

Fact Sheet

FEBRUARY
2014

The BOP Learning Lab



The Helping Hand Trust: An initiative by Clicks to improve access to healthcare

Many children in South Africa, especially those in poorer communities, lack access to adequate healthcare. According to UNICEF, an estimated 400,000 children in South Africa are not fully immunized against measles, which can be lethal if not treated properly. An estimated 19,000 cases of measles were recorded in 2011, 52% of which were children under the age of 5. Other ailments such as pneumonia and diarrhea account for 24% of recorded deaths in children under the age of 5¹, which could be easily prevented by improving levels of immunization. However, the country's overburdened public healthcare sector is struggling to cope with the demands that are put on it. In response, some firms in South Africa's private sector are developing innovative approaches to complement and assist the efforts of the public sector, especially in areas such as child care.

Through a network of over 330 pharmacies and over 130 clinics across South Africa, Clicks, South Africa's largest retail pharmacy chain, is seeking to lessen the burden on state facilities by extending a "helping hand" to mothers and babies from disadvantaged communities. Across 71 clinics in all nine provinces, the Clicks

Helping Hand Trust (HHT), through its Moms and Babies initiative, offers free immunization and primary health care services for mothers whose babies are born in state hospitals and are without medical aid. The model focuses on four key health services: baby immunizations, feeding and nutrition advice, baby growth monitoring and

weighing, and family planning medication and advice.

1. Child Mortality in South Africa: We could do better

In 2000, the Millennium Summit designated the reduction of child mortality as a critical Millennium Development Goal (MDG Goal 4). The

¹ Clicks Helping Hand Trust. *Helping Hand for Moms & Babies Project*. February 27, 2013. <http://www.clicks.co.za/Campaigns/HelpingHand/about.html>

² <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/childhealth.shtml>

³ & ⁴ MDG Report – Assessing Progress in Africa towards the MDGs. UN Economic Commission for Africa, 2012, page 59

⁵ & ⁶ <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Excel-Data/mortality.htm>

- Public health spending as share of national budget : 11%.
- Combined private and public health sector spending as share of GDP : 14.5%
- Average spend in the private sector per patient: R 10,000
- Average spend in the public sector per patient: R 1,900

Source: National Planning Commission

goal was to reduce global child and infant mortality by two thirds (66%) by 2015². While this ambitious target has not been reached, infant mortality rates have decreased by 28.3% across Africa as a whole³. In South Africa, the infant mortality rate has dropped by 12.8% over the past 20 years⁴, but is still comparatively high, at an estimated 46 per 1,000⁵. This puts our country in 137th position globally, far behind a number of other middle income countries like Brazil (23 per 1,000) or Algeria (25 per 1,000)⁶. The causes of this situation are complex. Some of the key challenges faced in South Africa are the lack of effective health education and access to health care facilities, which contribute to a relatively high rate of preventable diseases. Better immunization could also have a dramatic effect on reducing child mortality: As mentioned, 15% of deaths of children under five years old

in South Africa are caused by diarrhea, while another 9% are caused by pneumonia, both of which can be prevented through proper vaccination⁷.

2. The struggle to provide health care for the poorest

South Africa's public healthcare sector is struggling to deliver high quality healthcare services to those most in need. Demand for public healthcare, which in South Africa is dispensed free of charge for patients and entirely funded by the taxpayer, far outweighs supply. As a result, long queues form every day at most of South Africa's public healthcare facilities. Patients, including mothers with young children, often spend many hours, if not days, waiting to see a medical practitioner. This also often translates into lost income opportunities for them, and other negative economic externalities, as parents (typically mothers) must take time off work in order to get basic immunizations and nutrition advice to care for their children⁸.

3. The gap between public and private healthcare

As discussed in previous fact sheets, South Africa's health care system is characterized by significant inequalities between the public and private

networks. Private healthcare, which serves mainly the 16% of the population with private medical insurance, accounts for 50% of all healthcare spending. The public sector caters for the remaining 84% of the population on a budget which is roughly the same order of magnitude, but has to be spread around five or six times more people. Per capita, this translates to spending of about R10,000 per patient in the private sector, compared to roughly R1,900 per patient in the public sector⁹. The resource gap further feeds on itself as the private sector can rely on significant resources to attract qualified healthcare professionals: According to some estimates, 79% of healthcare professionals work in the private sector, leaving barely a fifth of the country's medical professionals to cater to 84% of the population¹⁰.

The South African government is seeking to develop a national health insurance scheme (NHI) to address these structural imbalances, and to provide quality universal care to everyone living in South Africa¹¹. However, considering the magnitude of the challenge and the size of the resource gap, the private sector can play a useful role in complementing these efforts to improve the offering of the public healthcare service. One way

⁸ Clicks Helping Hand Trust. *Helping Hand for Moms & Babies Project*. February 27, 2013. <http://www.clicks.co.za/Campaigns/HelpingHand/about.html>.

⁹ National Planning Commission, National Development Plan, Vision 2030, Pretoria, 2011.

¹⁰ John Ele-Ojo Ataguba and James Akazili. "Healthcare Financing in South Africa: Moving towards universal coverage." *CME* 28(2) 2010, accessed May 8, 2013, www.ajol.info/index.php/cme/article/download/55239/43707.

¹¹ South Africa Yearbook 2012-2013, GCIS

of doing this is through public-private partnerships, in which the private party assumes the financial, technical and operational risk in the design, funding, building and operation of a project. The **Clicks Helping Hand Trust** initiative is one example of such a PPP.

4. The Clicks “Helping Hand Trust” Initiative

Clicks is South Africa’s largest retail pharmacy chain, with over 330 pharmacies and 130 clinics nationwide. This extensive domestic network means that a significant proportion of the population is relatively close to a Clicks pharmacy or clinic. The Clicks Helping Hand Trust was launched by the company in 2011 as part of its corporate social responsibility programme, with the ultimate aim of growing into a self-sufficient inclusive business model¹². Its first initiative became the Moms and Babies Initiative.

The Clicks group entered into an agreement with the Western Cape Government Health Department, through which Clicks provides free in-store family planning services and immunizations to both state and private patients every day of the

week¹³ at all Clicks clinics in the Western Cape. The project is targeted towards disadvantaged South Africans and focuses on the following key health services:

Immunizations: By protecting children against communicable diseases, increased immunizations should save the lives of hundreds of children. Immunizations will be in line with the government’s immunization schedule¹⁴.

Feeding and nutrition advice: This includes breast feeding guidance and healthy eating advice for babies in an effort to prevent childhood illness.

Baby growth monitoring and weighing: Consistent growth observation should help with early diagnosis of disease and malnutrition.

Family planning medication and advice: Informative and educational family planning advice should help women plan the timing of their births and prevent the shock of unexpected pregnancy.

The first stage of the initiative consisted of piloting the initiative at a Clicks pharmacy in the township of Gugulethu in Cape Town.

Following the success of this initial phase, the offering was replicated in three more Western Cape clinics, and currently every clinic in the Western Cape province is a HHT clinic. The services listed above are provided by nursing practitioners employed by Clicks, and are available at no charge on one afternoon every week (Thursdays), and a small charge at other times. Immunizations and family planning services are carried out by qualified nurses. Interventions by nurses and patient visits are recorded and tracked using the Clicks in-house IT system as per national protocol rules.

5. Fees and Logistics: Building a revenue model while keeping fees affordable

The vaccinations required to maintain the health of a child from birth to the age of eighteen months cost at least R 3,500. However, under the PPP with the Western Cape Government Health initiative, the medication is provided for free by the Western Cape Department of Health (DoH), and patients are charged a nominal convenience fee by Clicks. Baby immunization services are provided for a fee of

¹¹ Clicks. “About Us.” 2013. <http://www.clicks.co.za/ClicksPharmacy.aspx>.

¹² Ministry of Health. *Western Cape Government and Clicks Launch a Pioneering Partnership*. January 29, 2013. <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/western-cape-government-health-and-clicks-launch-pioneering-partnership>.

¹³ Clicks Helping Hand Trust. *Helping Hand for Moms & Babies Project*. February 27, 2013. <http://www.clicks.co.za/Campaigns/HelpingHand/about.html>.

¹⁴ Ministry of Health. *Western Cape Government and Clicks Launch a Pioneering Partnership*. January 29, 2013. <http://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/western-cape-government-health-and-clicks-launch-pioneering-partnership>.

R75. The first time family planning consultation fee is R50, with follow-up appointments costing R 35.

The partnership between the provincial government and Clicks provides for affordable access to private healthcare for people in low income communities, while improving service coverage across the province and alleviating the pressure on provincial health clinics¹⁶.

The long term goal of the Western Cape DoH project is for government partnerships to be formed with other pharmacy groups, further increasing immunization and family planning access for South African citizens, and reducing child and infant mortality¹⁷.

Since the beginning of the launch of the PPP with the Western Cape DoH, a total of 36 Helping Hand Trust Clinics have been offering the service within the province, and the service has been expanded to another 35 clinics in other provinces, with at least one Helping Hand Trust outlet per

province. Clicks pays for the medication and nurse's time to deliver these services every Thursday afternoon for children born at a state facility and without medical aid. Under the current model, the Clicks Helping Hand Trust is funded through sponsorships, with 5% of the revenue generated from the sale of Clicks private branded baby consumables, as well as donations made to the Helping Hand Trust. Clicks also provides the facilities and nurses to the Trust.

Conclusion

While the Clicks Helping Hand Trust is still largely funded through its Corporate Social Responsibility scheme, Clicks is seeking to develop the programme's funding through the Trust's own resources. The programme provides affordable private health care services that help to reduce the burden on public health facilities. The long term plan for Clicks is to provide the HHT services in every single Clicks Clinic, and to eventually extend reach beyond Clicks Clinics into

rural areas with no access by using mobile clinics.

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Impact as of January 2014:

- 71 HHT clinics, and at least one HHT in each province
- 12,417 baby consultations and immunisations were administered
- 3,460 baby consultations with nutritional advice, baby weighing, etc.
- 3,454 family planning consultations and medication

¹⁵ & ¹⁶Claire Bisseker, "Clicks & Western Cape in health-care partnership." *Financial Mail*, February 14, 2013. <http://www.fm.co.za/lifestyle/health/2013/02/14/clicks-western-cape-in-health-care-partnership>.

¹⁷ "The Helping Hand Trust." (Presentation by Ayanda Nogantshi at BoP learning Lab, Cape Town, Western Cape, April 11, 2013).

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