

EXCERPT FROM NGO MATRICES

3.12 NURTURING ORPHANS OF AIDS FOR HUMANITY (NOAH)

Goals

NOAH aims

- To empower communities with the knowledge, skills, strategies and self-confidence to care for their own orphans and vulnerable children.
- To create opportunities for children to develop into caring and productive adults.

Objectives

- To mobilize and assist communities to care for orphans within their neighborhood by running their own projects;
- To mobilize a committee through its Arks (community networks), which allows for layers of care surrounding vulnerable children; To empower the Arks through training in database management, financial procedures and governance at a community level.

1. Development of best practice models

Grant summary:

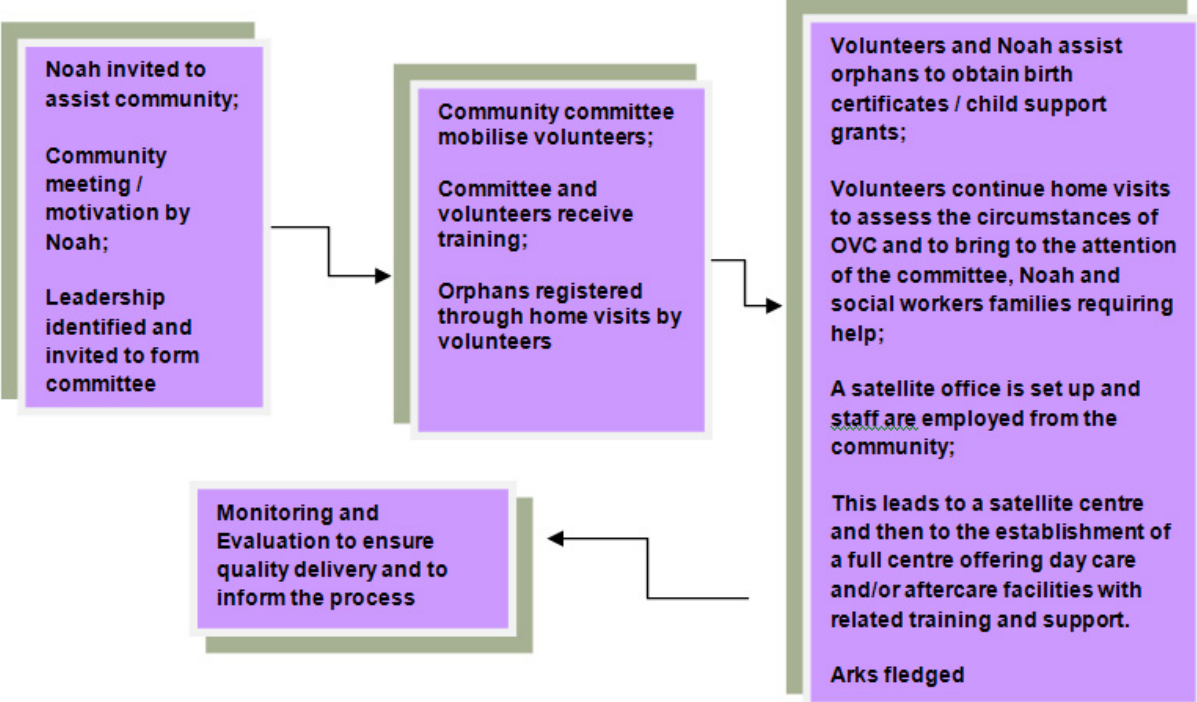
- Category: Orphaned and Vulnerable Children.
- Type: Program Discretionary Grant to Nurturing Orphans of AIDS for Humanity¹: To help establish a resource center for vulnerable children in Eshowe, KwaZulu-Natal.²
- Rationale: The proposed grant supports the Fund's interest in developing innovative models of care, education, and support for orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa. It will reinforce small grants made earlier this year to NOAH.

¹ GRANT NO.:03-147

² Report Received

Work undertaken:

An Ark, as defined by Noah, is a “community mobilized around the simple idea that they will not allow a child to suffer because of orphanhood amongst them.” The process of the Noah Model is represented as follows³:



Graph: Set by step process of the establishment of an Ark (Source: www.noah.org.za)

Orphans drop off younger siblings at a day care center on their way to school (if none is available, the resource center can act as a day care center). These children are mentored and counselled. If children have no suitable adult living with them, there are several options available. They may be placed with a related guardian, placed in unrelated foster care, or in a cluster foster scheme or even, in some cases, left as child-headed households. Decisions relating to care are made by the community committees. Teenage orphans are trained to grow vegetables in the "survival gardening" or permaculture style, to help feed themselves and their younger siblings. While at the resource center, it is expected that orphans help with chores and gardening in return for use of the center’s facilities. Vegetables grown at the center are used in order to make lunch for the children.

In addition, the Arks work together with several government departments. For example, the Department of Home Affairs is training some of the Ark volunteers to collect information necessary to process birth certificates; the Department of Housing has committed to donating a grant for each orphan requiring housing, which Noah will use with Habitat for Humanity to build houses in a specific area of KZN; the Department of Social development has donated

³ <http://www.noahorphans.org.za/NoahModel/tabid/8271/Default.aspx>

running expenses for some of Noah's resource centers; and the Department of Agriculture has agreed to give us starter packs for our resource center gardens.

Work done through RBF funding:

- The grant was used to build the center (with computer center, kitchen, dining hall and activities room) for a school in Eshowe. This school has since gone on to provide computer lessons, after care and day care to more than 200 children per day. This center is part of the larger Ark model where NOAH provides resources to support children's extended families. NOAH community members run the center's facilities.
- Noah currently cares for over 33 000 orphaned and vulnerable children within 107 Arks in the provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal in South Africa.

Organization's contribution/achievements:

- NOAH organizes monthly meetings with partners where participants engage with partners, talk about their models, and share successes. One of their partners, Thandanani Children's Foundation, has already started using a model similar to that of NOAH.
- NOAH believes it has cemented good relationships with partner organizations, such as Clamber Club, Rob Smetherham Bereavement Services for Children, TREE, Ntataise, Heifer, Child Welfare and Striata amongst others. These organizations provide services free of charge or at reduced rates, thereby facilitating broader service delivery.
- The success of many of the original Arks has allowed them to "graduate" to other donors, most notably the South African government (Department of Social Development), which will ensure sustainability.
- Through the Arks, NOAH has been able to assist more than 33 000 orphans and vulnerable children across the provinces of Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) and Gauteng, with one Ark in the North West Province. Based on the June 2008 figures, 107 community Arks deliver support through a network of over 634 Ark committee members, 807 volunteers and 671 full-time staff members. These statistics suggest the replicable and sustainable nature of the NOAH model.
- NOAH participated in three international conferences last year. Noah was nominated for the Conrad Hilton Prize to acknowledge its contribution towards providing services to those in need. NOAH continues to hold corporate breakfasts (up to four per month), which expose a new audience to the work of NOAH. It is the charity of choice for the 'Your Baby Show' and 'The Two Oceans Marathon', both of which have provided extensive opportunities for media liaison and networking.
- Director Lynette Finlay has been acknowledged for her tremendous contribution to the wellbeing of orphans and vulnerable children in South Africa. She received the Inyathelo Women in Philanthropy Award for 2008.

Challenges:

- Internal challenges, including high levels of staff turnover, difficulty replacing staff due to skills shortages, and time spent on orientation and training are a challenge. This has resulted in backlogs, hindering implementation of deliverables, which produce results.
- The development and delivery for new Arks in deep rural areas is slower. Little or no existing infrastructure such as electricity, water or public transport, and high levels of illiteracy in these communities are an on-going challenge. For example, basic requirements like banking or sending a fax, can take up to an entire day. One of NOAH's Arks in this category, Nansimpilo has no readily available water or electricity.

- NOAH believes that its model empowers people to solve problems. They do not want to create dependent communities that are indefinitely reliant on them. Instead, they want the Arks to continue to operate independently.
- NOAH is often incorrectly perceived to be a donor, which can lead to misunderstandings.
- It is difficult to limit support, but NOAH is restricted by its own resources because of its recent expansion.
- In some communities, too much empowerment of children is culturally unacceptable, and Noah is unable to enforce it. Noah can only suggest strategies that have helped elsewhere. Ultimately, each community has to decide how it wants to care for its children.

Lessons learnt:

- Registration forms: NOAH found that it was especially important to train volunteers to ask questions in a particular way so that data could be understood more easily. For example, NOAH has found that the Western definition of an orphan is very different to the African one. For instance, within an extended family a child who has lost his / her parents may not be considered an orphan
- Monitoring: Sound management, high levels of governance and good training followed by an effecting monitoring, evaluation and research program has made its success possible. NOAH became more child-focused in its efforts not to double-count children when tracking their progress.
- Geographic variations:
 - It was important to learn that Arks rolled out very differently in different provinces in South Africa. For instance, In Kwa-Zulu Natal, Arks was situated very far from the head-office in extremely rural areas. In Gauteng, all Arks were less than 50km away from the head-office. It was important to learn about the ways in which the regions were different.
 - One of the ways that NOAH is addressing this challenge is by deploying Ark development officers to work with municipality forums to discuss and advocate for Arks to receive basic services such as water and electricity. It is hoped that municipalities continue to buy into the idea of assisting NOAH Arks and the OVCs they serve, as well as re-evaluating the community as a whole as a priority area for the provision of basic services.
 - It was important for NOAH to learn that committees work very differently in different communities and regions. NOAH had to learn not to impose their way of doing things on the committees.

2. Advocacy and Policy Influence

Grant summary:

- Category: Orphaned and Vulnerable Children
- Type: Institutional Development⁴: To fund an institutional development initiative⁵
- Type: Salaries and training⁶⁷
- Type: To increase professional staff⁸⁹
- Type: Research, evaluation and advocacy

Work undertaken:

- A training coordinator was appointed who provided training and skills development to 324 committee members, staff and volunteers at the Ark level. This improved their capacity to deliver services to vulnerable children.
- A child psychologist was appointed who trained volunteers and staff in bereavement counselling and psychosocial support techniques at 29 Arks in 2005. Over the 16-month time span of the project, 65 Arks received support and training. This is reported to have led to these Arks improving their service delivery.
- This initial expansion of services has been essential for the ongoing sustainability of NOAH and has provided communities with skills to take better care of children at risk.
- The grant was used on staff salaries and administrative expansion. NOAH in 2006-2007 grew quite substantially in the field, increasing by approximately 45%. Administrative capacity therefore had to be expanded in order to cope with the increase in staff numbers, number of Arks and financial management and training requirements. NOAH's budget also doubled in this period. The grant provided for the salaries of an operations manager for KwaZulu Natal (KZN), a finance manager and training personnel.
- Most of phase one of the research grant, namely the literature review, was completed at the time of this study. In addition, the data collection methodologies have been decided on and formulated. Programs to be evaluated in the program evaluation component have been chosen; these are the Soul Buddyz program and Early Childhood Development (ECD) program. The sample of Arks for the operational assessment has been decided. This consists of 10 Arks in Gauteng and 25 Arks in KZN. Indicators for the baseline operational assessment have been developed.
- NOAH organizes monthly meetings with partners where participants engage, talk about their models and share successes with regard to Monitoring and Evaluation. NOAH hopes to shape how some of the grant-makers fund and what they fund. NOAH has developed its model in line with government recommendations and they will present the model to government at conferences.

Organization's contribution/achievements:

- NOAH does not actively lobby government or attempt to develop policy. However, through the organization's networks, it is advocating for policy change. For example,

⁴ GRANT NO. 03-27

⁵ Report received

⁶ GRANT NO.: 05-328

⁷ Report received

⁸ GRANT NO.: 07-346

⁹ Report received

NOAH has been appointed as a member of the Food Bank Network Board, which is regularly consulted on matters concerning children.

- NOAH is also regularly approached by media for comment on issues regarding vulnerable children and HIV/AIDS in general. NOAH's abstracts were accepted at the 2007 Marseilles and the 2008 Mexico HIV and AIDS Conferences, as well at the Uganda-based Conference in 2008. Each of these presented opportunities for input into policy development by the international community. NOAH's participation at each of these events was a direct result of Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) funding.
- Furthermore, NOAH's needs assessment and internal reviews have affected the organization's internal policies and guidelines. This, too, was a direct result of the RBF grant, which helped mould NOAH's operational effectiveness and drive the decision-making process, in turn strengthening its Ark model.

Challenges:

- Advocacy is not NOAH's key focus, although the organization recognizes that it should play a bigger role in this area. This is, however, currently not possible due to limited resources.

Lessons learned:

- NOAH felt that they had not used their "stage" properly in order to advocate and influence policy. It was felt that while NOAH did build relationships with government, it needed to extend its advocacy work.

3. Institutional Development

Capacity Strengthening:

Leadership

- During the previous year NOAH underwent large changes in leadership within management structures although the Board of Directors has remained consistent in driving its policy and vision. For many reasons, NOAH has been required to replace its CEO (serious health concerns), Head of Research (to pursue her PhD in USA), Head of Finance and Operations Managers (to take up more senior positions in other organizations and continue their studies) in both the KZN and Gauteng provinces. The new CEO has a strong background in team-building and she has been working towards a more structured and streamlined organization. She has improved strategic communication through workshops together with the entire management team.

Training attended/acquisition of new skills

- Coordinators are encouraged to go on child-care courses; personal development courses relating to particular fields are also encouraged. (For instance, fundraising administrators have attended courses on fundraising.)

Networking abilities and opportunities

- NOAH's partner organizations include Clamber Club, Rob Smetherham Bereavement Services for Children, TREE, Ntataise, Heifer, Child Welfare and Striata (to name a few).
- NOAH presented at three international conferences last year to share its model.

- The organization has participated in numerous radio and television broadcasts, the most recent of which will be broadcast to an international audience via the BBC's Channel 4.

Growth in organizational numbers, reach or services offered

- NOAH grew from 79 to 107 Arks last year. This has expanded NOAH's geographic reach, increased the number of children to whom services are provided and necessitated an increase in staff, volunteer and committee members. NOAH has expanded its services to include Bereavement Counselling and a more effective and cohesive Activities Program for both After Care and Day Care.

Communication, dissemination and sharing of the organization's work

- NOAH has expanded its newsletter distribution to more than 11,000 recipients. The organization has further participated in numerous radio and television broadcasts, the most recent of which will be broadcast to an international audience via the BBC's Channel 4.

Sustainability

- NOAH's model is rooted in sustainable practices. The guiding principles in developing its model, include 1) the model must be as economical in terms of money and resources as possible to that it could reach every orphaned child in South Africa; 2) include a "fall back" position in the case of external resource failure/NGO failure so that children do not suffer; and 3) be flexible and adaptable in relation to community needs and resources available.
- Furthermore, NOAH generates income through corporate breakfasts and gala dinner events. Long term, multi-year grant agreements have been secured with organizations such as Momentum, Starfish Greathearts Foundation, Deutsche bank, PEPFAR, and Finlay.

Accountability

- NOAH has relocated and centralized its financial department (from finances being administered in both KZN and Gauteng) to KZN. This will improve accountability and control.
- NOAH continues to be audited annually by Ernst & Young and numerous donors, including Deutsche Bank and PEPFAR, conduct independent audits. Each of these audits have returned favorable reviews of NOAH's corporate governance and accounting structures.

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):

- NOAH feels that it is essential to have an effective and accurate monitoring, evaluation and research (MER) program that can provide reliable data to the decision-makers at NOAH. To aid in the MER data collection, NOAH has implemented a computerized data-capturing tool at all ARKS in Gauteng that provides up-to-date, relevant and reliable data.
- Monthly review meetings are held to ensure the accuracy and relevance of data collected at all NOAH Arks (in KZN and Gauteng).
- NOAH successfully completed a full Needs Assessment that has guided its implementation since its completion in July 2007. This facilitates better service delivery and forms an essential part of NOAH's overall effectiveness. Everything that NOAH does is informed by the Needs Assessment. Statistics are generated every month

regarding the number of children who are benefiting and receiving the services. This information drives the funding. No decisions were made without checking monitoring and evaluation information which drives all of the organization's strategic planning.

Registration data, for example, is monitored closely. There are daily attendance registers relating to numbers of children and registers of the children's activities. Information on the numbers of volunteers who go to these children's' houses are also recorded on a database called a Pivot Table. Attendance registers are also kept for non-center services.

- NOAH has tried to learn not to re-invent the wheel and to learn from its mistakes. This has been most effective when NOAH networks and collaborates with other organizations, such as the Department of Social Development, PEPFAR, the Red Cross, other RBF grantees and the like. Shared knowledge has enabled the organization to learn not only from NOAH's own mistakes but from the successes and mistakes of other organizations in similar fields. Examples of how NOAH has used this learning include, refining its registration forms and data collection techniques, positioning itself better for advocacy, and how best to establish working relationships with government and donors through which the needs of children can better be met in terms of the Child Care Act.

Organizational Development (OD) support

- The NOAH staff members attended a workshop run by *Africa Ignite*, which has helped improve communication strategies. The director participated in the OD support offered by *Footsteps*.

Challenges:

- Very high levels of staff turnover remain a challenge.

Lessons learnt:

- Staff: In the past, staff members have been expected to be available at all hours, which was unrealistic and resulted in a few people battling with a huge amount of responsibility. NOAH responded by increasing its finance department and its number of skilled staff (e.g. five accountants have been added to the staff complement).
- Change of systems: NOAH has learnt that when changing systems it is vital to have back-up staff and funds. For example, when NOAH changed its systems from Pascal to Agpac, it ended up being ten months behind. The organization has learnt how important it is to do the relevant research for such a change. It was also important to have back-up systems in place.
- Administration: NOAH has also learnt how important it is to put money into administration. The organization found itself focusing on the short-term goals because of an awareness that they had to report back to funders. However, it has been realized that by implementing systems properly for the long term, the organization avoids wasting time and money in the long term.