



Aya Contigo: A Digital Sexual and Reproductive Health Companion

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Introduction

The current political, human rights and socio-economic developments in Venezuela have led to a complex humanitarian crisis. There is a scarcity of available and affordable basic necessities, including sexual and reproductive health services. Abortion is illegal, further restricting access to safe methods. Existing harm-reduction services have been impacted by both the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing legal persecution. These factors have caused a significant gap in access to safe abortion resources. This study aimed to address that gap by developing a digital self-care tool tailored to the needs of Venezuelans seeking abortion and contraception.

Method

This three-phase study aimed to design and evaluate a digital tool as a self-managed medication abortion and contraception guide for people in Venezuela.

Phase I: exploratory study including an online survey and qualitative interviews with Venezuelan women and community stakeholders to understand the context and preferences and attitudes towards a mobile application to self-manage abortion.

Phase II: development of the mobile application using results from Phase I and storyboarding with stakeholders.

Phase III: mixed-methods pilot study to evaluate the acceptability and feasibility of the mobile application, Aya Contigo, for self-managed abortion and contraception in Venezuela.

Results

Phase I: 1100 survey respondents, 70% response rate; 12 user interviews; 12 stakeholder interviews. Venezuelans' context influences their decisions. Most have a smartphone. Vast majority expressed need for a comprehensive evidence-based digital tool with offline capability that can accompany them through a safe self-managed medication abortion and contraception care.

Phase II: Design of wireframes through iterative process with stakeholders; remote user-testing with 5 users on initial prototype wireframes; after multiple design iterations and extensive user testing of the prototype, the Aya Contigo MVP (minimal viable product) was developed.

Phase III: 40 users needing a safe abortion engaged; 17 surveys completed; 13 user interviews. Most users found Aya Contigo to be an acceptable tool that provided benefit during their abortion experience.

Quotes from users



"I had a support, a friend, a trusted person" -User 2

"Because I had read up on everything I was doing [on Aya Contigo] and I felt more confident. I was sure of what I was doing. I was not afraid" -User 3



Co-creation with end-users and organizations can facilitate development of digital SRH tools that can empower and meet the needs of people in challenging settings.

Insights and Learnings

1. Hyper-localized, community-led and user-centered design can create effective tools for self-care that meet people's needs within their personal and social context. It is difficult to do in crisis settings, but can still be feasible and greatly benefits the end-users.

2. A digital tool is an acceptable and feasible way to accompany people through a self-managed abortion. It does not replace the desire or need for traditional human counselling.