75 million people.

We developed a new infographics hub, bringing together in one place a visual treasure chest of infographics about the state of the HIV response. And we launched new material on the history of HIV through an interactive HIV timeline. This living resource – launched for World AIDS Day 2016 – brought to life the four decades of the HIV epidemic, helping visitors to explore how different people have been affected by HIV through words, audio and video.

Incredible interactive #HIV timeline from our friends at @Avert_org! Love the timeline! Will be so useful! #wad2016 ">"



2016–17 also saw considerable investment in Avert's social media platforms. We built up our Facebook presence to reach out to individuals worried about HIV, using Facebook to provide information and increase knowledge on core HIV issues, not just to promote content elsewhere on the web. We also built up our Twitter profile to maximise our reach to professionals working in the HIV response. Our increased investment has shown results with Facebook likes up 225%, users reached up 22.7% and engagement up 4.3%. Twitter followers also increased by 45% over the year.

(Note: All comparative stats compared to previous year)

Great resource. You're welcome to note lack of progress in global #HIVprevention on the timeline. "" OBJECTIVE 2: TO WORK WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS IN COUNTRIES MOST AFFECTED BY HIV TO ENABLE THEM TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE AND FAR REACHING IN THEIR COMMUNITY ACTION

We remain committed to supporting the work of local grassroots organisations who are working with vulnerable and marginalised groups, and help them to make a clear contribution to overall country strategies on HIV. In 2016-17 we continued to work with four NGOs working in Malawi, Zambia, Lesotho and South Africa on areas including youth engagement, HIV testing, improving linkages between services, and primary prevention. This builds on the partnerships we have had with these organisations for a number of years now, supporting scale up of their work, reach and impact. A focus for 2016–17 was strengthening the monitoring, evaluation and learning skills of our partners so they can better use and share the vital data they are gathering, and present it to a wider audience. As an example, we brought all four partners together at the AIDS 2016 conference in Durban where one of our partners had an opportunity to share their experiences of working with a local government clinic to roll-out the new national guidance on preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

We facilitated a learning exchange between two of our partners, which looked at different approaches to engaging and retaining volunteers and establishing strong working relationships with local government services.

COMMITMENT TO CIVIL SOCIETY



PB (LESOTHO) 2015-16: £10,000 2016-17: £25,078



UMUNTHU (MALAWI) 2015-16: £44,522 2016-17: £61,490



AVERT'S FUNDING

BISO (ZAMBIA) 2015-16: £21,000 2016-17: £28,428

FUNDING MAINTAINED



SISONKE (SOUTH AFRICA) 2015-16: £35,364 2016-17: £35,900 The youth are really benefitting from the football approach. Before the programme started it was a challenge here for young people to ask for information at HIV services but now they can ask on the football pitch where they already are. They can really understand the messages from using football drills.

Peter Dias, Umunthu Youth Officer

I was able to make a decision that has changed my life. I tested for HIV and got positive results. Because I had sufficient information on HIV/AIDS I accepted my status, enrolled into treatment and I am now living openly with HIV. I take my medication accordingly with pride and I am all happy. Had I not joined the group and gained knowledge, none of this could have happened. That was really the best thing that changed my life. 79

PB prison youth group member

MALAWI - UMUNTHU FOUNDATION

In 2016–17 we remained the sole funder of Umunthu, a vital community-based NGO working in the peri-urban township areas outside Blantyre. We increased our financial and technical support to the programme, with a grant of £61,490 compared to £44,522 the year before, helping position them for future local funding.

Umunthu continued to provide HIV services at two busy local government health centres ensuring they had the staff capacity to deliver essential services – as well as operating its own clinic in the heart of the community. Avert supported Umunthu to build its reputation in the community, helping to attract and retain clients.

Our funding of the construction of a new clinic extension at Limbe Health Centre was a vital part of improving effective service delivery – reducing chronic overcrowding, client referral and lack of privacy. This has led to more people enrolling on HIV treatment, retaining them and improving client consultation times. There has been recognition at national level for this initiative entirely project-managed by Umunthu.



Umunthu tested a record 36,898 people, of which 8,058 (22%) tested positive and were referred for treatment. This number included 8,769 pregnant women, of which 1,219 (14%) tested positive and were enrolled into treatment to prevent transmission of HIV from mother to baby. Umunthu was awarded a Certificate of Excellence for their HIV testing services by the Ministry of Health and UNICEF.

Umunthu has also tried out new ways to reach young people who are vulnerable to HIV, and who often tire of the same old prevention messages. A six-week pilot used football (in partnership with Tackle Africa) to share information about sexual health and improve knowledge around HIV transmission routes and prevention options, demonstrating good results in a short period.



LESOTHO – PHELISANANG BOPHELONG (PB)

Phelisanang Bophelong (PB) are a well-established NGO working predominantly in Leribe district to support the rights and welfare of people living with or most at risk of HIV. We more than doubled our funding to PB from £10,000 in 2015-16 to £25,078 in 2016-17. This was based on the programme's capacity to reach out to and engage young people, including young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, and young people in prison.

PB have made considerable progress and clearly demonstrated their ability to build the trust of young people and provide them with the services and engagement they want. They have set up 13 youth groups linked to health centres, schools, and the local prison, and are providing the space for a local LGBTI group to form and grow in confidence and identity.

Through these groups they provided nearly 7,000 young people with engaging information and materials on sexual health and HIV – building their knowledge and confidence to make informed choices to stay healthy. Nearly 4,000 young people were supported with HIV testing of whom only 1.3% tested HIV positive. These are promising results that suggest that the programme's early interventions are reducing infections among young people.



The project also engaged parents and guardians to break down taboos around sex and address harmful gender norms by encouraging open dialogue. Work in parallel with teachers created more open spaces for pupils to discuss sexual health.

PB played a vital role building local social capital and life skills among LGBTI, and increased understanding of LGBTI issues among local leaders and national stakeholders through specific training on gender and sexual diversity and a round table event challenging gender and sexual diversity stereotypes.

This work has begun to break down barriers, improving the ability of LGBTI people to access services and demand their rights. It has also improved visibility of LGBTI people and built their confidence, with the first ever Pride event organised by the LGBTI group in Hlotse.

- Through BISO I have learnt a lot about HIV. I even had the courage to go and be tested for HIV. I discovered that I was actually HIV positive as well.
 With the knowledge gained, I have been able to live positively and to take care of myself. 77
- The involvement of BISO volunteers linking and referring clients to health centres has made the community record a higher level of health.
 More people are speaking and getting to know about their health now.

Village Headman

BISO client

ZAMBIA - BWAFWANO INTEGRATED SERVICES ORGANISATION (BISO)

We increased our grant to NGO partner BISO to support its work in a rural, underserved district of Zambia where young people lack opportunities and many of the drivers of HIV remain unchallenged. We provided a grant of £28,428 (up from £21,000 the year before) to work with rural health centres to reach young people, helping them get the life skills and HIV awareness they need.

Between July 2016 and March 2017 Avert funding enabled BISO to set up a new project, complementing their existing work, with a specific focus on young people. It reached 4,921 people through HIV awareness-raising events and tested 4,368 people. Of these, 3,185 were tested in their homes, helping to bridge the gap between HIV services and communities. 450 people (10.3%) tested positive and were then supported to access treatment. 49 community health workers were trained at HIV testing and counselling providers and linked across health centres.



THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE REPORTING CONSISTENTLY USING CONDOMS INCREASED FROM 31% TO



2016–17 saw the successful close out of the Comic Relief/ Avert-supported Umweo project which increased the number of people screened, tested and supported into care for both HIV and TB, and increased community action to prevent new infections. An end of project evaluation highlighted that the family-centred approach had been particularly effective at reaching more people in the community, and that the project had a significant impact on behaviour change – increasing the number of people consistently using condoms from 31% to 68% and the percentage of people accessing HIV testing from 66% to 87%.

The evaluation learning has been shared at district and national level and has also informed BISO's future work in Mkushi.



SOUTH AFRICA - SISONKE

Avert helped establish the Sisonke Project over 12 years ago through the Diocese of Grahams Town in the Eastern Cape. This project has successfully supported elderly people and young children during the most challenging phase of the HIV epidemic. 12 years on it has achieved its goals. So in 2016–17 we provided a grant of £35,900 to enable the elderly caregivers to establish their own selfsufficient community groups and support Sisonke to document its successes and prepare for the phasing out of Avert funding.

Over the course of the last 12 years, the project has built a strong network of elderly women who are well informed about HIV, have a voice to speak out in their communities and are able to access the support they need to keep themselves and their families healthy.

As Sisonke has developed, South Africa has made great strides in getting its population tested and now has the largest HIV treatment programme in the world. The country also now largely funds its own HIV response and has built strong social security and pension schemes, which the Sisonke project has supported elderly women to access.



In light of this immense progress and availability of domestic resourcing for HIV and wider social development in South Africa, and after considerable consultation, we have agreed to start a withdrawal process which will take two years and include an extensive review and documentation of the project's impact, as well as an assessment of the current priorities and gaps for elderly caregivers in the context of a rapidly changing South Africa, for future use by the Diocese. This will ensure their work is as relevant and fundable as possible going forward.

OBJECTIVE 3: TO DEVELOP AN EFFECTIVE ORGANISATION



OUR STRATEGY

Responding to the changing and developing needs of the epidemic and those most affected remains a central pillar of Avert and our work. We engaged the support of consultants IMA to help us develop a new Theory of Change and four-year strategy aligned to the fast track global goals of UNAIDS. The outcome of our work with IMA is a strong strategic direction that builds on our 30 years of work across the epidemic and demonstrates a clear focus and relevant contribution.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS



Avert recognises the importance of strong, effective collaboration and partnerships with others. We know that the success of our new strategy will depend on these partnerships. During the year we started working with Tackle Africa on new ways to reach out to young people in Malawi who were tired of the out-of-date ways health agencies were engaging with them. Using football as a way to engage young people in HIV prevention is proving hugely successful and we intend to continue to invest in this area in the coming year.

STOPAIDS continues to be a vital partner to Avert – they play an important role as a central policy and convening agency for the UK international HIV sector response. We have increased our engagement with BOND who play a vital role, not only in the post-Brexit era but also in terms of ensuring efficiencies and better collaboration and learning across the wider INGO sector.



Avert continues to benefit greatly from a small, talented and committed staff team. During the course of the year we expanded the team to include a new Digital Marketing officer whose work has been focused on ensuring Avert is reaching the right people who need to know about HIV.



We have started the new financial year with a strong, focused strategy and the energy and commitment from our staff group to deliver another year of excellent results with impact where it matters most.

LOOKING AHEAD

Our challenges now lie in working to diversify our funding base and continuing to build meaningful partnerships that ensure we are able to work more efficiently and maximise our collective impact. We know that to be successful in bringing on board new funding partners we have to continue to deliver quality work that is evidence-based and against which we can demonstrate impact.

Ensuring that our content is getting in front of the right people – those that continue to be left behind in the HIV response or continue to be at higher risk – remains our priority. We will continue to ensure that the funds we invest in supporting our civil society partners enable them to grow their work, build their capacity, and allow them to innovate and respond to the needs of their communities.

We are looking ahead to a funding model that provides the opportunity for us to do more of what matters with other partners sharing similar goals and that builds on and makes the best use of the funds we already have. We will be joined by a new staff member in the autumn of 2017 to help drive this work forward.

KEY PRIORITIES 2017-18

Our new 2017–21 strategy *Investing for Impact* sets out four response areas where we will focus our efforts. Priorities for 2017–18 within each response area include:

RESPONSE 1: PROMOTE KNOWLEDGE AND EDUCATION ON HIV



- Increase visitors to Avert.org from target sub-Saharan African countries through new focused content creation and marketing.
- Increase the reach of Avert.org among our professional audiences through an integrated marketing campaign.
- Develop a range of new content for our public and professional audiences.

RESPONSE 2: HARNESS INNOVATION TO REACH THOSE THAT NEED TO KNOW

• Co-create new HIV prevention information materials with young people in Southern Africa, for local and national campaigns.

RESPONSE 3: SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY RESPONSES THAT INFORM AND EMPOWER

- Bring on one new youth-focused partner organisation enthusiastic about embracing innovation.
- Enhance the ability of youth in Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia to speak out about their sexual health.
- Document and disseminate the impact of our 12-year partnership with Sisonke in South Africa.

RESPONSE 4: CHALLENGE STIGMA AND OTHER BARRIERS

- Carry out an online World AIDS Day campaign focused on reducing stigma.
- Increase stigma reduction as a component in NGO partner programmes.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY



NOTE Income in 2015–16 was substantially higher due to the sale of Avert's freehold property and a substantial legacy.

AVERT (LIMITED BY GUARANTEE) ORGANISATIONAL INFORMATION

Charity number 1074849 Company number 03716796

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SPOT SOMETHING NEW?

You may have noticed that this year's Annual Report features Avert's new logo. We don't spend money unnecessarily on branding but as an agency devoted to communicating messages and engaging with our audiences, we also know how important it is to have an identity that evokes the forward-facing, innovative and youth-focused organisation we are.