

## Background to the Boost Project



### Why did we develop Boost?

Community health workers support millions of people living with, or at risk of HIV in Southern Africa and are often people's first point of contact with the health system.

To play an effective role, community health workers need access to up-to-date, clear, accurate and user-friendly information on HIV and other health issues. At the moment there are few ways for community health workers to get this, and many still rely on word of mouth for new information.

Boost is a mobile app designed to support community health workers with the information they need. The resources on the app are quick, easy and free to access whenever community health workers need.

### How was Boost created?

Boost was co-created with the active involvement of over 100 community health workers from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

#### Focus group discussions

The project started in January 2019, with focus group discussions with community healthworkers from these three countries. In these discussions community health workers told us that they wanted an easier way of getting information. Often the answers to their questions were not readily available and even if their initial training was good, it can be hard for them to stay up-to-date.

*“Existing materials are helpful but not enough” - Focus group participant, Malawi*

*“Some of the information has changed and it is dynamic; there is no upgrade; there is information gap because time has past, things have changed from the time we learnt about them.” - Focus group participant, Zambia*

*“We don’t always have enough time to get answers. I will only refer the really difficult questions to my supervisor.” - Focus group participant, Zimbabwe*

## User-panels





After the focus group discussions, we set up user-panels with the community health workers in WhatsApp. These WhatsApp groups meant that community health workers could continue to participate in the creation of Boost. We had regular discussions around the content and functionality of the app, and the groups tested and improved early iterations of Boost.

## How is Boost being used?

Boost is currently being rolled out by organisations in several southern African countries.

It's being used to support community health workers and peer educators in clinic waiting rooms, home visits and to start games and discussion in group sessions. Our implementing partners have told us: ‘The app has made it easy for peer educators to share correct information with their clients’ - Africaid Zvandiri.

As more countries have implemented social distancing measures in response to COVID-19, many community healthworkers are no longer able to see their clients face-to-face. As a result new organisations are signing up to Boost to help their community health workers keep in touch with their clients. Using the Boost app, they can share information with their clients over WhatsApp.

	<p>“It is useful in my work as a peer educator and counsellor it helps me to be informative and to be equipped.”</p> <p>- Christine, community health worker in Zimbabwe</p>		<p>“With Boost you will never go wrong, the best way to get real information on health and SRHR.”</p> <p>- Tendai, peer educator in Zimbabwe</p>
	<p>“It has a lot of useful and educative info. The videos and photos are good and clear so they are easy to use.”</p> <p>- Jacob, community health worker in Zimbabwe</p>		<p>“What I love most about Boost is that it is simple but very educating &amp; it will help me so much in my field.”</p> <p>- Loveness, community health worker in Zambia</p>

## What is next for the Boost project?

Boost launched in January 2020, since then we have been promoting the app to new organisations and community health workers who we hope will find it useful.

We will be continuing to add and update the content on Boost, and further develop the functionality of the app. In the next phase of development, we're integrating Boost with WhatsApp - so users can access great HIV content through their normal messaging platforms.

We are now collecting learnings from the first phase of the project, working with two Zimbabwean NGOs (Africaid Zvandiri and OPHID) on an initial case study of Boost. This will help us to understand its impact on community health workers' ability and effectiveness. The case study will look into the following questions:

- How do community health workers interact with digital information?
- What information content do they access?
- Does it improve their knowledge and confidence?
- How can Boost benefit the clients' understanding and engagement in sessions?
- Does Boost provide value to organisations in the ongoing development of community health workers?
- To what extent does the app expand access to digital information for those with limited connectivity?

We will share the results and learning from the case study at the end of 2020. To sign up for email updates on the Boost project and learnings, [register here](#).

## Learn more

Get more information on all that [Boost has to offer and how to download the app](#).

[Read more about the project](#) and how community health workers were involved in the design and development of the app.



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01 July 2020

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