

**Immediate release**  
**6 June 2008**

**ARK (ABSOLUTE RETURN FOR KIDS) RAISES £25.5 MILLION FOR DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN ANNOUNCES MAJOR NEW PROJECT IN INDIA**

ARK, the leading international children's charity, reports today (6 June 2008) that it has raised a total of £25.5 million at its seventh annual fund-raising dinner, held on Thursday 5 June at the historic Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich. The generosity of the 1,100 guests who come predominantly from the financial industries, far exceeded organisers' hopes, particularly given the more difficult economic environment.

Speaking at the event, former UK Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Tony Blair, said:

"It is a great honour to address ARK, whose effectiveness in delivering programmes is without parallel. Like your guests I am humbled by ARK's achievements in the fields of HIV/AIDS treatment, in education and in support for abandoned children. Equally, I admire your determination that far more can and must be achieved to relieve the hardship of so many children.

"This evening demonstrates both the power and the value of philanthropy. ARK's international effectiveness in mobilising private charitable commitment, superb business acumen and government support has changed the lives of thousands of children. You have a great deal to be proud of and I wish you continued success."

ARK's programmes have transformed the lives of 65,000 children, by providing life-saving health care to families blighted by HIV/AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa, supporting children in care in Eastern Europe and providing educational opportunities for disadvantaged children in the UK through its academies and training programmes.

This year's theme, "***Overcoming the barriers to education***", takes that work forward by expanding existing programmes and funding new work in related fields.

***INDIA - new programme will drive up the quality of education***

Among other programmes, the dinner secured funding to launch a ***new programme in India to train high impact Head Teachers***. India is home to 40% of the world's poorest children. It has 24 million primary school drop-outs and half of all pupils fail to attain even basic literacy and numeracy - missing out on any chance of a decent life. **This project will help transform the opportunities of more than 100,000 pupils.**

ARK's Chairman, Arpad Busson, said:

"I am thrilled by the overwhelming generosity of our guests, particularly given the more difficult financial and economic environment. I am immensely grateful for what we

achieved last night. These donations will transform the lives of tens of thousands of children in India, South Africa, Eastern Europe and the UK.

“In particular, I am pleased that we can embark on a new project to improve educational opportunities for children in India. Raising educational standards for Indian school children will offer opportunity to a generation. We continue to work towards an AIDS-free generation in Africa and a world in which there are no large scale institutions for children.

“I want to thank Stevie Wonder for an electrifying performance and Lord Dalmeny for his skill in ensuring that guests willingly and enthusiastically contributed to ARK’s cause. I am immensely grateful to Tony Blair for his moving and inspirational speech. He is a true visionary.

“We are extremely grateful to all those who made the event possible including: our generous sponsors, Blue Crest Capital Management, Bloomberg, Merrill Lynch and UBS, our venue, the Old Royal Naval College, the donors of wonderful prizes including LVMH, Damien Hirst, FIAT, Tracy Emin, the event producers, Starlight, the Admirable Crichton and Rob Van Helden Floral Design.”

**ENDS**

For further information please contact:

Lesley Smith,

ARK (Absolute Return for Kids)

Tel: 020 7395 2080 / 07702 684323

[Lesley.smith@arkonline.org](mailto:Lesley.smith@arkonline.org)

[www.arkonline.org](http://www.arkonline.org)

### **About the Gala Dinner**

This year's spectacular Gala Dinner was held in the historic surroundings of the Old Royal Naval College at Greenwich. Guests were greeted by Trinity Brass and Jazz Ensemble and the evening was opened by the Hillsong & Gospel Choir. ARK's Chairman Arpad Busson made the introductory speech and introduced the keynote speaker, Tony Blair. The pledge appeal was announced by ARK Trustee Paul Marshall and the auction was conducted by Lord Dalmeny, Deputy Chairman of Sotheby's.

Among the prizes donated to ARK for auction, guests bid for:

- The chance to attend Nelson Mandela's 90th birthday party;
- A Fiat Cinquecento customised by Tracy Emin;
- A speaking part with credit in the film of Eloise, in Paris with Uma Thurman;
- A safari in the Singiti Serengeti in Tanzania;
- The opportunity to name a 100 carat diamond owned by Graff diamonds. The pear shaped diamond took more than a year to cut and polish and is the world's most recent 100 carat diamond.

### **About ARK**

ARK is an international charity whose purpose is to transform children's lives.

ARK was founded in 2002 by a group of senior figures in the alternative investment industry, pooling their skills and resources to improve the life chances of children. With a shared vision of collective philanthropy, ARK delivers high social returns on philanthropic investment.

ARK brings together passionate experts with the best talent from business. It has developed a strong results-driven model to identify, create and deliver innovative programmes addressing critical issues in the areas of HIV/AIDS (South Africa, Mozambique), Education (UK, Asia) and Children in Care (Eastern Europe) that are transformative, scalable and sustainable. ARK applies the same principles and disciplines to managing the charity as it would to running a business, focusing on the transformation of children's lives. Through rigorous research, monitoring and evaluation, it can demonstrate that it achieves high standards of efficiency and effectiveness.

ARK's Board of Trustees and Patrons ensure that the central administrative costs of ARK are met. 100% of donations are then used to deliver ARK's programmes. The Board acts as a catalyst for others to give and leverages additional funding and significant resources for ARK's work.

ARK's Trustees are: Arpad A Busson – Chairman, Paul Dunning, Phil Falcone, Stanley Fink, David Gorton, Kevin Gundle, Paul Marshall, Jennifer Moses, William von Mueffling, Tom Sandell, Jeff Tarrant, Blaine Tomlinson, Ian Wace.

### **ARK in Southern Africa**

ARK is working to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic in sub-Saharan Africa. In South Africa and Mozambique, our anti-retroviral treatment (ART) programmes for care-givers and children have benefited more than 50,000 children. The Clinton-ARK Initiative for Mozambique, a strategic partnership with the Clinton Foundation HIV/AIDS initiative, is

training health workers across the country to enrol patients onto ART and to improve paediatric treatment.

### **ARK in Eastern Europe**

ARK and its partners have closed 11 detrimental state-run institutions and moved more than 1,600 children into nurturing, supportive, family-focused homes. ARK is on track to support the closure of a total of 24 institutions by 2010.

The tremendous response to the charity auction will help ARK and Hope and Homes for children to close a further six institutions in Romania.

### **ARK Schools in the UK**

ARK Schools is founding a network of outstanding, non-selective, non-denominational academies offering high quality education to children of all backgrounds. It runs three schools in London with a further three to open in September 2008. ARK aims to have 12 academies open by 2012, transforming the opportunities of more than 12,000 pupils.

ARK also runs and develops programmes to help schools succeed. The ***Future Leaders*** programme, run in partnership with the NCSL, develops outstanding senior leaders for challenging urban schools.