Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) is a dynamic, continuous children’s charity whose mission is to transform the lives of children who are victims of abuse, disability, illness and poverty.

In South Africa, ARK strategies collectively aim to rapidly reduce the vulnerability of children to the impact of HIV and AIDS.

Some project specific objectives were to:

- Identify access barriers to identity services for children and their carers
- Facilitate simultaneous access to social support services and children with a carer
- Provide individual assistance to poor families with transport to service points and;
- Process larger numbers of applications for documentation and grants.

Some project specific objectives were to:

- Assist the government with rapid scaling up of services for children and their carers
- Linking them with government’s social security systems and;
- Support government service points to be able to receive and identify and support eligible children and their families, vulnerable children and poor households.

**Clinical Services:**
- Provide assistance to children who are victims of abuse, disability, illness and poverty.

**Services:**
- Facilitate simultaneous access to social support services for children and their carers

**ARK South Africa’s Programmes**

**Grant Access in South Africa**

SA legislation provides for 3 child-specific grants besides others:

- The Child Support Grant - children <18 whose caregivers qualify on income-related means test
- The Foster Care Grant - children <18 who have a legally appointed foster parent by order of the court
- The Care Dependency Grant - for children <18 who require permanent home care due to severe disability or chronic illness

**Pensions and the Non child-specific grants that indirectly benefit children are:**
- Reduced Home Care – for adults with severe disabilities, Stage IV AIDS or active TB
- Long distances & lack of funds for travel and transportation – ARK provides needy families with transport to service points and;
- Shortage of staff at most government offices undermines the 1 day documentation and government grants needed human resources at Home Affairs

**Recommended:**

- Relevant policies and plans need to be developed by government and informed by sound information from society-government relationships on a continuous basis
- Large-scale events are effective mechanisms that are easily replicated
- It is essential that all local partners feel part of the process from the outset and that each partner brings a contribution to the table
- While Government interventions are needed to assist OVCs, NGOs have a key role to play in assisting eligible families to access government services and to act as key informants for government agencies in improving service delivery.

**Grant Access Strategy Achievements**

- While the Department of Social Development has made significant progress with grant uptake over the past few years, large numbers of vulnerable children (often the most vulnerable children) remain unable to access these grants, primarily due to lack of identity documents
- Although jamborees continue to demonstrate cost-effective means of assisting large numbers in caregivers to access services, senior managers on-site during jamborees are necessary to make decisions on difficult cases.

**Issues**

- HIV and AIDS have led to various negative socio-economic outcomes affecting individuals, families and communities. Breadwinners’ ill health or death has left families with no choice but to depend on government social assistance (grants), and an increase in destitute child-headed households
- HIV and AIDS have led to various negative socio-economic outcomes affecting individuals, families and communities. Breadwinners’ ill health or death has left families with no choice but to depend on government social assistance (grants), and an increase in destitute child-headed households

**Core delivery mechanisms**

- Providing individual assistance to poor households through trained and supervised community workers who are supported by a social worker and community coordinator
- With good cooperation from all stakeholders, targets are achieved!
- While the Department of Social Development has made significant progress with grant uptake over the past few years, large numbers of vulnerable children (often the most vulnerable children) remain unable to access these grants, primarily due to lack of identity documents
- While Government interventions are needed to assist OVCs, NGOs have a key role to play in assisting eligible families to access government services and to act as key informants for government agencies in improving service delivery.

**Guiding principles:**
- Efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability