

Reducing the Impact of HIV and AIDS on Poor Households: IMPROVING ACCESS TO GOVERNMENTAL SOCIAL SECURITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Who are we?

Absolute Return for Kids (ARK) is a young, dynamic 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.



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

- 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, mainly due to lack of identity documents

ARK South Africa's Programmes

Clinical Services: Assist the government with rapid scaling up of the ART concentrating at the primary care level

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

Community Access and Adherence (CAA): Ensure the continued support of patients on treatment by continued community based support

Guiding principles: Efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability

Grant Access in South Africa

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

The Child Support Grant – children <14 whose caregivers qualify in terms of an 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

Non child-specific grants that indirectly benefit children are **Pensions** and the **Adult Disability Grant**, for adults with severe disabilities, Stage IV AIDS or active TB

ARK's Grant Access Strategy

In 2007 ARK developed a Grant Access Strategy to facilitate access to social grants for eligible children in AIDS-affected communities in South Africa;

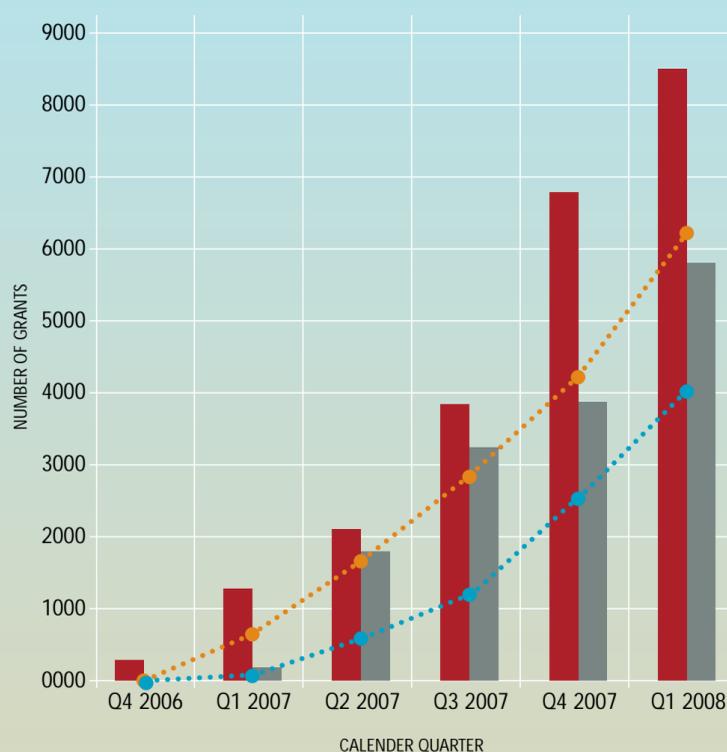


The main purpose was to build government and community capacity to support and care for orphans, vulnerable children and poor households.

Some project specific objectives were to:

- identify and support eligible children and their families, linking them with government's social security systems and;
- support government service points to be able to receive and process larger numbers of applications for documentation and grants.

GRANT ACCESS STRATEGY ACHIEVEMENTS



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
- Working closely with the relevant service points to address bottlenecks / inefficiencies in the application and administration processes
- Coordinating grants jamborees in partnership with government agencies and other NGOs to bring recipients and services together

KEY CHALLENGES

- Lack of relevant documentation for grant access – Huge shortage of highly needed human resources at Home Affairs
- Shortage of staff at most government offices undermines the 1 day turnaround – by SA Social Security Agency
- Long distances & lack of funds for transportation – ARK provides needy households with transport to service points and;
- Lack of understanding of the purpose of jamborees - minimum effort made to ensure that as many people as possible are assisted
- While there is evidence of good practice amongst particular individuals within departments, a range of mechanisms are needed to institutionalise good practice amongst all officials and across all service points

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- More and more families are getting access to documentation and grants - we are able to follow up on approved grant applications and ensure payment to beneficiaries; – Allowing them social security and food security
- Strengthened the state service points through continuous feedback to different government departments and keeping good working relationship – It is important to strengthen civil society-government relationships on a continuous basis
- Jamborees and community outreach activities taken on by government and other NGOs improve access for larger numbers of households
- With good cooperation from all stakeholders, targets are achieved! –Thereby improving quality of life for people who are receiving grants

LESSONS

- 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;
- 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;
- Large-scale events are effective mechanisms that are easily replicated
- We need to develop strategic partnerships with other organisations so as to address the multitude of needs that are being identified
- The value of bringing different government departments around one table is highly vital to better service delivery.

Recommendations

- The state's aid delivery measures to citizens need to be strengthened
- Identified access barriers to identity documentation and government grants for the poor need to be dealt with rigorously
- Relevant policies and plans need to be developed by government and informed by sound information from communities – Especially policies and practices of the Department of Home Affairs
- Although jamborees continue to demonstrate cost-effective means of assisting large numbers of caregivers to access services, senior managers on-site during jamborees are necessary to make decisions on difficult cases