"We believe in the power of HIV and AIDS education to change lives, and so provide quality, impartial information on the epidemic to people worldwide."
AVERT has been working at the forefront of the HIV response since 1986. Our impartial, evidence-based information reaches thousands of people across the world every day, and our work in Southern Africa with local partners helps to change the lives of those most in need. As a knowledge organisation, we empower people to protect themselves and others from infection, reduce HIV stigma, and improve HIV programmes globally.

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 understanding of HIV and AIDS and take action to reduce infections and improve the lives of those affected.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS
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.
2015/16 has been a momentous year for the HIV response, with bold commitments to end AIDS as a global public health threat by 2030, and specific targets for 2020. 2015 also saw the launch of the new World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines recommending the start of antiretroviral treatment as soon as possible after people are diagnosed with HIV. By mid-2016 over 17 million people worldwide were accessing HIV treatment; this is only 46% of those who need it but is still a very significant achievement. However, new infections in groups such as young adolescent girls in Southern Africa remain a huge concern.

2015 also saw the launch of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), replacing the Millennium Development Goals. With the right will and commitment the SDGs can help ensure HIV is addressed across a range of development challenges, driving down new infections and addressing the underlying causes of HIV.

But three decades on, knowledge, awareness, and education around HIV is still patchy at best. In some of the hardest hit countries in Southern Africa, and among young gay men growing up in the UK, USA and elsewhere, the percentage of people with accurate knowledge on HIV and ways to prevent transmission is as low as 35%. The need for accurate, accessible and relevant information on HIV that can reach the right people in the right places is critical if we are to achieve the global goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat.

AVERN remains committed to this effort through a range of online channels, and 2016 has been an exciting year of growth and development for us. One of our key achievements for the year was the launch of our new AVERN.org digital education platform. We worked hard to better understand our audiences, what matters most to them, and how to ensure they are well informed about HIV. The result is two distinct areas on AVERN.org – one tailored to our general public users, the other supporting the different information needs of our professional users. We are delighted at the positive feedback we have received post launch from around the world. Moving forward the site will grow and develop reflecting the latest advances and breakthroughs in the HIV epidemic.

Building on the success of our work in Malawi we increased our investment in our partner Umunthu Foundation. As a result the programme reached nearly double the number of people with HIV counselling and testing services – delivering impact on the ground and value for money. It was a real privilege to have the opportunity to visit the programme last year and speak to some of the many people benefiting from the new treatment clinic we supported. One man told me he was getting treatment for the first time as he could now easily walk to the new centre from his home.

We also started working on two new programmes. We are delighted to be supporting a Comic Relief programme in Zambia focused on HIV and TB integration, and are looking to expand on the HIV testing work that they have started. Our other new partner, Phelisanang Bophelong in Lesotho, works with adolescents to reduce their vulnerability to HIV and increase their uptake of sexual and reproductive health services. We are very excited about our partnership with this excellent youth-centred organisation, and our shared aims to reach young people with high quality information on HIV in the way that they want and need.

All of these achievements would not have been possible without the commitment and capacity of our excellent staff team, leadership from our Board of Trustees, and support from our donors. AVERN continues to benefit greatly from the endowment handed down to us by the organisation’s founding directors. As we grow, meet the challenges of the HIV epidemic ahead, and maximise the opportunities of an increasingly digital world, we will be working hard to ensure our financial stability, looking for new partnerships, and diversifying our funding base. We end the year with a great sense of achievement and a clear understanding of our purpose and direction ahead.
This has been a year of remarkable achievement for AVERT as we approach 30 years’ service and commitment to the global HIV response.

Our commitment, vision, independence, and adaptability have always helped us deliver work that is relevant and aligned with the needs of people and communities most affected by the epidemic. Although we are a small organisation with limited resources, we remain ambitious that we can bring about significant change.

This year we have redoubled our efforts to capitalise on our history and potential. I am delighted to report that we have engaged in a raft of work to ensure that AVERT remains relevant and responsive to the challenges of the HIV epidemic today and over the next five years. We have underpinned our long-standing commitment to this work by reviewing charity governance, refreshing our vision, and establishing a new strategy.

We are in the response for the long haul, so we have also worked to ensure sustainability and capacity by reviewing our financial model and fundraising strategy. We also relocated the organisation to new offices in Brighton, removing the risk and burdens associated with owning and maintaining our own building. As this report details, we used the resources from the sale to invest in and grow the organisation.

A big part of this has been investment in our staff and capacity. We have recruited new senior staff to ensure our digital presence and offer is cutting edge as well as engaging two senior consultants to support organisational development. The Board is also committed to being an excellent employer and as part of this we have developed a new HR manual and instigated policy changes to support the well-being of our staff.

It has been a good, exciting and progressive year. AVERT looks forward to doing as we always have – pushing above our weight to make a difference to the lives of those most affected by and most at risk of HIV.

Simon Forrest  Chair of the Board of Trustees
In November 2015, following just over six months review and redevelopment, we launched our new AVERT.org digital education platform. With distinct areas for our public and professional users the site now provides a much more tailored user experience, with clear, fresh, and engaging written and visual content. With over 12.2 million visits during the year, this is a significant resource to support the HIV response. Information and education remain vital tools to reduce the number of new infections and also to support those who are living with HIV. We are working to reach more people by ensuring our content is easily accessible, visual, updated and written in simple and clear English.

With positive feedback from our users since launch, we have also worked hard to maximise our Google charity advertising grant to ensure that AVERT.org is reaching the right people in the right places. The growth of users in countries such as Kenya and South Africa (see map) demonstrates our global relevance. Over the coming year we will be looking to build on this regional engagement and produce tailored content that resonates with those most at risk and most in need of information. We will also be giving more priority to our social media and marketing channels to increase our reach.

User engagement on AVERT.org is extremely important to us and we continue to look for ways to improve this. The majority of our users continue to engage with the public side of the site, sharing how the information has made them feel and act. The personal stories that we share on the site remain hugely popular and help make the ‘facts’ about HIV relevant and meaningful to our users’ individual realities. Next year we will be looking to further develop this part of the site, as well as launch more interactive multimedia and infographic content.

“I really learn a lot from this page. I also will take care of my health, make sure that I use protection.”

“Thanks for this valuable page. After reading this I go slow with my fiancé and I’m able to have a good and safe sex with her.”

“I’ve been working on HIV issues for quite some time, and just wanted to say that this is one of the clearest descriptions of the treatment cascade I’ve found – thank you! AVERT’s resources are very helpful in distilling the complex, often jargon-laden health speak into everyday, understandable concepts.”
Scaling up our international partnership work this year has demonstrated the ongoing impact and value good partnership can bring to local NGOs and CBOs working in some of the poorest and hardest hit countries in Southern Africa. We have focused on Southern Africa because of the severity and complexity of the HIV epidemic in this region and the strength of local civil society to play a key role in addressing the HIV epidemic. We aim specifically to partner with and fund local organisations that are working at the grassroots in affected communities. We aim to make a contribution to national HIV programmes through local efforts, and to demonstrate good use of our available resources.

In 2015–16 we partnered with four local organisations in Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa and Zambia. This work included HIV testing and counselling (Malawi), youth HIV work (Lesotho), HIV/TB integration (Zambia), and empowering older people to care for grandchildren orphaned by AIDS (South Africa).

In South Africa, we continued to evolve our long-term partnership with Sisonke which over the past 10 years has supported elderly caregivers in rural areas of Eastern Cape. The programme has brought together a network of grandmothers and helped them to find a voice in their communities. Our partnership with Sisonke continued to provide skills and support for elderly women to promote awareness about HIV and AIDS, and to take care of their grandchildren who have been orphaned by AIDS.

In 2015–16 Sisonke supported the elderly groups to operate more independently and decentralise some activities to community level, such as providing advice on social security grants. Two new activities were introduced based on needs expressed by communities. The first was sharing and learning groups – regular support groups for elderly women to find common solutions to challenges they face. The second was parenting skills training for the elderly, recognising that raising children in the modern world in the context of HIV and AIDS requires new skills and knowledge.

Malawi has one of the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world, with 10% of the population living with HIV. AVERT, in partnership with the Umunthu Foundation, has been providing HIV services in the Blantyre region of Malawi since 2010. The Umunthu Foundation is the only organisation in the area delivering vital HIV information, counselling and testing services.

In 2015–16 we doubled our grant commitment to Umunthu and as a result saw a doubling of effort and impact at the project level. The programme opened a much-needed new testing and treatment clinic, and started work with the local government clinic to improve the quality of services on offer to this highly populated peri-urban community. The programme successfully reached over 33,000 people with HIV counselling and testing – nearly double the number from a year earlier. This matters for two reasons. Firstly, increasing testing means those diagnosed with HIV are able to access support and treatment. But secondly, testing is also a key way to raise awareness and change behaviour which can, in turn, prevent new HIV infections.

Work also started on a new testing and treatment clinic at Limbe Health Centre which will be completed by the end of 2016.

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
Lesotho is a small country yet currently has the second largest HIV epidemic in the world, with 23.4% of the population living with HIV. It has a growing adolescent population, with adolescent girls in particular being disproportionately affected by HIV.

Working with a new partner Phelisanang Bophelong (PB) this year we managed to support a number of exciting initiatives designed to respond to this crisis and the risks adolescents face. One great achievement has been the successful ‘Mothers and daughters camps’ and ‘Fathers and sons’ camps run by PB’s trained staff to help bridge the cultural norms and generational divide that exists around sexuality, sex and healthy relationships.

The programme also supported just over 2,500 young people to access HIV testing and sexual and reproductive health services, distributed information to thousands of adolescents, and reached those most marginalised such as young men who have sex with men and transgender youth.

Zambia has an HIV prevalence rate of 12.6%, making it one of the most affected countries in the world. Tuberculosis (TB) is the leading cause of death for people with HIV, so there is urgent need for effective integration of programmes that respond to both HIV and TB at the community level.

This year a new partnership with Bwafwano Integrated Services Organisation (BISO) enabled us to help address this need. BISO are a long-standing NGO working across many of Zambia’s poor communities supporting HIV, TB, education and social development programmes.

During the year, the programme (taken over by AVERT from another NGO) continued to make excellent progress against its five-year targets. Supported by Comic Relief, it aims to increase the number of people screened and tested for both HIV and TB and supported into care, and increase community action to prevent new infections. In 2016–17 when the Comic Relief grant ends, AVERT will support the programme to continue to expand the HIV testing and TB referral work through a new strategic grant.

Lesotho

- 3,560 people screened for TB at the village level through trained community workers
- 1,842 people counselled and tested for HIV
- 427 people supported to access HIV and TB treatment

Zambia

- 2,620 adolescents counselled and tested for HIV in youth-friendly services
- 1,140 young people supported to attend new youth clubs
- 90 adolescents from marginalised populations trained in HIV and empowerment skills

SUCCESS STORY

Tšepiso is 15 years old and living with HIV. Because of her HIV status, she was bullied at school and stigmatised in her village.

With support from Limakatso, a PB community volunteer, Tšepiso has joined one of the project’s youth groups where she has found a safe and welcoming space to make friends and get advice.

Limakatso is also encouraging Tšepiso’s parents, teachers and students to respect Tšepiso’s rights. Tšepiso is now much more confident to share her problems and seek advice on positive living.

SUCCESS STORY

Belinda is 30 years old and was very ill and bedridden when BISO volunteers first met her. With support from the project, Belinda took an HIV test. Once it was confirmed that she was HIV positive she was able to immediately start taking the lifesaving treatment she needed.

Belinda has recovered and is now well enough to work on her farm and take care of her young family.

BREAKING DOWN STIGMA

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ACCESSING TREATMENT

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OUR STAFF

The AVERT team made great progress over the course of the year against our two key objectives:

1. We successfully recruited a new full-time Head of Digital Communications at the end of the year and took the decision to recruit a new Digital Marketing Officer.

2. AVERT moved to new more suitable office premises in Brighton – one of the UK’s hubs for digital design and development. The smooth transition was a big achievement and our new location is helping with recruitment, retention, networking and staff wellbeing.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we look ahead to 2016–17 there are a number of challenges and opportunities for the HIV response and AVERT. HIV continues to compete for people’s attention in a world where HIV has been generally deprioritised, and where the demands of other social and health issues are rising. In this context we have to work even harder to keep HIV on the agenda, and to find the right digital spaces to talk about HIV to the right audiences.

Keeping pace with these changing expectations around content delivery and style, and ensuring our content is getting into the hands of those who most need to know about HIV, will remain a key focus for us. This means continuing to develop innovative content and to find new channels to reach those most in need. A strong digital team and extra digital marketing capacity over the coming year will help us address some of these challenges and increase our digital impact.

Civil society in many parts of the world continues to play a vital role in supporting national plans to address HIV. Many of these civil society organisations rely on support from international organisations that can offer technical support, partnership and financial resources. As a small organisation with limited resources, AVERT needs to continue to assess our partnership programme to ensure we are supporting the right projects that can deliver effectively at the grassroots and have the greatest impact. Looking ahead we will work to ensure the sustainability of our financial contribution and plan for growth where applicable and relevant.

OBJECTIVE 1: REACH THE RIGHT AUDIENCES

- Increase multimedia content on AVERT.org
- Market AVERT’s digital content towards those who need to know, including tailored campaigns in East and Southern Africa
- Increase proportion of AVERT.org and social media audiences from selected target countries
- Increase AVERT.org’s news audience by 50%

OBJECTIVE 2: EXPAND OUR SUPPORT TO OUR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- Expand our reach in Malawi by 20%
- Build capacity in Lesotho to respond to LGBTI youth
- Support Zambia to double the number of people reached with HIV testing and counselling to 3,600
- Support Sisonke to document their achievements over the last 10 years

OBJECTIVE 3: REALISE OUR POTENTIAL

- Launch AVERT’s new theory of change and four-year strategic plan
- Develop a new fundraising strategy
- Support and grow a strong staff team
- Commemorate AVERT’s 30th year of responding to the HIV epidemic

‘’It’s a nice page, it gives courage. I thought I was the only one afraid of testing for HIV, so tomorrow I will test. ’’

‘’Good work guys, sometimes is hard to talk with my health advisor, but with you things become more easier. ’’

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## Total Income

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## Total Expenditure

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