

# Avert > HIV >

Empowering people  
through knowledge >



ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

## Closing the gaps

Building knowledge, confidence and skills  
Priming agency and action





Over

# 36.6

MILLION PEOPLE

empowered through knowledge on sexual health and HIV



Over

# 81%

OF VISITORS TO  
**BE IN THE KNOW**

were more likely to take action on HIV and sexual health as a result

## 2022-23 highlights



# 36

MILLION FACEBOOK &amp; INSTAGRAM USERS

reached with information to support their knowledge, skills and confidence



Boost accessed by nearly

# 35

THOUSAND COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS/EDUCATORS (web &amp; app)



Nearly

# 70

THOUSAND PEOPLE

reached through 2022 World AIDS Day campaign on Facebook and Instagram



# 13

MILLION PEOPLE in sub-Saharan Africa empowered through *Be in the KNOW* (web & social)

# 2.6

MILLION ENGAGEMENTS

with Avert content across our project portfolio



Information resources for primary HIV and sexual health practitioners viewed

# 188

THOUSAND TIMES



HIV still isn't over, particularly for young women – in 2022 there were over 4,000 new HIV infections among adolescent girls and young women each week.<sup>1</sup> If we are to narrow the HIV knowledge gaps that are holding back faster progress, access to trusted health information must be a reality for all. That's why Avert continues to focus our efforts so keenly on co-creating high quality, context-appropriate digital content and resources that are designed to directly address the needs of people most affected by HIV and poor sexual health, and those working to support them.

This has been a year of significant progress towards those aims. Two of our central products, *Boost* and *Be in the KNOW*, are now firmly established brands, reaching millions of individuals and frontline health workers with engaging, evidence-based resources that are helping them and their communities to take better decisions about their sexual health. Alongside this, we've been working hard to share more of the knowledge and expertise that we have built up over the past year from all our products and partnerships.



Projects and campaigns to reach **targeted** populations undertaken in

**10**  
COUNTRIES

across sub-Saharan Africa: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe



**70**  
THOUSAND  
YOUNG USERS

in South Africa started online conversations on the issues that matter to them through Young Africa Live

**YAYA**

Life skills app Yaya rolled out to over

**550**  
LOW LITERACY GIRLS  
in Mozambique



Avert learning presented at

**4**  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCES



# Message from the Chair and CEO

Not everyone is benefiting from the progress that has been achieved in the HIV response. Health information is a right and yet millions of people still do not have the knowledge to make informed choices that protect their health.



**We have welcomed working with Avert on the Young Africa Live project. They are excellent at developing impactful content that engages young audiences and they know how to make it work on the social channels that young people use.**

Lindsay Hayden, Portfolio Lead Young People, Elton John AIDS Foundation

In 2022, women and girls accounted for 62% of new HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa, yet only 42% of districts with high HIV incidence had dedicated prevention programmes for adolescent girls and young women. HIV prevalence also continues to be many times higher among key populations compared to the general population. The criminalization of marginalised groups, such as the LGBT community in countries like Uganda, continues to fuel stigma and dissuade those most in need from finding support and using services. This has knock on effects on their own health as well as that of their partners and communities. Millions of lives are in jeopardy.

Health literacy matters and can help break down many of the barriers that hold back progress. It can challenge stigma. It can help people to know about new prevention tools like pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) and how to access them. It can act as a lifeline to populations discriminated against based on gender or sexuality by providing confidential guidance and a readymade support group to anyone with access to a smartphone. It can help the 29.8 million people currently receiving life-saving treatment for HIV not only to understand and adhere to their treatment, but also provide additional resources to support their mental health and psychosocial needs.

Developing health literacy resources that not only inform but also dismantle stigma and misinformation can create a new norm, one that values inclusion, evidence, openness



and clarity. That's why this year has seen us build on our commitment to support advice seekers, educators and health practitioners, and reach the people who most need trustworthy, accessible and action-oriented information.

We now have a number of co-created tools in our kit box to support our different audiences on their learning journeys. The feedback and engagement analytics from our new digital brand *Be in the KNOW*, launched in April 2022, have been impressive – with clear evidence the brand is bringing young people into wider discussions on HIV and sexual health and building their knowledge and their agency to make informed choices.

Similarly, through our role developing content for and marketing *Young Africa Live*, we have brought over 70,000 young people into the conversation and gained valuable insights into the sexual health challenges faced by young people in South Africa. Together with a more detailed understanding of how they are using social media, these insights will inform other strands of our work going forward.

*Boost*, our app for community health workers and peer educators, has continued to go from strength to strength, with its further integration by a Zimbabwean HIV organisation into its wider work streams, and growing demand from motivated individual peer educators across sub-Saharan Africa. This is an exciting chance for us to take *Boost* to scale and embed it in community health outreach approaches across the region.

Likewise, *Yaya* – our life skills app co-designed with a group of adolescent girls and young women in Mozambique – has found its feet and is a model for how digital solutions can be successfully adapted to work for even the most low-literate and rural contexts. *Yaya* is helping create agency and build self-efficacy among a population that is at particular risk of HIV.

Avert remains committed to working with others across the sector to maximise impact and reduce duplication. We would like to thank our valued partners, funders, co-collaborators, staff and Trustees who all share our vision of ending new HIV infections and ensuring the dignity and wellbeing of those living with HIV.



*[Signature]*

**Sarah Hand**  
Chief Executive Officer

*[Signature]*

**Professor Simon Forrest**  
Chair of the Board of Trustees

# Vision, mission and values

## WHO WE ARE

Avert uses digital communications to build health literacy on HIV and sexual health. With over 30 years' experience, we are a trusted provider of accessible, accurate and actionable content and resources that support informed choices. Our work supports global efforts to end AIDS and achieve the Sustainable Development Goal for health. Every year, we engage with millions of individuals, community health workers and primary health practitioners living in areas of greatest need. We use our understanding of HIV and sexual health, our expertise in digital marketing, communications and behaviour change, and our network of partnerships to increase their knowledge, skills and confidence, and their ability to act.

## OUR VISION

A world with no new HIV infections, where people make empowered sexual health choices, and where those living with HIV do so with dignity, good health and equality.

## OUR MISSION

To increase health literacy on HIV and sexual health, among those most affected in areas of greatest need, in order to reduce new infections and improve health and well being.

## OUR VALUES

We believe in every person's right to health and to the information that enables them to make informed choices around sexual health. The following values inform our work:





- **EVIDENCE-BASED.** We are committed to providing reliable, accurate, and high-quality information on HIV and sexual health. We use the latest evidence to inform our content and programmatic priorities.
- **RESPONSIVE.** We adapt our approach to respond to changing trends in the HIV epidemic and in how our target audiences access and consume information.
- **TRUSTWORTHY.** We have more than 30 years' experience of working in the HIV response. We are recognised and accredited as a provider of accurate and reliable information.
- **CREATIVE.** We understand the power of new approaches to bring about change. We focus on solutions and think creatively to continually improve our work and 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 that by working in partnership we can pool skills and resources, share learning, and have greater impact.
- **SEX-POSITIVE.** We believe in a sex-positive approach to sexual health and rights that recognises and celebrates sexual pleasure and sexual diversity, prioritises personal agency, and is free of judgment.

“

**I so much love this advice thank you**

Be in the KNOW user

**Information is broken down in a way we understand it and it's not too technical. Thank you!!**

Be in the KNOW user, Zimbabwe

**I am amazed by how there is so much useful information about sex, consent and safety. Some of us have hardly had sex ed while growing up and without having someone to talk to, having reliable information in such simple, everyday language that is based on research and also feels so empowering to the reader – is a great resource.**

Be in the KNOW user, India

# Our strategy

## From knowledge to action

### THE WAY WE WORK

We develop and promote HIV and sexual health content and resources that are accurate, accessible, useful, and actionable. In doing this:

- We use learning and evidence from health literacy, behaviour change and digital marketing research and practice to inform our content and approach.
- We work through partnerships, as the best way to create high quality, sustainable programmes.
- We use our understanding of technology to prioritise inclusive digital approaches, and our knowledge of the context to create realistic solutions.
- We prioritise user-centred design principles, working with users to develop products that effectively meet their needs.



**My questions were answered and my knowledge has increased.**

Be in the KNOW user, Zimbabwe

**STRATEGIC  
RESPONSE**

**OUTCOME**

**RESULT**





# 1

Increase the HIV and sexual health-related knowledge, skills and confidence of those most at risk of HIV and poor sexual health, and those living with HIV.

We will:

- develop and share targeted digital HIV and sexual health communications.

The people we reach have gained up-to-date knowledge, skills and confidence to make informed choices to support their own and others' sexual health.

The people we reach take informed action to support their own and others' sexual health, reducing HIV and other sexual health infections, and improving physical and mental health among those living with HIV.

# 2

Expand and deepen the knowledge, skills and confidence of educators and advocates working on local responses to HIV and sexual health.

We will:

- develop and share accessible digital knowledge and information resources for educators and advocates.

Targeted educators and advocates have gained up-to-date knowledge, skills and confidence to support quality engagement with their clients or target groups.

Educators and advocates are effective at their roles, improving the sexual health of the local population.

# 3

Support evidence-based practice among primary HIV and sexual health practitioners.

We will:

- develop and share evidence-based good practice information and resources for practitioners.

Targeted practitioners have gained up-to-date knowledge of evidence-based approaches to support local HIV and sexual health responses.

Practitioners adopt evidence-based approaches, improving the relevance of primary HIV and sexual health responses.



**The information that has been shared I found very interesting because there are so many myths around this things in our societies so I think is information give us clarity.**

Be in the KNOW user, South Africa



**I got to learn some other health topics that I didn't know about and this makes me able to interact with clients confidently because the information is there.**

Boost user, Mpilo Central Hospital, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

**This is an excellent resource for teenagers who are learning how to navigate and regulate themselves, their health as well as relationships with others.**

Young Africa Live user, South Africa

# Our work in action

The second year of our 2021–24 global strategy *From knowledge to action* has consolidated Avert's reputation for quality and expertise. Our audiences' needs have continued to be at the forefront of everything we do. Their input has played a critical part in shaping the design and content of flagship projects *Boost*, *Yaya* and *Young Africa Live*, and our *Be in the KNOW* digital brand. User feedback consistently shows that our brands and products improve their knowledge, skills and confidence, leaving users able to make more informed health decisions and more likely to take action.



**Being educated about consent 'n whatnot is really helpful... I always thought I wrong when I refuse to give my partner sex even if I'm not in that mood.**

Be in the KNOW user, Eswatini

**It helps me to make positive decision.**

Be in the KNOW user, Zambia





## PERSONAL STORY: ELIZABETH



Elizabeth struggled to come to terms with her HIV-positive status at first but learning more about HIV helped her to understand her diagnosis and look after her health.

"I didn't handle the news well. I thought my life was over.

I went to my follow up appointments, and I am grateful that I had kind and understanding doctors. I received a crash course in HIV and learned what it means to be undetectable. I also learned that my new husband had a very high load, which meant it was more likely he gave it to me. What I didn't expect was to find out later that he was already aware of his status long before we ever said, 'I do'. This news destroyed me.

Eventually it was my faith that got me through. I decided this would not ruin me. I returned to my hometown, reconnected with family and friends, started seeing an amazing doctor and met an even more amazing man. He's negative and 11 years and two kids later, he still makes me glad I didn't give up on love.

I know there's still a ridiculous amount of misinformation and stigma around HIV. I've even experienced unprofessional behaviour from doctors, but I refuse to let it change who I am. I am living my positive life positively. There's so much more to life."

*Elizabeth is one of many Be in the KNOW users who share their stories for publication to provide hope and inspiration to others.*



Over

**36.6**

**MILLION PEOPLE**

empowered through knowledge

**BE IN THE  
KNOW**

**1.8**

**MILLION  
ENGAGEMENTS**

with *Be in the KNOW* content  
(web & social)

# Be in the KNOW

One year on from its launch, we are delighted that our *Be in the KNOW* brand – across website and social media – has become a go-to trusted resource on HIV and sexual health in sub-Saharan Africa. It offers fresh, sex-positive content for individuals and for the community health workers and primary practitioners who support them. It is informed by research, high quality data and a rigorous peer review process.

“

Yes it is really useful cause I too have a positive HIV lady and she loves me a lot but some times I fear to have sex with her, but this page has made me stronger now.

Be in the KNOW user, Uganda



Sex, sexuality and relationships are still subject to cultural taboos and conservative outlooks in many countries on the African continent, but the boom in mobile and digital technology means that more people are searching for judgement-free answers online. *Be in the KNOW* is there for them with content that builds their knowledge and confidence so that they can take charge of their own sexual health.

In its first 12 months, *Be in the KNOW* reached over 13 million people in sub-Saharan Africa and engagement rates across our social media channels and the website were high. Over 67% of users said information was very easy to understand and 86% said they found *Be in the KNOW* useful. As a result, over 77% of users felt more confident to talk about their sexual health and 81% were more likely to take action.

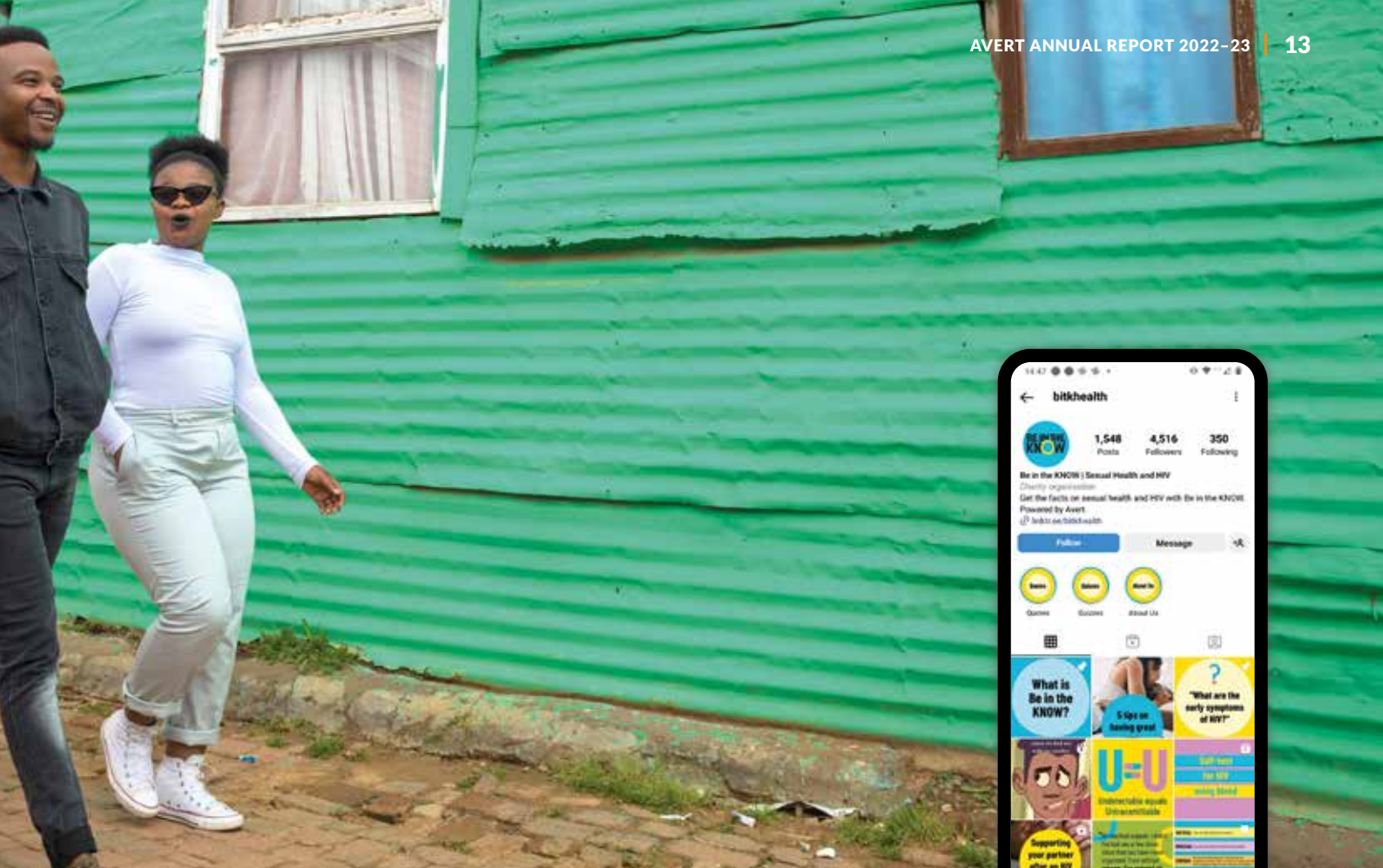
One key learning has been that sex- and pleasure-focused content is a successful way to engage young people and take them on a broader, curated learning journey about HIV and sexual health. We've also gained a better understanding of the kind of content that works best on each channel and how best to differentiate these. With over 19 million users in South Asia also exploring our resources, we are looking to develop broader content that is relevant to their contexts too.

“

It's giving me confidence that even though I'm [HIV] positive, I can still live a healthy life.

Be in the KNOW user, Kenya





## ENSURING SUCCESS

In an era when 'fake news' and misinformation is giving rise to harmful and stigmatising views, trusted information and a trusted brand are more important than ever. *Be in the KNOW* is accredited by the independent PIF TICK quality kitemark, providing reassurance to our audiences that we are a provider of accurate, unbiased, and evidence-based information. Over 76% of our users say they fully trust the information on *Be in the KNOW*.

To be sure that content is hitting its mark, *Be in the KNOW* has been co-created and developed with the people we are trying to reach at the centre. This has included in person and virtual focus group discussions, user testing, WhatsApp chat groups, and working with in-country focal points in the HIV and sexual health sector in target countries. All of this ensures that our content and brand is relevant and responsive to real needs. We use data from the website and social media to continually iterate and improve.

Part of the reason for the success of *Be in the KNOW* is because Avert takes a sex-positive and pleasure-inclusive approach to sexual health and rights. There is now clear evidence that bringing sexual pleasure into the way we approach sexual health increases impact.<sup>2</sup> Our content connects with our audiences precisely because it celebrates sexuality and sexual desire and simultaneously outlines how to have sex in ways that will keep users and their partners happy and safe.

Building on Avert's years of experience in digital communications, we also continue to follow best practice search engine optimisation (SEO) and search marketing techniques to monitor sexual health-related search terms and make sure that our content is getting in front of the people who need it the most. We also maximise our Google charity grant, developing and maintaining effective ads that achieve a strong click-through rate, getting our information in front of thousands of people each month.



**The information helps me to give accurate information to the public since my job also focuses on promoting the health and safety of workers at the workplace.**

*Be in the KNOW user, Zimbabwe*



# 13

**MILLION PEOPLE**  
reached across sub-Saharan  
Africa (web & social)



# Boost

Community health workers and peer educators (CHWs) are a crucial first port of call for many people in sub-Saharan Africa – providing health information, countering misinformation, and supporting self-care. But they often lack the up-to-date knowledge and information resources they need to be able to effectively support their communities' health. *Boost* was designed as a digital job aide to transform CHWs' capabilities, build community trust in their roles, and increase the agency of community members to make informed health choices.



Co-created with over 100 CHWs in southern Africa, *Boost* provides up-to-date visual and interactive information materials on HIV, sexual health and other primary health issues that enhance CHWs' knowledge, skills and confidence. It is available as a native Android app that works offline and as a web version. We have also continued piloting a chatbot version, the *BoostBot*.

Over the past year *Boost* usage continued to grow and deepen with over 1,000 CHWs using the native app in Zimbabwe, and over 33,800 users of the online web version. An evaluation of use in Zimbabwe found 96% of CHWs increased their confidence and improved communication with clients, 96% increased personal knowledge of recent HIV-related evidence, and 100% of CHW supervisors said that using *Boost* improves CHWs' quality of service.

Following feedback from CHWs, we added new content on intersecting health topics including female genital schistosomiasis (FGS) and worked on improving *Boost*'s offline functionality. We also developed new functionality to embed *Boost* within CHWs' daily working practices, expanded local language content, and added back-end functions such as data dashboards to support partner implementation.



**It's become easy to communicate with my clients.**

Community outreach agent, Garanyemba Clinic, Gwanda, Zimbabwe



## WORKING WITH OPHID

Zimbabwean HIV organisation OPHID was one of the first to see the potential in adopting Boost to increase the number of young people accessing HIV, sexual and mental health services. Having been part of the *Boost* pilot, OPHID believed that integrating *Boost* into its PEPFAR programme would address a knowledge gap and ultimately improve the overall project outcomes.

Using a tailored version of *Boost* to guide them, a specialised cadre of 500 community health workers called community outreach agents (COAs) are carrying out screening and referrals among households to increase their uptake of essential health services. The COAs cover six districts in southern Zimbabwe and are linked to community health facilities. Some work

specifically with young people. *Boost* content has been translated into the local Shona and Ndebele languages, along with screening tools that have been locally validated and endorsed by the Ministry of Health and Child Care, and a data management infrastructure that is compliant with Zimbabwe's new data protection laws.

Early results from the rollout indicate that *Boost* is enhancing the knowledge, skills and confidence of the COAs, as well as increasing trust with their clients. The screenings that they are carrying out at a household level are supporting young people's access to HIV, sexual health, family planning, FGS and mental health services.

## SCALING BOOST

Based on the success of *Boost* to date, our plans for regional scale-up are ambitious. We want to see *Boost* in the hands of many thousands more community health workers and peer educators across sub-Saharan Africa. We plan to achieve this in three ways:

- by expanding its use across more organisations and new cadres of CHWs in Zimbabwe to make the most of the investment made to date in local languages and screening and referral tools specific to the Zimbabwe context
- by working with more organisational partners, in more places, on more primary health issues, to adopt *Boost* and improve their CHWs' knowledge, skills, and confidence
- by building on the success of the web version of *Boost* to reach many more self-motivated CHWs who are already searching for information and answers online to support their work but need a trusted resource.

We want to work with CHW organisations, networks and m-health organisations to maximise the use of the learning, investment, and co-created health content developed so far. This means supporting organisations to adopt and integrate *Boost* into existing programme work, supporting organisations that are new to digital, and working with those that have specific content, language or operational requirements. We are also looking to collaborate with other m-health organisations that are already supporting CHW organisations to track and evaluate their CHWs' knowledge needs and activities, and explore opportunities for the *Boost* content and approach to be integrated into existing tools.

Without the right knowledge resources, CHWs cannot effectively support their communities' health. *Boost* equips them with the tools and confidence to become agents of change.

*Note: CHWs in this context refers to all non-formally qualified workers such as peer educators, community health advocates, community educators, treatment support workers etc.*

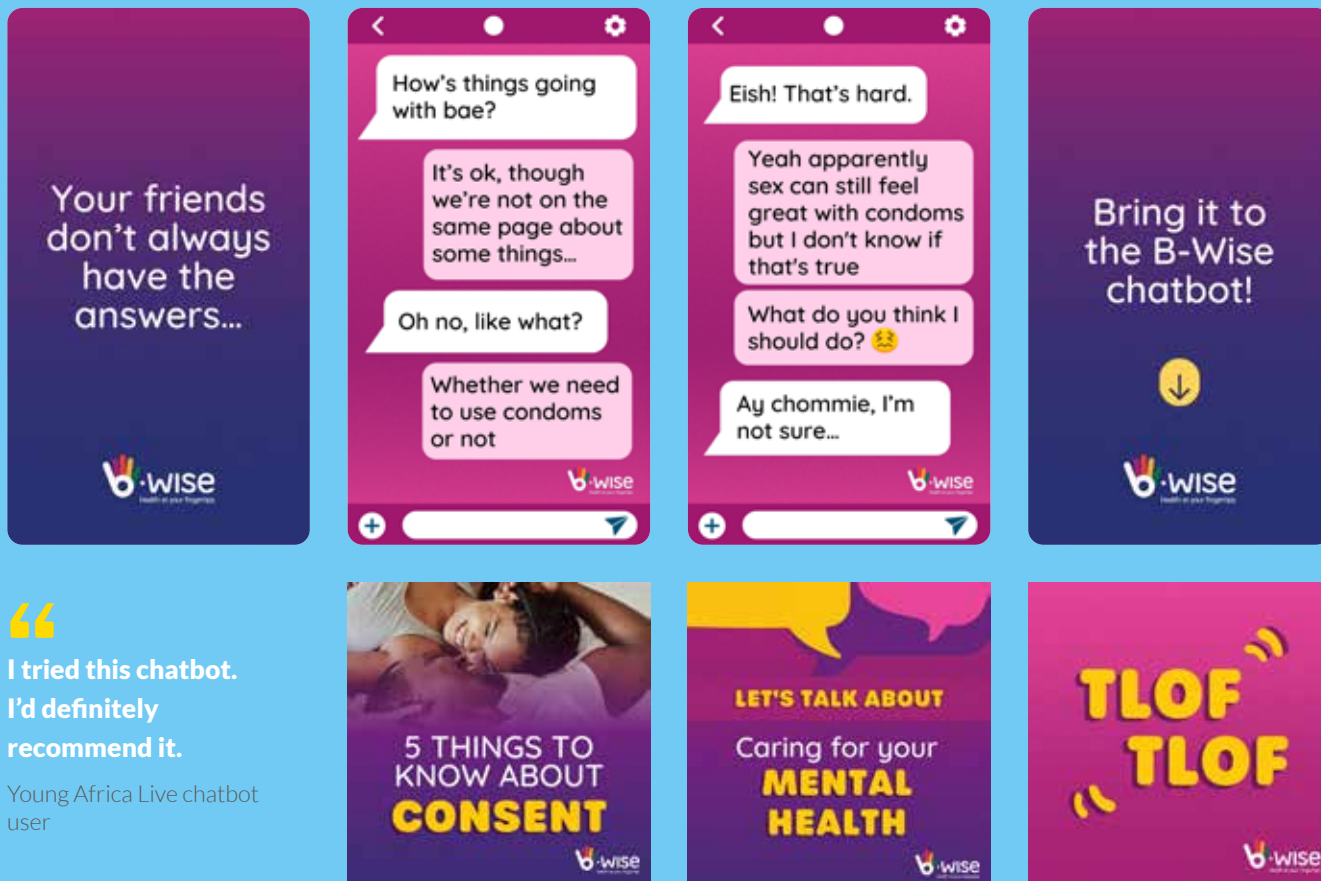


**We now have confident COAs [CHWs] and our programming is improving due to the Boost usage.**

District supervisor, Boost outcome evaluation participant



**96%**  
OF USERS  
increased knowledge  
and confidence



# Young Africa Live

A new generation of young people in South Africa need a new approach to engage them on issues around sexual and mental health. Piloted in South Africa from early 2023, *Young Africa Live* uses a WhatsApp chatbot, Facebook and Instagram to reach young people. It provides judgement-free private conversations and tailored support through the chatbot, and peer engagement and open discussions on Facebook and Instagram, allowing young people to benefit from the advantages of both platforms.

Through its clear, trustworthy and engaging content *Young Africa Live* is aiming to engage over 100,000 young people during the course of the project, helping them make informed choices to improve their sexual and mental health. The results so far – over 70,000 conversations started with young people by July 2023 – show *Young Africa Live* is empowering a new generation of young people through digital to make knowledgeable decisions and link up with wider HIV and STI services.

Avert has led content development for the chatbot across a range of issues related to sex and relationships, HIV and STIs, and mental health. We have also led on social media marketing to drive awareness and engagement with the chatbot and to promote and moderate discussions on Facebook and Instagram.

Led by Reach Digital Health, with investment from the Elton John AIDS Foundation and pro-bono support from Meta, the project has been integrated within the national B-Wise sexual health brand through close collaboration with the South African National Department of Health and B-Wise partners.

Working on *Young Africa Live* has honed our skills in creating conversational chatbot content and provided valuable insights into the social media usage and sexual health challenges faced by young people in South Africa. This in turn has sparked new ideas for sex-positive, pleasure-based content. All this learning is being fed into the ongoing improvement and iteration of *Young Africa Live*, as well as feeding into Avert's wider work.



**It's been great having Avert's expertise in developing engaging, sex positive content on the *Young Africa Live* project.**

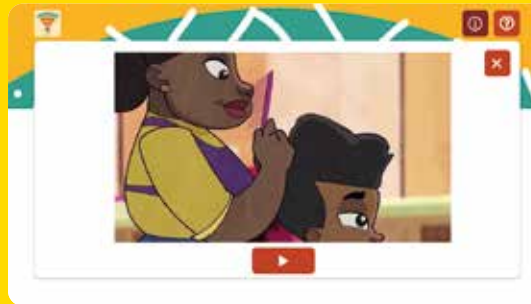
Erwin Fisser, Social Behaviour Change Communications Lead, Aidsfonds





We like what [Yaya] said... We can trust her because she has a friendly voice and seems like a very knowledgeable person.

Yaya co-creation participant, Mozambique



# Yaya

Yaya is a life skills app developed by Avert to engage out-of-school, low literacy girls in Mozambique. Developed as part of the EAGLE project, a programme funded by Global Affairs Canada and implemented by VSO and Light for the World, Yaya is a tablet-based, user-friendly set of resources on life skills, sex, and relationships, that aims to increase the girls' knowledge and enable them to make informed sexual health and relationship decisions.

Yaya has now been rolled out to over 550 girls and will reach a total of 3,000 girls across Sofala and Manica provinces by project end. Co-created with end users, Yaya is a demonstration of how digital can be relevant to and make a difference to the most marginalised populations.

Delivered in two local oral languages, Ndau and Sena, Yaya has no text and uses only audio and visuals to provide a resource that is easy to navigate and intuitive for non-literate users. It is a home-based learning solution that provides the flexibility for the girls to keep revisiting the content and absorb the information in their own time and surroundings.

Ongoing user engagement with a cohort of the girls was fundamental in shaping content, design and functionality development, and ensured sex, relationships, contraception and choice were discussed in ways appropriate and relevant to the girls' context and circumstances. As a result of the girls' involvement, the app was more readily accepted by their families and wider community.

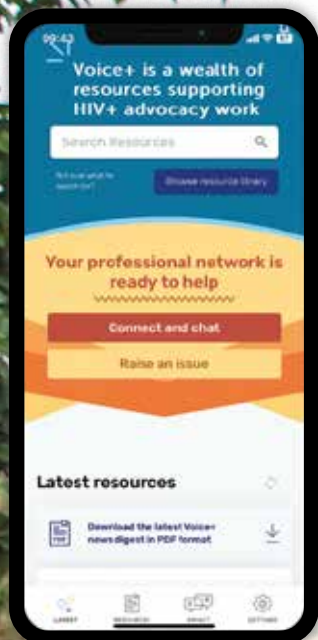
With VSO, we are now assessing additional language versions, and researching how we could deploy Yaya – and the learning captured through the development process – to support similar initiatives with low literacy communities elsewhere. Other organisations working in Mozambique could also benefit from the app and we look forward to forging new relationships so that many more women and girls gain access to Yaya.



The impact of the co-creation process was very positive. It made the application more acceptable to the community because they had participated in its creation ... The girls really, in exploring their ideas, developed self-esteem and were able to believe in themselves. They could express their opinions about sexuality and feel that they were important and involved in what was going on.

Nelma, EAGLE project representative in Mozambique





## VOICE+

Over the year we continued to work closely with GNP+ on their Voice+ platform, using our digital content and monitoring and evaluation experience to support content planning, development and delivery, monitoring and evaluation work, and wider strategy for the app. This fed into GNP+'s wider work to improve the look and feel of the app and enhance its performance.

Voice+ was designed to improve communication between network members and is a two-way digital platform that was initially introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic but subsequently adapted as a core network tool. It supports links between networks of people living with HIV and is used by them as a trusted source of information, a place to connect, and a tool to raise local issues.

We are continuing to explore ways in which more of Avert's existing sexual health content can be made available to Voice+ users to avoid duplication of effort between our two organisations. GNP+ is a highly valued partner and we are looking forward to new opportunities to develop our work together.

# Project spotlights





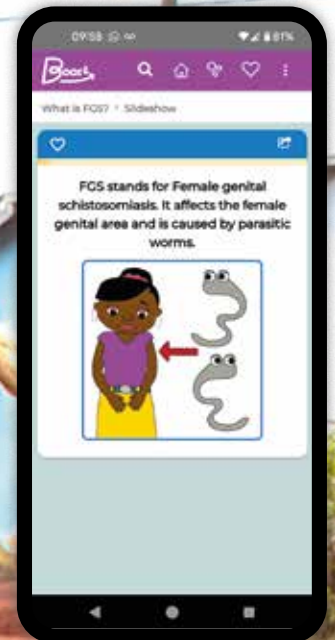
## SUPPORTING A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO WOMEN'S HEALTH

As a founding member of the Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS) Integration Group (FIG), which was created in 2022, Avert brought our wealth of knowledge not only of HIV and sexual health to the coalition, but also our experience of making complex health information accessible to populations most impacted by these conditions.

FGS is a neglected tropical disease that is preventable and treatable, but affects 56 million women and girls across Africa and can lead to years of suffering and stigma. Often misdiagnosed as a sexually transmitted infection, if left untreated FGS puts women at risk of serious reproductive health issues, including infertility and cervical cancer. It also makes women and girls more vulnerable to HIV.

During the year we used our platforms to reach those who need information and resources about FGS and integrating FGS with SRH practices. This included adding a new module on FGS to our community health worker job aide *Boost*, and new resources to the *Be in the KNOW* website highlighting the need for a holistic person-centred approach that recognises the interlinkages between FGS, HIV and sexual and reproductive health.

Systematically addressing the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of FGS in a comprehensive way has the potential to increase women's and girls' overall health outcomes, quality of life and wellbeing. Avert will continue to work with FIG partners on FGS health literacy to make this a reality.



## HIV AND MPOX

A global outbreak of mpox, renamed from monkeypox by the World Health Organization to lessen stigma, was declared a public health emergency in July 2022. Although not sexually transmitted, it is passed on through close contact and, in this instance, has mainly affected gay men and other men who have sex with men. People with HIV who are not yet diagnosed or on treatment, and with compromised immune systems, have also been at greater risk of serious infection.

Taking the learning from our work during the COVID-19 pandemic, Avert had a very clear role to play disseminating time-critical and dependable information to the communities accessing our content and channels across web and social – countering stigma and helping to combat vaccine hesitancy.

With support from Gilead, we created new mpox content to use across our channels and linked this new content to existing materials on HIV and sexual health. The aim was to enable individuals and practitioners to increase their knowledge and protect themselves and others against mpox, and also encourage continuity of HIV treatment and prevention services.



# Connecting, learning and sharing

Working in partnership with like-minded organisations to exchange expertise and add value to each other's activities is core to Avert's approach. Over the year we increased our engagement with a broad range of organisations across the HIV, sexual health, digital and behaviour change sectors to support collaboration, avoid duplication, and enhance our wider understanding and effectiveness. We also worked harder to share the evidence and learning generated through our own work at conferences and through other networks and events.

“

I recently tested positive and the information that I read reassured me that HIV is not a death sentence. That HIV is a manageable disease if I adhere to my medication as prescribed, and that I can have a meaningful and loving relationship with a negative person. Disclosure will be important to build trust between me and my partner.

Be in the KNOW website user, South Africa

A few highlights of this work to connect, learn and share include:

- presenting our **Yaya life skills app** at the **24TH INTERNATIONAL AIDS CONFERENCE IN MONTREAL**, as well as taking part in a panel discussion on **HIV and FGS integration**, having our own networking booth in the Global Village where we welcomed over 200 people to exchange ideas, and supporting an FGS panel discussion in the Women's Networking Zone
- participating in a **panel discussion** at the **3RD INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CHANGE COMMUNICATIONS SUMMIT IN MARRAKESH** to share our insights on how behaviour change communication is evolving in the 21st century, as well as connecting with a range of new contacts around behaviour change
- **presenting evidence on the value of Boost** at the **3RD INTERNATIONAL CHW SYMPOSIUM IN LIBERIA**, highlighting to government health staff from across Africa the role Avert's job aide can play supporting salaried, skilled, supervised, and supplied community health workers

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

PRESENTING





- presenting our new **primary research** on the sexual health information behaviours of young Zambian men at the **INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP ON HIV AND ADOLESCENCE IN CAPE TOWN** and the **8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BEHAVIOUR CHANGE IN LONDON** – improving the sector's understanding of this group's information seeking and sharing habits and how to better support them as transformative agents supporting peer sexual agency
  - **supporting the annual learning summit** of **PATA**, the action network of health providers in sub-Saharan Africa, and **chairing a summit session** showcasing examples of **proven digital interventions** that can improve paediatric health care outcomes
  - collaborating with the **PLEASURE PROJECT** to explore new ways to incorporate **pleasure-focused content** across our platforms, particularly *Be in the KNOW* – this included a workshop and training session. The Pleasure Project works to eroticize safer sex and develop the evidence base for sex-positive pleasure-based approaches to sexual health and rights. Avert is proud to have been the first organisation to endorse their set of 'pleasure principles'
  - sharing interests around **collaboration, conversation, awareness, youth engagement and campaigning** as part of the **#GENENDIT COALITION**, which has helped Avert to connect with, learn from and inspire other institutions serving young people
  - showcasing how **health literacy** can play a role in **self-care** as a member of the **SELF-CARE TRAILBLAZER GROUP**, a global coalition dedicated to expanding the safe and effective practice of self-care. Through self-care, individuals can better manage their own health, health outcomes are improved, and health systems better equipped to achieve universal health coverage
  - **joining** the **COMMUNITY HEALTH IMPACT COALITION** as an **ally** to support their work championing the rights of CHWs to receive a salary, training, and the appropriate resources and supervision to be able to carry out their jobs
  - **sharing learning** with the **HCD EXCHANGE** knowledge hub's community of human-centred design practitioners.
- We aspire to continually improve our practice and see connecting, learning and sharing as the foundations for this. We look forward to engaging with more organisations, networks and learning events in the year ahead.



# The year ahead

**Following a successful year demonstrating the value and impact of our work, our focus for the year ahead will be on scaling up to reach more people.**

We will continue to align our work to the needs of the epidemic, with a particular focus on women and girls in sub-Saharan Africa, as highlighted in the latest UNAIDS report. This means providing information on HIV and broader sexual and reproductive health that is integrated, targeted and effective.

We will continue to follow evidence-based approaches, including ensuring all content is sex-positive, as we know pleasure-inclusive sexual health is more effective at encouraging safe sexual choices.

Our work also relies on maintaining a sustainable funding base. In a challenging funding environment, we will continue to explore new ways to support and expand our work.

## BUILDING ON EXISTING PRODUCTS

We will implement a programme of iterative testing and learning on *Be in the KNOW*, across the website and social media, to improve the health learning journeys of our audiences and maximise the brand's overall impact.

On *Boost* we will expand partnerships with organisations whose work *Boost* can strengthen by equipping their community health workers and peer educators (CHWs) with the knowledge resources they need. The free web version of *Boost* will be promoted to self-motivated CHWs, through online marketing and a new CHW ambassadors scheme.

We will host a webinar for potential partners, funders and *Boost* implementers, sharing the learnings from its roll out in Zimbabwe. Through engagement with other organisations, we will continue to explore how *Boost* best complements existing digital CHW resources.

We will build on the success of our *Yaya* life skills app by securing partnerships to expand its range of content and languages, to reach and benefit more low-literacy communities inside and outside Mozambique.

## NEW STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT

We look forward to carrying out a review of our progress and achievements against our current strategy, in consultation with partners and leaders across the sector. This will help inform our next strategic framework.

We will monitor closely the fast-paced evolution of the social media landscape, responding thoughtfully so we remain visible and relevant to our core audiences. We will also explore ways to sustainably expand *Be in the KNOW* to meet the needs of audiences in new geographical regions, such as South Asia.



# Maintaining an effective organisation

**Maintaining our commitment to evidence and independence sits at the core of our organisation and ensures we are the trusted, go-to HIV and sexual health organisation for millions of people globally.**

We continue to operate as a small, but highly effective organisation reaching millions. Our talented and committed staff, based in the UK, Zimbabwe and South Africa work hard to maintain our reputation and the trust we have from our global audiences. Investing in our knowledge management systems ensures that we are always up-to-date and accurate, while taking a human centred design approach ensures we understand what our audiences want to know. These working principles are at the core of our sustainability strategy, alongside our ability to be agile and responsive to changing digital platforms and audience behaviours.

We are committed to using with good stewardship and care the enormous opportunities that our understanding of digital communication platforms and search marketing brings. Digital platforms give new opportunities for people to enquire, explore and learn in the privacy of their own homes and in their own time on the health issues that matter most to them. The digital literacy and rights of our key audiences are crucial in ensuring we can use social media platforms and the web to the best advantage to support improved health outcomes.

Our committed partners and funders have supported us to grow and to maintain our standards and the effectiveness of our organisation as we continue to stay flexible to the changing HIV, sexual health and digital landscapes.

We look forward to a challenging year ahead as we work hard to be sustainable, reach more people, and close the knowledge gap. This will be the final year in our current strategy and will contribute greatly to the direction we take in the coming years. We know that whether it's creating demand for PrEP, being informed about HIV transmission, or understanding HIV treatment, that health literacy matters. We remain committed to play our part towards achieving the UNAIDS Global Goals to end AIDS by 2030.

“

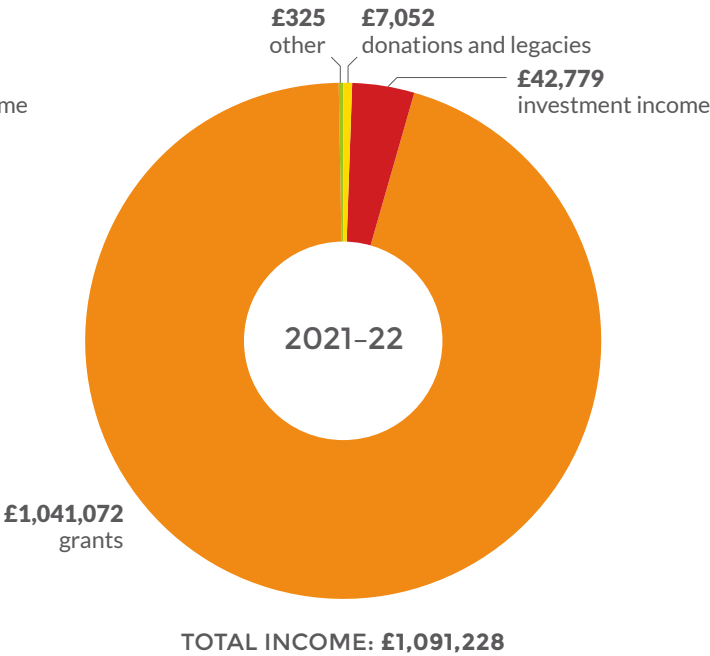
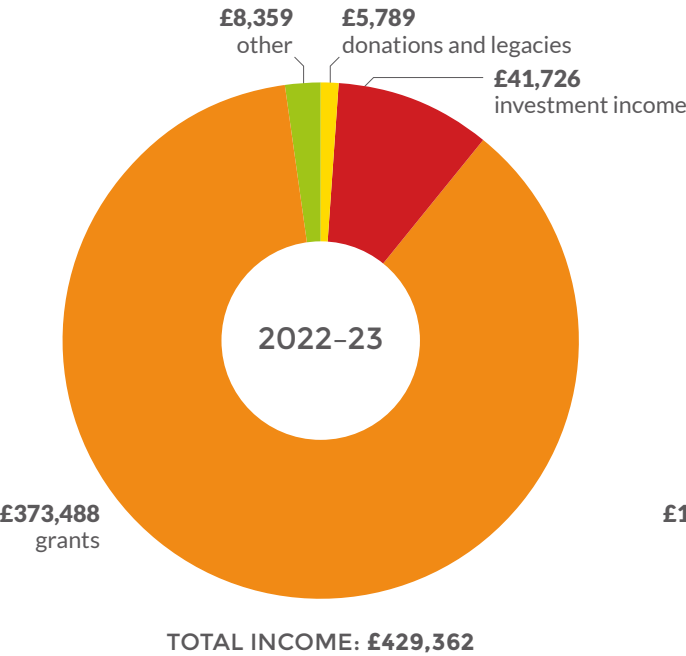
**Gilead is pleased to support Avert's work across key populations to lessen the healthcare divide through up-to-date, innovative, online resources and tools, so that, people can support their own self-care. We welcome their expertise in taking complex health information and making it accessible to people who need to know.**

Gilead Sciences

*Note: Avert receives grant funding from Gilead Sciences; Gilead has no input or influence into grantee activities.*

# Financial summary

TOTAL INCOME  
FOR THE YEAR

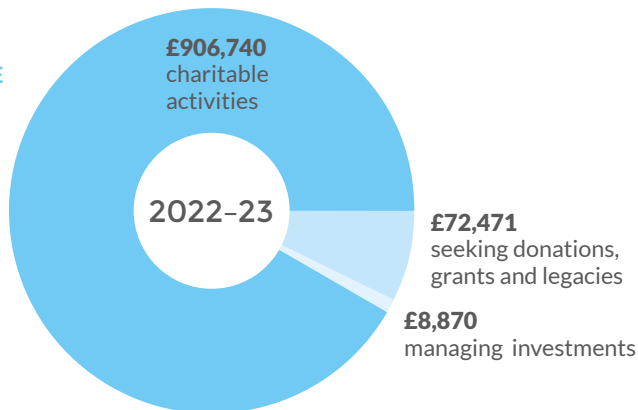


Avert would like to acknowledge and thank all the individual donors who continue to support our work as well as thanking the Vitol Foundation, Mercury Phoenix Trust, Gilead Sciences, ViiV Healthcare, VSO, The Elton John AIDS Foundation, Sentebale, the Risk Pool Fund, and the Global Network of People Living with HIV, for their grant support and partnership.

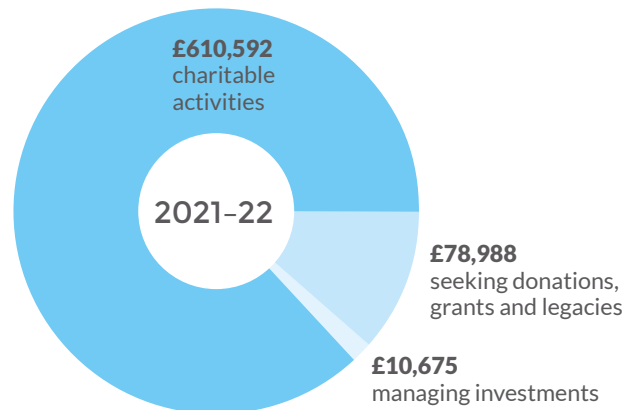




TOTAL EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR

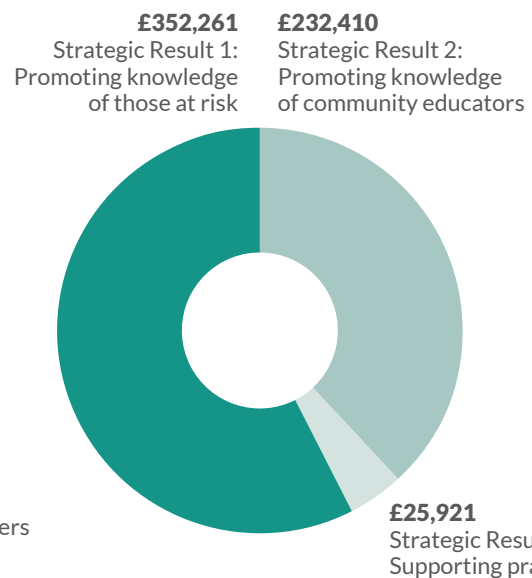
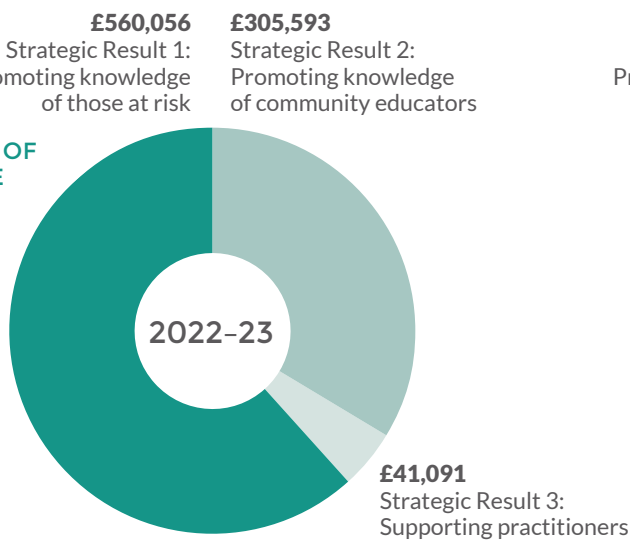


TOTAL EXPENDITURE: £988,081



TOTAL EXPENDITURE: £700,255

BREAKDOWN OF EXPENDITURE AGAINST OUR CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES





# Organisational information

## AVERT (LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

### TRUSTEES

Professor Simon Forrest (*Chair*)  
 Anna Becker  
 Emily Hughes  
 Carole Leach-Lemens  
 Beryl Mutoonono-Watkiss (*resigned 27 July 2023*)  
 Andrew Walker  
 Max Cuvelier  
 Sam Avrett (*resigned 2 November 2023*)  
 Carol Sherman

### PRINCIPAL AND REGISTERED OFFICE

Platf9rm, Tower Point,  
 44 North Road  
 Brighton BN1 1YR  
 UK

Registered charity number 1074849  
 Registered company number 03716796

### COMPANY SECRETARY

Professor Simon Forrest

### BOARD SECRETARY

Kerry Pike

### KEY MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL

Sarah Hand, *Chief Executive Officer (CEO)*  
 Simon Moore, *Director of Communications & Digital Health Strategy*  
 Kate Harrison, *Director of Partnerships and Fundraising (left August 2022)*  
 Jon Edgell, *Director of Finance and Operations*

### 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  
 25 Copthall Ave, London EC2R 7AH

### SOLICITORS

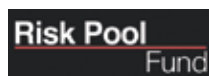
Irwin Mitchell  
 Belmont House, Station Way  
 Crawley, West Sussex RH10 1JA

### AUDITORS

Blue Spire Limited, Chartered Accountants  
 Cawley Priory, South Pallant  
 Chichester PO19 1SY



## Working in partnership with...





**www.avert.info**

General email: [info@avert.org](mailto:info@avert.org)

Registered UK charity no. 1074849  
Registered UK company no. 03716796

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#### NOTES

- 1 Globally there were an estimated 1.3 million infections in 2022 and while this figure is declining, it is still too high.
- 2 Zaneva M, Philpott A, Singh A, Larsson G, Gonsalves L (2022). What is the added value of incorporating pleasure in sexual health interventions? A systematic review and meta-analysis. PLoS ONE 17(2): e0261034. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0261034>