

Boost – an app to support community health workers' ongoing learning



Boost was developed with community health workers in Southern Africa to give them digital information and tools to use in their work. The aim of the project is to help community health workers keep learning, and equip them with fun, interactive tools that they can use with their clients. The Boost app launched in January 2020 and is now available to download.

What was the aim of the project?

Community health workers support millions of people with, or at risk of HIV in Southern Africa. They are often people's first point of contact with the health system, however to play an effective role, they need clear, accessible, and accurate information so they can provide high quality care to their communities.

Often community health workers are reliant on paper-based resources which are difficult to keep up-to-date, or in-person trainings which vary in terms of regularity and quality.

With access to mobile phones growing in Southern Africa, we saw an opportunity to provide a digital alternative: a more convenient way for community health workers to stay up to date. Boost provides accurate and reliable information on HIV, sexual health and COVID-19, accessible through a smart phone, so that community health workers can have the information they need to hand throughout the day.

Because data costs and poor internet access still block many people from going on-line, Boost can be downloaded for offline use.

How was Boost developed?

Boost was developed with the active involvement of over 100 community health workers.

The project began in February 2019, with the first round of scoping and consultations taking place in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia. We spoke to different implementing organisations and held focus group discussions with over 100 community health workers. These discussions helped us to understand community health workers' information needs and use of mobile technologies.

Some of the community health workers we spoke to signed up to join co-creation groups on WhatsApp, where they could be further involved in the design of the app. The members of these groups were able to help design, develop and feedback on the content and features of the app throughout its development.

Boost launched at the end of January 2020 and is being promoted in relevant priority countries in Southern Africa. Boost is available and free for individuals and organisation to download and use.

What does Boost provide?

- A wide range of information including on HIV, COVID-19, maternal health, common co-infections and NCDs, TB, sex, relationships and more.
- An accessible way of learning. We break down information into short, simple sentences and use images to make the content suitable for those with lower-levels of English.
- Easy-to-use technology that helps users search, save favourites and share content with others over WhatsApp.
- The ability to track your progress as you learn and sharable analytics for organisations, so they can see how their community health workers are using the app.

Find out more about [how to use Boost and the information it provides](#).



“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



How can you access Boost?

- [Google play store](#): Download the full app to use offline from the google play store.
- Feature phones: Go to the KaiOS store to download Boost for feature phones.
- [The Boost web app](#): Access all the Boost content online at boost.avert.org.
- WhatsApp: Send questions to the WhatsApp chat bot to access Boost information via chat.
- [Facebook](#): Join the Boost Facebook group to discuss content further and talk to other CHWs.

What's next for Boost?

We are currently conducting a full external evaluation of Boost, working with two partners ([Africaid](#) and [OPHID](#)) in Zimbabwe. Through this work we hope to understand how Boost has impacted community health workers' knowledge, confidence and practice.

We are still looking to promote Boost to other organisations working with community health workers. Our aim is to make these tools accessible to all and used across the region.

Want to find out more?

If you'd like to use Boost with your organisation or want to know more about partnering with Avert on Boost adaptations, [get in touch](#).

Last full review:

12 July 2021

Next full review:

12 July 2024