

# WhatsApp-based microlearning for healthcare workers: The example of 6MMD in South Africa

*A rapid, scalable approach to training frontline healthcare workers*

IAS – the International AIDS Society

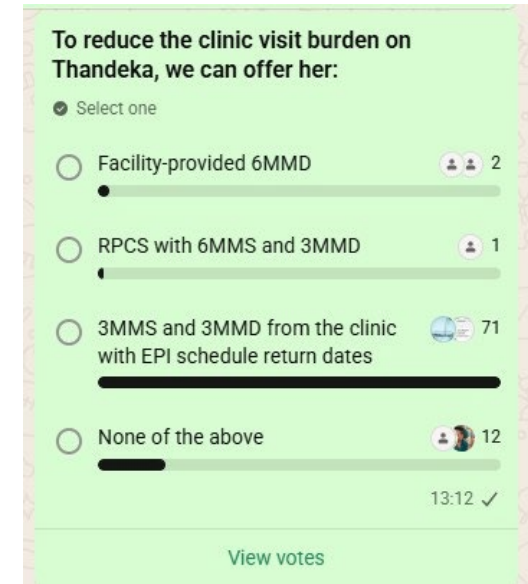


# What is WhatsApp-based microlearning?

Learning delivered in **bite-sized nuggets**, often via a **mobile device**, allowing quick, easy and engaging access.



- Healthcare workers learn together in WhatsApp groups
- Short sessions (10–15 minutes) during the workday
- Text-based, case-driven lessons
- 2–3 key learning points per session
- Interactive polls to reinforce learning
- Brief window for questions and discussion (2–4 minutes)
- Visual (JPEG) and voice-note summaries



# WhatsApp-based microlearning is acceptable, feasible and improves patient care

- RCT in the rural Eastern Cape – WhatsApp microlearning vs no training ([Chisholm, 2025](#), [Chisholm, 2025](#))
  - 50 clinics, 233 nurses, 206 community healthcare workers (CHWs)

## Intervention

Short, interactive, case-based lessons delivered via WhatsApp groups.

## Results

- 79% of nurses and 76% of CHWs enrolled
- High engagement
  - 96% of nurses and 88% of CHWs accessed lessons within two weeks
- Significant improvement in knowledge
- **21% increase in correct patient care (p<0.001)**
- **98% would participate again**

# 6MMD rollout in South Africa: context



health

Department:  
Health  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## Background

- National rollout of 6-Month Multi-Month dispensing (6MMD) initiated by NDoH (November 2025)

## Challenges

- Rapid implementation timeline
- Limited reach of virtual training
- Reduced facility-level support (funding constraints)

**Need for a rapid, scalable training approach →**



**WhatsApp-based microlearning introduced to augment the virtual training**

## Initial rollout of WhatsApp microlearning

- Aug-Nov 2025: **2,285 South African healthcare workers trained** across 3 cohorts (Groups 1-3)
  - More than 50% were NDoH



CHW/Counsellor

1.5%



Doctor

10.8%



Pharmacist

10.7%



Nurse

62.1%

- **Training format: 8 weekly session, 10-15 mins per session (over lunchtime)**

# High engagement and participation

Measured using WhatsApp “read receipts” (blue ticks)

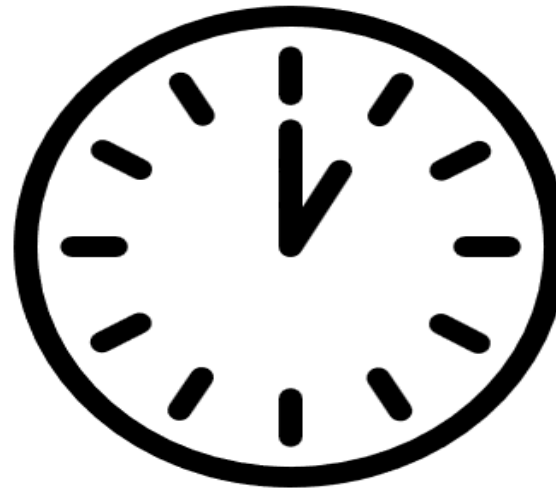


52.7%



Read lessons in ‘live’  
session/within 1 hour

81.88%



Read lessons  
within 24 hours

89.10%



Read lessons  
within a week

## Decentralized rollout of WhatsApp microlearning

- March 2026 - **“How to” training conducted** with partners (Mar 2026)
- March – April 2026 - **An additional 5,191 HCWs trained** (Groups 4-21) across 17 districts (supported by CDC and DSPs)
- April 2026 – **An additional 1,201 HCWs trained** (Groups 22-26) across 6 districts (supported by Operational Phutuma)



## Housekeeping

2025

- Sessions will mostly be case-based, with a couple of polls.
- We love to hear from you, so please feel free to send comments or emoji reactions on messages to interact during sessions.
- We welcome discussions on the lessons. If you wish to discuss the management of a specific patient because you feel it will benefit the group, please **do not share any identifying patient details** (e.g. names), to protect confidentiality.
- We will keep the sessions short (10 minutes). We know how busy you are!
- Please only share comments related to the learning – memes, images and/or comments that are not related will be removed.
- We all need downtime, so posting in the group will only be possible within the learning sessions.
- Please be kind. We are here to learn. There is no such thing as a stupid question.
- Any concerns regarding these group rules should please be discussed with Dr Briony Chisholm immediately: call or WhatsApp on 063 336 7896.



We'll be starting the session in **15 minutes**.

**Please do not start a group call: the lessons are text-only.**

Please take note of the group's housekeeping rules

12:45



8

Good afternoon! Welcome to the sixth session of the facility-provided 6MMD training. Please remember, this is a text-only session.

**Please do not start a group call.**

13:00



6

Today we're going to do a couple more cases to highlight who is - and isn't - eligible for **facility-provided 6MMD**.

13:00



2

Mandla, 28, has been on ART (TLD) since 2022. Initially, Mandla had some adherence issues because he is a truck driver and kept missing clinic visits. His first few VLs were greater than (>) 50 c/mL. After receiving adherence counselling, he had a VL < 50 c/mL and was decanted to start a RPCs, which reduced his clinics visits: 6MMS (6-monthly prescription), 3MMD (3-monthly dispensing from CCMDD), 3-monthly EX-PUP (collection at an external pick-up point).

His 2024 and 2025 VLs have been < 50 c/mL. He is clinically well, with no TB/OIs.

13:00

Briony

### Can Mandla get his ART with facility-provided 6MMD?

Select one

- Yes 125
- No 5
- I'm not sure 0

13:01

[View votes](#)

Briony

Briony

☰ Can Mandla get his ART with facility-provided 6MMD?

Yes! Mandla is eligible for **facility-provided 6MMD** because he has been **on ART for longer than 12 months**, is considered **very stable**, i.e. has had **two consecutive VL < (less than) 50 c/mL, confirmed by a clinician** and he is **clinically well**.

The process of 6MMD is explained to him and he is offered facility-provided 6MMD, which he accepts. He is happy to not have to attend both the clinic and his local pick-up point anymore.

13:03



Briony

This means that Mandla will have how many facility contacts per year, provided he does not become sick or need other assistance?

Select one

- Twelve (12) 1
- Six (6) 0
- Four (4) 0
- Two (2) 121

13:04

[View votes](#)

Briony

Briony

This means that Mandla will have how many facility contacts per year, provided he does not become sick or need other assistance?

👏👏👏 Brilliant!

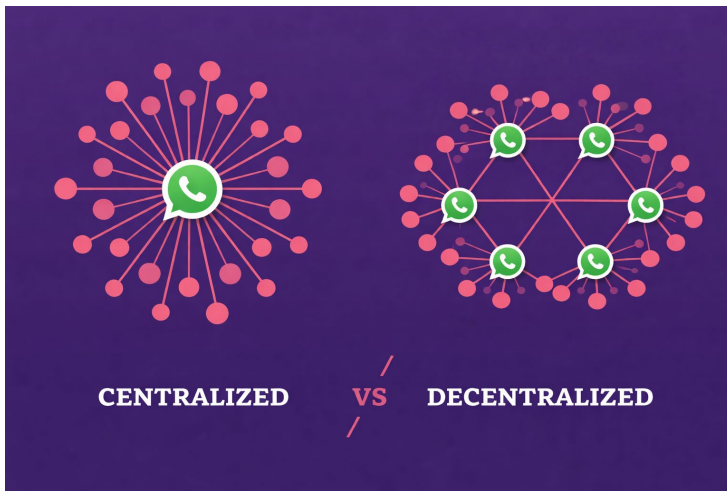
Mandla will have **two contacts/year**:

1. Today (M0 on facility-based 6MMD), he will be given a 6-month script (**6MMS**) after his **clinical review** and will be given 6 months of ART (**6MMD**) **from the facility**
2. At 6M, he will come in for **clinical review** including his annual VL review, renewal of his script (**6MMS**) and collection of 6 months of ART (**6MMD**) **from the facility**

... and back to point 1 again

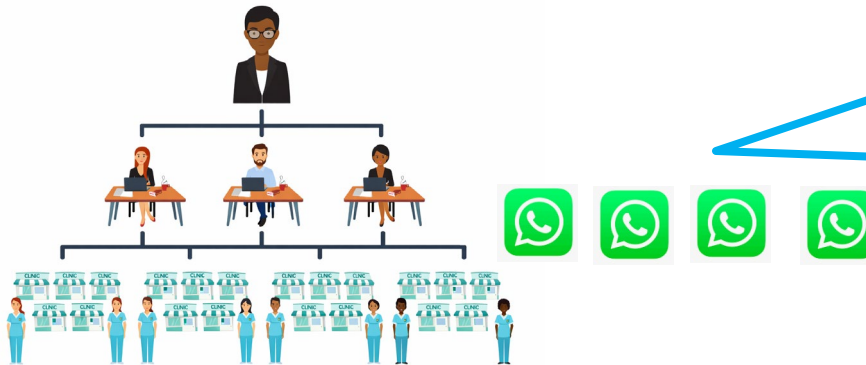
13:05

# Scaling through decentralized Train-the-Facilitator model



- Department of Health, CDC and other partners trained as facilitators
- Facilitators deliver the same NDoH-approved 6MMD module
- Enables multiple parallel WhatsApp training groups
- Rapidly expands reach across districts

**Now implemented in 23 districts**



**DIY WhatsApp-based Training**  
A step-by-step guide to conducting facility-based 6MMD training using a WhatsApp microlearning approach





# WHAT'S NEXT?

## What's next?

- Expand to new content areas:
  - Re-engagement algorithm
  - New TPT guidelines
  - Updated AHD guidelines
- Integrate WhatsApp microlearning into routine guideline roll-out

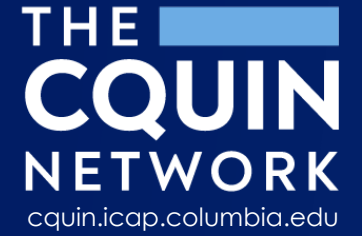
# Access the WhatsApp microlearning resource

**RIAS**

## DIY WhatsApp-based microlearning

### A step-by-step guide to conducting training using WhatsApp





# Thank you

For more information: [dsd@iasociety.org](mailto:dsd@iasociety.org)

