

SOUTH AFRICA: School based care and support

SCALEABLE MODEL OF INTERVENTION IN AIDS AFFECTED COMMUNITIES

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5 million+ people living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa:

- 1 million+ children have lost a mother
- 2 million+ children have lost a father
- 300 000+ are double orphans
- 500 000+ children have a mother who is sick with AIDS.
- 40% of all HIV/AIDS child deaths are below the age of 5 years.
- 13 million children (74.9%) live in poverty, and
- Less than 50% of these children receive a poverty alleviation grant.



Programmes to address vulnerability in AIDS-affected communities need to be scaleable and make optimum use of limited resources. In this respect, the education system presents an accessible service point ideally suited to large scale care and support activities.

- Examples of good practice within schools highlight how much can be achieved with relatively few additional resources.
- The education system has an existing infrastructure of around 28 000 schools, spread across the country.
- Schools are central and relatively accessible and often represent the only substantial infrastructure in poor rural areas.
- Many children who would otherwise fall through the service gap could be identified and supported through schools.
- The education system reaches about 11 500 000 children in SA, including those most affected by HIV/AIDS and the age group most at risk of infection.

Why schools?



- Within primary schools, enrolment rates remain high at present.
- The school environment is an inclusive environment centred on children and committed to children's development.

- Educators see children every day of the school year for five days of the week and are therefore ideally placed to recognise change in children's lives and to monitor children who have been identified as vulnerable.
- Support within schools will bring children to schools and keep children in school, with obvious long term benefits.
- Schools are made up of many components, each potentially valuable as a resource for care and support, including school governing bodies and the broader school community.
- Education policy in SA provides the framework for an inclusive education system that encourages schools to address all barriers to learning, including social vulnerability.

ARKs replicable model of school based support

In collaboration with the Media in Education Trust (MIET) and the Department of Education, the model is being piloted in a cluster of 8 schools in rural KwaZulu-Natal, providing services to over 2000 children daily.

The project aims to facilitate the identification, referral and support of vulnerable children through schools. Core outcome indicators are:

- improved grant access
- improved school attendance
- improved nutritional status

The project employs:

- A team of 3 community workers in each school
- A social worker per cluster of schools

The project provides the following services:

- Breakfast to all children every school day
- Lunch at schools on weekends and holidays
- Systems for identifying and monitoring vulnerable children
- Assistance with grant applications:
 - Assisting individual families
 - Weekend visits to schools by state officials to process document applications en masse
 - Grants jamboree - one stop shop for grant applications,

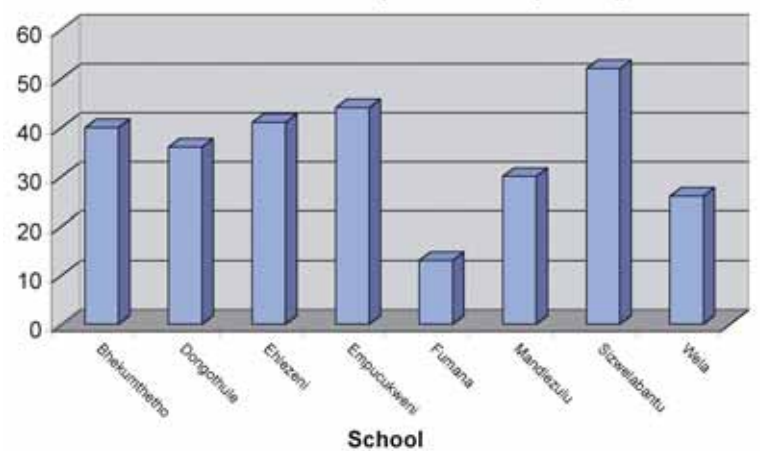
bringing all relevant state departments together at a central school over weekends

- Home visits and counselling
- Strengthened referral systems - regular school visits and monthly inter-sectoral meetings

Preliminary assessment (following 8 months of implementation):

- Average of 2177 children fed mon-fri (71% of school population)
- Average of 1787 children fed over weekends (58% of school population)
- 520 children referred to social worker
- 499 grant applications processed (leveraging R1,137,720 per year in state grants)
- 1041 applications for birth certificates and ID books processed
- School attendance
- Slight (not statistically significant) improvement in attendance for June 06 vs June 05, but
- Strong anecdotal evidence of improved concentration and participation in classroom and extra mural activities

Baseline % children <14 years accessing social grants



Child is in need

Child (or sibling) attends school

School is equipped with motivation, skills and resources to identify and respond to signs of vulnerability

Social worker visits school weekly to collect names of vulnerable children

Child gets daily meal (7 days a week) from school feeding scheme - delivered by community workers who are trained to identify and monitor vulnerability

SW provides feedback and support to schools through school visits and monthly meetings

SW follows up on the child and his/her family - assists with grant access

Report back to SW

Community workers monitor the child

Scaleable model of intervention in AIDS affected communities

Lessons learnt:

- The pilot illustrated the feasibility and efficacy of identifying and supporting vulnerable children through schools.
- Feeding children through school will not necessarily increase the number of days that the child attends school but is likely to impact on the child's ability to concentrate and participate in class.
- For sustainability and to secure the buy-in of school management teams, the DOE need to be integrally involved in planning the project, introducing the project to schools and monitoring its implementation.
- It is essential that all local partners feel part of the process from the outset and that each partner bring a contribution to the table. Roles and responsibilities should be clearly articulated at the outset through MOUs with all key stakeholders.
- The existence of a local "champion" is critical to the success of the project. The identification (and support) of a local champion should be integrated into the planning phase.
- A replicable model needs to remain flexible enough to acknowledge and accommodate local needs and capacities
- Partnerships with local service providers are essential in replicating models of intervention across communities. These need to be characterised by open dialogue and mutual respect
- In the pilot, the roles of the school-based community workers were not adequately negotiated and contracted at the outset. As a result, we are not getting maximum benefit out of this cadre of worker. We will address this by providing job descriptions, contracts, clear targets and a formal supervision and management structure for community workers in future clusters.
- The community workers can also play an extremely valuable role in supporting the social worker so as to make better use of this limited resource i.e. the community workers can be trained to do much of the preparatory work around grant access.
- Remaining focused on core project objectives is a key challenge in an area where needs are great and varied and services are scarce. Strategic partnerships with other organisations are critical.
- Recruiting and retaining professional social workers is problematic in rural areas of SA. A cadre of skilled and supervised auxiliary social workers or welfare officers presents a viable alternative.

