



# ACCESS Newsletter

-The official Newsletter of the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security-

ACCESS

Issue 3

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## 1. Editorial

In 16 months ACCESS has grown to a membership of over 120 organisations all over South Africa. This growth is a reflection of the extent of frustration that many children's organizations are experiencing with the social security system in South Africa at present.

Our membership reflects the diversity of organisations across South Africa, all working tirelessly in the interest of the child. Our members include CBO's and faith based organisations, NGO's, welfare organisations, crèche committees, health workers and many others.

To address the challenge of an alliance that can and will make a difference ACCESS has employed a National Coordinator, Patricia Martin, based in Cape Town. It will be her responsibility over the next year to make sure that ACCESS's vision is fulfilled through coordination with ACCESS members and partners. Should you wish to make contact with Patricia please feel free to do so. She can be contacted on Tel 021 – 788 2069 and by email [p.martin@mweb.co.za](mailto:p.martin@mweb.co.za).

Yours sincerely,

ACCESS Task Team  
Shirin Motala (Children's Rights Centre)  
Paula Proudlock (Children's Institute)  
Shereen Usdin (Soul City) and  
Patricia Martin, ACCESS National Co-ordinator

## 2. Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security System for South Africa

In May, Cabinet released the Report of the Committee of Inquiry for public comment. The Department of Social Development was tasked with collating all the comment received and presenting this to the Cabinet committee responsible for analyzing the Committee of Inquiry's recommendations. Cabinet was scheduled to discuss the Report at its mid July meeting.

May and June 2002 were therefore busy months for ACCESS. We worked hard to ensure that a **summary document** of the Committee of Inquiry report was developed and distributed to our members. This was motivated by the concern that few of you would be able to get a copy of the document easily over the internet and more importantly that few people had the luxury of time to spend hours reading a very big report, while they are so busy with their day to day work of caring for children.

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*Your Voice is important to children – make yourself heard. Send in your submission to ACCESS today. We will forward it to the Minister and the Department of Social Development.*

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ACCESS also developed an easy to use **Social Security Submission Form** to assist those of you to send in your submissions to the Department of Social Development. The deadline for sending in submissions was extremely short and we have been concerned that not many of you would have had a chance to send in your views.

ACCESS believes that even though the official date for comment has passed, while the issue is still being considered by Cabinet and Parliament, we must continue to make our voices heard and to this end we want to encourage members to continue to send in their

views and opinions on the Committee of Inquiry recommendations. If you have not received copies of the documents noted above let us know and we will ensure that these are resent. A copy of the submission format is included with this update for you to photocopy and use.

**YOUR VOICE IS IMPORTANT TO CHILDREN – MAKE YOURSELF HEARD. SEND IN YOUR SUBMISSION TO THE MINISTER AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.**

Submissions can be faxed to the Minister and Director General (DG) of the Department of Social Development (Fax: 012 - 321 2658). (Please remember to fax ACCESS a copy so that we have a record of submissions sent to the Department. You can fax a copy of your submission to Shirin Motala on 031 – 307 6074).



(A picture taken during the provincial child participation process last year)

Finally we forwarded you a copy of the **ACCESS Submission**, which captured the views and concerns of the child sector about developing a comprehensive system for all in South Africa. ACCESS believes our submission was unique in that it captured the voices of vulnerable children themselves expressing why they believe that a comprehensive social security system is needed. The submission has been sent to the Department of Social Development and Parliament.

If you have not yet received your copy, please contact Paula on 021 - 685 1583 or [paula@rmh.uct.ac.za](mailto:paula@rmh.uct.ac.za)

Cabinet has postponed its discussion and decision in relation to the Committee of Inquiry's recommendations until January 2003. While Cabinet did not reject the recommendations, they did show a leaning towards more support for job creations strategies rather than a comprehensive social security approach that would include the introduction of a Basic Income Grant. ACCESS strongly believes that both approaches are needed.

A job creation strategy alone will not address the extent of the poverty problem. With 70% of children living in poverty and more than half the population living on less than R144 per month, a well planned and comprehensive social security system is essential. The system must provide for the millions of unemployed adults, the working poor and children between the ages of 7 and 18 who currently receive no social security support.



(A picture taken during the provincial child participation process last year)

After the mid July meeting, Cabinet issued a statement saying that it was considering whether or not to extend the child support grant above the age of 7 years. It has called for more evidence to show that such an extension would be effective. The Committee of Inquiry Report provides extensive evidence to Cabinet on the need for extending the child support grant as a

first phase of a comprehensive social security system. This was precisely why the Committee of Inquiry was established - to provide Cabinet with evidence. Cabinet's call for more evidence is not reasonable in the light of the extent of the poverty in which so many children are living every day. ACCESS submits that more evidence is not needed. Children can't wait. They need social security now.

### **3. Child Care Act Review**

The South African Law Commission (SLC) is busy finalising its Report and Draft Child Care Bill. The Report and Draft Bill is scheduled to be handed over to the Minister at a press conference in Cape Town on 29 August 2002. While Cabinet has not yet made a decision on the recommendations made by the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social Security system, the SALC Report and Draft Bill will in all likelihood include children's social security rights and a strong motivation for the provision of a universal child support grant through the extension of the CSG.

The Minister and Department will consider the Report and Draft Bill before it is submitted to Cabinet and eventually tabled in Parliament for debate and passage. ACCESS is calling for the new Child Care Act to provide expressly for and interpret the state's obligations with regards to children's rights to social security.

### **4. Grants Awareness and Empowerment Campaign**

ACCESS believes that a partnership with the state to increase the numbers of children registered for grants is urgently required and to this end we have been working with Soul City towards getting the cooperation of the Department of Social Development (DoSD) and Department of Home Affairs on a Grants Awareness and Empowerment Campaign.

We have had two meetings with officials from the Department of Social Development to discuss this project and we are pleased to advise that the feedback from the Department

appears positive. The Department of Social Development has prioritized grants registration for this year and our contributions as ACCESS and Soul City will clearly add value to the measures being taken by the state.

Some of the kinds of activities envisaged by ACCESS include development and distribution of materials and information to increase **“Social Security literacy”** that is to ensure that people know what grants they are entitled to and what procedures to go through to access these grants. The Soul City and Soul Buddyz series starting in January 2003 will contain social security literacy information, and Soul City print media and radio programmes will also include social security information.

We also envisage training and awareness with stakeholders who work directly with vulnerable households and communities to ensure that in their daily contact with these households they are able to provide accurate and appropriate information on what grants children are entitled to and how to go about applying for these grants. We will also provide information on who to contact (state and para-legal organizations) if an applicant is experiencing problems in accessing their grants.

The Department's role includes improving services and addressing barriers so that the increased numbers of beneficiaries (inspired by the awareness and empowerment campaign) who apply for grants, receive efficient service from both the Department of Home Affairs and Social Development.

Many more exciting ideas are planned and the involvement of members in the campaign is going to be the key to the campaigns success.

ACCESS needs to hear from you -:

- a) *What activities are you currently undertaking that could provide good examples of how to increase access to grants?*

- b) *What ideas do you have about what will work in trying to increase access to grants?*

- c) *What is your organisation capable of and willing to do to increase awareness about grants through your day-to-day work?*

Email, fax or call us to share your ideas, experiences and recommendations to make the right to grants a living campaign. You can contact Patricia Martin, Tel # 021 788 2069, [p.martin@mweb.co.za](mailto:p.martin@mweb.co.za). We look forward to hearing from you soon as the grants project will be implemented shortly.

## **5. Barriers to Child Support Grant Research Project**

In June 2002 the Department of Social Development and the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund hosted a conference *“A Call to Coordinated Action for Children Affected by HIV/AIDS”*. A background paper<sup>1</sup> developed specifically for delegates attending the conference noted the following about access to grants .....

In a section on the Child Support Grant (p6) it noted *“There are delays in accessing this grant for many children do not have birth documents.”* In the section on priority issues for the conference (p11) it noted *“Changes are needed to simplify administrative procedures and to make social relief and grants more accessible to people with HIV/AIDS and to affected children.”*

While it is encouraging to note that there is a realisation within the Department of Social Development that there are serious barriers to accessing grants, we are greatly concerned that the DoSD appears to have no plan in place to identify more effective mechanisms for ensuring that children entitled to grants are able to

**Children Can't Wait – they need our active involvement now!**

<sup>1</sup> Department of Social Development, 2002, A call to coordinated action for children affected by HIV/AIDS; Background paper for delegates attending the conference hosted by the DoSD and the NMCF 2-5 June 2002.

access them, especially when the Department is at pains to point out that the problem lies with the administration of birth and identity documents by the Department of Home Affairs. In order to confirm that our understanding was correct, and in response to an invitation by the Minister of Social Development that ACCESS meet with DoSD officials, a meeting was held recently (11 July 2002) between ACCESS representatives and the DoSD.

At this meeting ACCESS put a number of questions to the DoSD regarding their plans to improve access to the child support grant, their mechanisms for fast tracking access to grants for malnourished/vulnerable children, and the extent to which they had considered changes to legislation and regulations as a way of addressing the barriers to grants access.



(A picture taken during the provincial child participation process last year)

ACCESS came away from that meeting disappointed in the apparent lack of a plan to solve the access to identity document and birth certificate problems experienced by applicants. The Department was not open to the proposal that alternate documents be accepted as temporary evidence of identity as the DoSD had received unfavourable reports from the Office of the Auditor General regarding the extent of fraud, which was being allegedly perpetrated.

The DoSD was unable to furnish details of how extensive the problem of fraud was, whether the fraud was in any way linked to the use of alternative proof of identity, and whether the

measures being taken to decrease fraud were reasonable, given that these same measures appeared to be preventing those eligible to the grants from accessing them. The Department promised to forward the information upon which it bases its decision not to accept alternative evidence of identity to ACCESS. We are awaiting this information.

In our last Newsletter ACCESS invited you to submit case studies to us describing the barriers to grants experienced by the children that you work with. We thank those organisations who responded and look forward to receiving feedback from more of you. We are sure that in your day-to-day work you have come across similar problems. If so please do contact us and share your experience. We will be collating all the case studies and using them as evidence of the fact that many vulnerable children - the very children which the child support grant programme is aimed at - are unable to access this life saving support. This evidence will be submitted to the Department, Cabinet, Parliament, the general media and public, and the courts if necessary in order to improve access to grants for children.

If you have a story to share then please contact Patricia Martin on 021 - 788 2069  
Email: [p.martin@mweb.co.za](mailto:p.martin@mweb.co.za)

## **6. The ACCESS Children's Participation Process**

The Child Participation Project Report is now available and is being mailed to all ACCESS members. If you are not on the ACCESS mailing list and would like to receive a copy of the report then contact Patricia so that we can make sure you receive a copy of that report.

ACCESS presented this report to members of the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) Select Committee on Social Services in Cape Town during June. We were delighted to hear that later during that week at the Social Services Budget debate in the NCOP, the Chairperson of the Select Committee on Social Services, Loretta Jacobus, quoted some of the findings of

the ACCESS report in her speech and instructed all members of the NCOP to ensure that they had a copy of the report as it was an important reference document.

She had the following to say to the Minister of Social Development with regards to the problem of identity documents:

*"This gives us a total of 1 858 891 (child support grant beneficiaries), but it might be slightly more at this point in time. Unfortunately we cannot furnish this House with statistics of the number of eligible children qualifying for this grant presently, but we do know that a large portion of eligible children for various reasons are not able to access this grant. The take up rate seems to be higher in the better-resourced Provinces, and lower in Provinces with high poverty levels. In the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, 1 in every 5 eligible children access the CSG, whereas in the Western Cape and Gauteng for every 2 children targeted, 3 are receiving the CSG.*

*One of the most common reasons given for this discrepancy is the existence of an administrative problem, namely that most children who do qualify for the CSG do not have the necessary documentation like birth certificates, or the parents do not have ID's. In this regard honourable Minister we want to recommend that you initiate discussion with your Home Affairs counterpart to facilitate the speedy processing of identification documentation, and the introduction of mobile units to cater for the far flung rural areas in certain provinces like the Eastern Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal."*

She encouraged Cabinet to listen to the children's voices in the ACCESS Report and incorporate them into its decision-making processes around social security policy and law reform:

*"Chairperson, when we look at social security for children, it is not just the sole responsibility of the Department of Social Development, but also rather an inter-sectoral responsibility of a number of Government Departments.*

*Comprehensive social security for children comprises a package of services and benefits, e.g. access to healthcare, education, nutrition, water and sanitation, housing, etc. It must also provide for the special needs arising from chronic health conditions or a compromised home situation to ensure survival and a standard of living adequate for their development.*

*We therefore want to recommend Chairperson, that when policy and legislation around comprehensive social security is looked at, the inputs from all these departments, recommendations from the Committee of Inquiry, as well as the recommendations from the report of the ACCESS Child Participation Process are incorporated."*

A child friendly version of the ACCESS Child Participation Report is currently being developed and will be circulated in the next two months. ACCESS would like to sincerely thank all the children, ACCESS members, and organizations who participated in the provincial and national workshops and the presentation to Parliament. Together we managed to ensure that children's voices were heard. ACCESS will continue to carry the children's voices forward in its various activities. We would like to encourage all members to incorporate the children's words, as recorded in the Report, into their submissions, letter to Ministers, and other advocacy initiatives.

## **7. Building the Alliance**

Towards the end of 2002 and in the early 2003 ACCESS will be hosting provincial and a national workshops with members to explore how to improve access to social security in SA and how to support efforts towards the development of a comprehensive social security system for all South Africans.

Tell us what you, as members would like these workshops to cover so that the workshops are meaningful and contribute to your work. Also tell other organisations who are not yet ACCESS members to sign on and be placed on the

workshops mailing list for the provincial and national workshops.

## **8. ACCESS Capacity and Resources**

Our National Coordinator, Patricia will have much work to do over the next few months. She will be contacting you all soon with regards to the provincial and national workshops.

ACCESS is fortunate that a select group of donors have recognised the value of the work of the Alliance and are willing to support it. This includes resources for ensuring more effective communication between the ACCESS Task Team and its members and to host the workshops as indicated above.



(A picture taken during the provincial child participation process last year)

An Alliance however is only as strong as its members and your contributions in terms of inputs, suggestions and in terms of undertaking mutually beneficial activities jointly or on behalf of ACCESS will contribute enormously.

If your organisation can contribute to any of the ACCESS projects (not necessarily in financial terms) but maybe by undertaking work such as translation of documents, legal and other relevant research, volunteer capacity etc, get in touch with Patricia. There is work for all of us.

Yours sincerely,  
The ACCESS Task Team and ACCESS Staff

## **ACCESS Task Team Contact Details**

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## **ACCESS Staff Contact Details**

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## **LETTERS / CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR MEMBERS**

Dear Paula and Shirin

Congratulations on the work you have done and the progress you have made. Your news letter is great too. May I please make a point about access to grants in general. In our experience at Thandanani, in 6 years of battling to gain access to the Child Support Grant, it has become impossible to achieve anything without the cooperation of Home Affairs. If 49% of our children do not have Birth Certificates, it matters not what welfare does.

I believe what you are doing is excellent and on target, but I do think that there is an important missing link in the process which, unless dealt with, will hold up all Welfare's efforts.

Good luck

Linda Aadnesgaard  
Executive Director  
Thandanani Association

Dear Gail and the ACESS Task Team

Sitting in my hotel room in Johannesburg- where I am on a business trip- I have been catching up on some reading. At the top of the pile was your Children Speak out on Poverty report.

I felt that I must formerly acknowledge the work that you are doing in terms of its breadth and depth and it's quality but especially in terms of the extent to which it is bringing into the debate the voices of children.

Thank you for the high quality of your work and inputs into the process of reviewing social security in South Africa. Thank you for such a comprehensive and lucid report on the realities faced by our children (I am already quoting your report in my work). And thank you for ensuring that the opinions of children are sought, appreciated and (hopefully) listed to.

May I suggest that you send a copy of the Report to the NGO Working Group of which RAPCAN is a member.

Keep fighting

Warm regards,  
Carol Bower  
Executive Director  
RAPCAN

**This Newsletter was prepared by  
Shirin Motala  
Paula Proudlock, and  
Partricia Martin  
For the ACESS Task Team**

**Designed by  
Zama Mvulane, Children's Institute,  
University of Cape Town**

## **Current Grants in South Africa**

### **Foster Child Grant (FCS)**

Amount: R450 per month

- Grant paid to foster parents of a child placed in foster care through children's court.

### **Care Dependency Grant (CDG)**

Amount: R620 per month

- Payable to parents or foster parents of children with severe mental or physical disabilities who require and receive permanent home care
- Age limits of between 1 and 18 years.
- Means test applies in respect of natural parents, but not foster parents.

### **Child Support Grant (CSG)**

Amount: R130 per month

- Payable to care-giver of a child under the age of 7.
- Payable for a maximum of 6 children per care-giver.
- Subject to a means test

To access all the above grants an ID or Birth certificate is needed for the child. The care-giver and foster parent/s also need an ID.

### **Old aged pension (OAP)**

Amount: R620 per month

- Paid to men over 65 years and women over 60 years.

### **Disability Grants for adults**

Amount: R 620 per month

- South African citizens
- Resident in South Africa
- Complies with means test
- 18 years old and above

### **Social Relief of Distress Grant**

It is a short-term measure offering immediate assistance to people in crisis. It can take the form of cash or material goods, and is subject to a needs-test. The grant is also available to persons who are waiting for permanent grants to be approved, and can be provided for up to 3 or 6 months if extended.

To apply for this grant, an ID document or other acceptable proof of identity is needed & proof of the person's need for the grant.