Information, education and communication (IEC) materials on sex, relationships and HIV, created with and for young people in southern Africa.

CONTENTS
2 Welcome
2 The Young Voices package
2 Who is Young Voices for?
3 Content
4 Meet the characters
5 How to use Young Voices
5 Using Young Voices in a group
7 Monitoring and evaluating Young Voices
9 About Young Voices
9 Why was Young Voices developed?
9 How was Young Voices developed?
9 CO-CREATION
9 WORKSHOP
10 WHATSAPP GROUPS
Welcome

Welcome to ‘Sex & Relationships – our way’, the first package of IEC materials in the Avert Young Voices series. Young Voices is a pilot project with young people (15–24) in southern Africa to co-create new HIV and sexual and reproductive health information materials that they can relate to. Comprised of videos and a comic creator supported by information materials, Young Voices is designed to promote thinking and discussion around six key themes relevant to the context and experiences of young people in the region.

The Young Voices package

‘Sex and Relationships – our way!’ contains the stories of six young people living in southern Africa told through animations and a comic strip for offline use.

Each of their stories covers a topic relating to sex, relationships and HIV that affects the health and wellbeing of young people living in the region. Participants learn of the dilemmas facing each of these characters and are asked, what should they do?

The stories are designed to promote thinking and discussion around these key topics, aided by the supplementary materials which include fact sheets and ideas for discussion. There is also an online (and offline) comic creator – giving young people the chance to create their own comic strip ending to the characters’ stories, in their own words. These can be completed alone or as part of group work.

Who is Young Voices for?

Young Voices is free to use for any organisation or peer support group, school or individual – **we only ask that as a professional user of the Avert materials, you submit a short survey (see Monitoring and evaluating Young Voices, page 7).**

All the resources are easily accessed and downloadable on the Avert’s Young Voices Africa Hub, where you can explore the specific themes and meet the characters. There are also downloadable, compressed versions of all the materials to share over WhatsApp.
Content

ANIMATIONS
The core of Young Voices is six short animations (approximately one minute each). Through these we are introduced to Spijo, Martha, Mwaise, Chipo, Lineo and Babalwa. We learn who they are, their situation and what they are worried or thinking about. Each animation finishes with a question asking, what they should do?

COMIC STRIP
As an offline alternative, or to be used as part of group work, the characters’ stories are also condensed into a short static comic, finishing with the same question – what should they do?

ONLINE COMIC CREATOR
Using an interactive online comic creator, participants can finish the story of any of the six characters, and explore how they would react to a range of different scenarios, and what advice they would give.

Participants have access to all of the characters, a variety of props, scenes and text options so that they can invent and tell their story. Participants are also encouraged to share their comics, with the best ones featured on Avert.org and our social channels. The comic creator was developed with low bandwidth in mind for ease of use.

OFFLINE COMIC CREATOR
Printable hand-outs are available to download for participants who do not have access to the internet. And for those without access to printing facilities, blank paper and pens are all that are needed to start creating their own comic strip endings.

FACT SHEETS
The themes explored in the animations will no doubt challenge views and bring up questions for the participants. The six thematic fact sheets highlight key points, or ‘things to know’ about each of the topics, with the aim of building the knowledge of the participants.

DISCUSSION POINTS
Each of the themes comes with a set of discussion questions that can be used as part of group work in school, with peer educators, or just to get you thinking. They are used to challenge participants to think critically about the issue – and test their own ideas, opinions and assumptions with their peers.

FACILITATORS’ NOTES
Separate facilitators’ versions of the Key Facts documents are available with notes for facilitators to help direct discussions around each of the key themes.
Meet the characters

BABALWA
Babalwa’s talking about contraception with her sister, Grace. She is not sexually active yet, but her and her boyfriend are thinking about it. What contraception do you think they should use to avoid pregnancy and protect their sexual health?

LINEO
Lineo has started dating a new boy, they are getting pretty close now and she is wondering whether she should tell him that she is living with HIV. She is worried that he might not accept it and might tell other people. What do you think she should do?

MWAISE
Mwaise has been asked out by a much older guy. Her friend is telling her that she should go for it, but she is not so sure.

SPIJO
Spijo had a wild night last night. He’s telling his friends that after the party he went back to his girlfriend’s house. They had sex, but now he is worried because they forgot to use a condom.

CHIPO
Chipo has started dating a guy that she’s liked for a long time. He has started to pressure her to have sex with him, but she doesn’t feel ready.

MARTHA
Martha’s boyfriend is getting controlling. Her hairdresser Nola warns her that these behaviours are not OK and to be careful.
How to use Young Voices

Young Voices is an engaging and interactive tool designed for participatory learning. It can be used on its own, or alongside existing materials and curricula to reinforce messages and spark discussions about the issues affecting each of the characters.

The intervention is first and foremost a digital product – but we have also created downloadable and printable alternatives for greater variability and use of the tool.

Each of the characters’ stories are designed to get the participants discussing the characters’ dilemmas and the wider SRH issues they involve. An online comic creator (and paper-based alternative) provides a fun and interactive way to think about the issues and explore options. We want the participants to learn by doing, share feelings, concerns, experiences, and discuss and analyse the issues.

Each of the stories are standalone and can be watched alone or as part of a series. There is no one right or wrong way to use the Young Voices materials but here are some of the ways that they could be used:

- by individuals
- by peer educators as part of their community outreach work
- by organisations to train peer educators
- by youth groups to stimulate discussion
- in the classroom, as part of a curriculum on sex and relationships.

Using Young Voices in a group

We want Young Voices to be flexible and easy to use, and for the materials to be delivered as organisations and individuals see appropriate, so the following ways of using the materials in groups are only suggestions. Feel free to adapt!

We welcome your feedback on the suggestions below and want to know how you are using Young Voices so that we can incorporate ideas going forward.

If you have used Young Voices please take our survey (see Monitoring and evaluating Young Voices, page 7).

KEEP IN MIND:

- The facilitator shouldn’t dominate the discussion.
- Get the group comfortable with one another and keep the group’s energy up.
- Start with easy questions.

Explain to the participants that they will be watching a short video on a topic related to sex, HIV and relationships, and that they will be asked to think critically about the character’s situation.

Gather participants around a mobile phone, a laptop, or if you have access to one, a TV or projector screen, and show them one of the animations.

- If feasible, you can print out the static comic, or WhatsApp the static comic strip to group participants to follow along with on their phones, as a reminder of the story for the discussion.
Before the discussion/comic creation activity – consider asking the participants if they liked the look and feel of the animation and the story (as a break the ice question).

Invite the participants to discuss what they thought about the character and their situation.

- You can facilitate a discussion around each of these themes using the discussion points provided. You can use just one, or all of the discussion questions. You can also use your own that may be more relevant to the group you are working with, or respond to the conversations that are already being had.
- The participants will have different ideas and experiences as to how the character should proceed. Be sure to negotiate the different dynamics within the group and facilitate an open discussion. Encourage opportunities for people to tell their own stories or those of friends that relate to the experiences of the characters.
- Encourage participants to be honest, creative, to ask questions, and share their thoughts with the group.
- Some of the stories (Martha and Chipo) should be approached sensitively and with the understanding that some participants may have, themselves, experienced coercion, abuse or assault. It is important to make it clear that no one should feel guilt or blame for not stopping a sexual encounter they didn't want to have.

Invite the participants to complete a comic.

- If participants have access to free internet via either a computer or a mobile phone, get them to access the online comic creator and think about how they would finish the story of the character they’ve just met.
- Tell them that the online comic creator has all of the characters, backgrounds and props to put together their comic. They can use the speech or thought bubbles to type what they want their characters to say/think/feel and set the scene for your story. They have four panels to bring the story to a conclusion.
- If there is no access to a digital platform, they can simply complete the exercise on a piece of paper. Some participants may feel more comfortable completing the story verbally.
- Depending on the group dynamic, this exercise can be completed individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
- Participants should be given some time to think about what their character would do next. They should be given ample space to be creative and make their comic look good – that will also keep the activity fun.
- If they like, participants can present back to the group their comics.
- Get the participants to share their comics on their social media feeds and via WhatsApp to their friends and ask them to view an animation and complete a comic.

You can chat through the relevant key facts sheet with the participants before they start making their comic, or share it as a reference document for the participants to use while they make their comic. The key fact sheets can be shown on a computer or phone, shared via WhatsApp, or printed out.

These steps can be done in whatever order you prefer, depending on how you’d like to lead the discussion.
Monitoring and evaluating Young Voices

Young Voices is a pilot project, and we are eager to receive feedback on how it is being used, who it is reaching, and what’s working.

As part of this free set of resources, we only ask that users fill in a short survey to help us understand how the materials are being used, and to help us keep Young Voices relevant and effective. As Young Voices is a living resource, we will be incorporating feedback and improving this guide going forward.

Go to www.avert.org/YV-org-survey to access the survey and submit your data.

Some of the indicators that we ask users to track include how they used the materials, if they are clear and accurate, and if you have any suggestions to improve Young Voices. We also welcome any examples of comic strip cartoons created – either through the online cartoon creator or using paper and pens offline. You can upload these while completing your survey, or email to info@avert.org

For information, the survey data we are collecting is set out on the next page.
USER SURVEY QUESTIONS
(access the full survey online at www.avert.org/YV-org-survey)

1. Which country (or countries) have you used Young Voices in?

2. Which locality/region/country are you providing this survey information for?

3. What did you use the Young Voices materials for?
   - Peer educator training / Youth group sessions / Youth friendly corner / CSE / life skills sessions / Other

4. How did you show the materials?
   - Online on a computer / Downloaded onto a computer / Online on a phone / Downloaded onto a phone / Printed copies / Other

5. Which of the Young Voices themes did you use?
   - Sex without a condom / Unhealthy relationships / Dating older people / Options for contraception / Talking about HIV / How to say no

6. Which types of resources did you use?
   - Videos / Comic sheets / Factsheets / Discussion questions / Online comic creator

7. How many peer educators / facilitators have used the materials (estimate)?

8. How many youth participants (15–24) have been reached using the materials (estimate)?

9. Were the materials useful?
   - Very / Fairly / Not very / Not at all

10. Do the materials work well with other materials you use or your set curriculum?
    - Very well / Quite well / Not very well / Not at all

11. Were there any benefits to using the materials?

12. Did young people find the materials engaging?
    - Yes, very / Yes, fairly / No, not very / No, not at all

13. Have the materials enhanced your sessions / trainings?
    - Yes a lot / Yes a little / Not really / Not at all

14. Are the materials clear and accurate?
    - Very / Fairly / Not very / Not at all

15. Are the materials easy to use?
    - Very / Fairly / Not very / Not at all

16. Are the materials relevant to your local context?
    - Very / Fairly / Not very / Not at all

17. Do you have any suggestions to improve the materials?

18. Do you have any completed comics to share?

19. Would you be willing to do a short interview with our team for us to share as a case study?
About Young Voices

Why was Young Voices developed?

Young people in sub-Saharan Africa are disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic, and particularly young women, who are twice as likely to acquire HIV than their male counterparts. In the coming years, the population of young people (15–24) living in the region is expected to double (by 2050), a demographic shift dubbed the ‘youth bulge’, or ‘youth wave’. This presents a worrying challenge as efforts to control HIV in young people in the region have so far failed.

Unprotected sex is the most common route of HIV infection among young people. Low HIV and sexual health knowledge is a key barrier to reducing HIV infections in this group. Across east and southern Africa, knowledge about HIV in young people ranges from 23% of young men in South Africa, to 65% of young girls in Rwanda. In most countries, less than half of young people had correct and comprehensive knowledge about HIV.

We know from literature and desk research, discussion with our partners, and via interactions on our website (Avert.org) and social media, that there is a distinct lack of IEC materials and resources about HIV that are tailored to the needs of, and targeted at, young people.

The growth of emerging mobile technologies in some of these high burden countries means a growing potential for online content and platforms to be used to engage young people in the issues surrounding HIV and sexual health.

How was Young Voices developed?

CO-CREATION

We believe young people know best what the most important information areas are, and what messages are the most powerful, engaging and relevant to their experiences to increase HIV knowledge and encourage behaviour change.

At the heart of Young Voices is a co-creation methodology that put young people from the 5 target countries at the centre of the process. This participatory process was important for us as a matter of principle, but also as a means of delivering IEC materials that are relevant, authentic and fill genuine information gaps – and as a result are effective as a way to promote HIV knowledge acquisition and encourage behaviour change.

WORKSHOP

A regional workshop held in Johannesburg in October 2017 brought together 20 young people from five priority countries (Lesotho, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe). The group consisted of peer educators and psychosocial counsellors who worked with young people in the region.

Through the workshop young people were encouraged to share their experiences, and those of their communities, to inform content that is authentic and to help create initial messaging ideas. They were also consulted on current trends, appropriate language, design preferences/influences and delivery platform preferences.
The focus of the workshop was to identify information gaps, identify and validate themes, and co-create initial ideas for content and messaging. We also explored what they felt were the most effective formats, platforms and channels for delivery, as well as visual preferences.

**WHATSAPP GROUPS**

After the workshop we set-up five additional country-specific WhatsApp groups with an expanded group of youth participants. The aim of these groups was to engage more young people in shaping the content, and as a means for young people to chat and feedback on every stage of the content creation process, ensuring content co-creation continued beyond the workshop.

We worked with a Johannesburg-based design agency, Livity Africa, to help us engage young people in a way that felt relevant to them. Through the groups the young people inputted on initial concepts for series and messaging for each theme; the look and feel; the script; and the content that went into the supporting resources. They also informed the key facts and discussion materials, and tested the content and functionality of the online comic creator.

For more information on Young Voices, or to discuss using the materials in your programme, please get in touch:

info@avert.org

This guide is a draft – it will be reviewed once we receive more in-country feedback.