

Reaching out to children: An analysis of the first six months of the extension of the Child Support Grant in South Africa



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ABSTRACT

The Child Support Grant is the South African government's primary poverty alleviation mechanism targeted at children. From April 2003 eligibility for the grant was extended to children above the age of six who live in poverty. The South African Department of Social Development plans a phased-in extension to the age of 14. If they meet the means test and other criteria, children up to the age of nine are eligible to receive the Child Support Grant in 2003/4 as the first phase of the extension.

This paper examines the first six months of the extension of the Child Support Grant from April to September 2003. An analysis was done by using administrative data from the department of Social Development, as well as a range of other supporting research. The author found that the extension is proceeding according to the department's targets at a national level. Despite this, more than half of children living in poverty in this age category have yet to access the grant, and there are a number of administrative problems which, if resolved, would greatly improve access. In addition, the nine provinces are performing at very different levels in implementing the extension. The paper ends with a range of recommendations to the Department to ensure administrative justice for children and the realisation of children's right to social security.

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1. Introduction

In April 2003 the South African Department of Social Development extended the eligibility criteria for children receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG). For the first time since its inception in 1998, children over the age of seven are able to receive this vital poverty alleviation grant.

Although the CSG was extended to children up to the age of 14 years, the Department of Social Development argued that it did not have the administrative capacity to extend the grant to all poor children under the age of 14 immediately. It therefore put in place a “progressive realisation of the socio-economic rights of children” through the phased-in extension of the CSG. The extension of the grant to poor children up to the age of 14 will therefore be phased-in over three years. From 1 April 2003 children aged seven and eight became eligible for the grant. From 1 April 2004, children aged nine and ten will become eligible. And from 1 April 2005, children then aged 11, 12 and 13 years will be able to receive the grant. In this financial year, the grant amount has increased from R140 per month to R160 per month.

The first six months of the extension has been important in establishing administrative procedures and capacity within the Department of Social Development. Six months into the extension, it is vital to assess the implementation and reach of the grant extension against poverty data and the department’s own targets. This paper uses the administrative data from the Department of Social Development (SOCPEN) and supporting research to analyse the scope of the extension and concerns about the administration of the phasing-in of the grant, and examine some data about families accessing the grants. The objective is simple: to support improved administration of the grant and the realisation of children’s right to access social security, and to make recommendations for the three years of the planned extension, aimed at improving access and administrative justice for children and their families.

2. Grants for children

There are currently three grants that specifically target children. The *Child Support Grant* (CSG) was launched in 1998 to replace the State Maintenance Grant. At first uptake was slow, and in April 2000 there were only 350 000 poor children who accessed this grant. Three years later it had reached almost ten times that number, and is now even larger than the Old Age Pension (OAP) in terms of the number of recipients. Both the OAP and the CSG are primarily aimed at alleviating poverty within their target groups. The Child Support Grant in particular is aimed at assisting families to provide for the basic needs of children in their care. It is paid monthly to a caregiver who meets the administrative criteria. The beneficiary or caregiver does not need to be a biological parent or family member but must be a South African citizen and produce an affidavit stating she or he is the primary provider of care to the child.

The other grants targeted at specific groups of children are not primarily aimed at poverty reduction, although they clearly support poor families too. The *Foster Child Grant* (FCG) is given to the foster parent of a child who has been placed in his/her care through the court system. Only South African citizens are eligible to receive the grant. Foster parents of children up to the age of 18 years can qualify, and this can be extended to the age of 21 years if the children are still at school. It is a much more substantial grant than the CSG, and has a monthly cash value of R500. The *Care Dependency Grant* (CDG) is paid to those who care for children with severe disabilities and who therefore need special care. They can be biological parents, foster parents or people who have been made caregivers by the court (Soul City, 2003). Caregivers of children up

to the age of 18 are eligible, and an assessment, including a medical report, is necessary to qualify for the grant. It has the highest monetary value of these grants at R700 per month. Only South African citizens are eligible for Care Dependency Grants.

3. The data from SOCPEN

This paper uses two kinds of data from the SOCPEN system of the Department of Social Development¹. The daily records include the number of applicants, beneficiaries paid and applications rejected for each of the grants administered by the Department of Social Development per province. Records for the OAP and grants for war veterans, disability, foster care, care dependency, child support and grants in aid are included. Also included are the number of applications rejected and the amounts disbursed according to grant category. The data is cumulative, and for the purposes of this paper, the daily records were analysed as of the last day of each month for the six month period under review.

With respect to the CSG, the form of the daily records changed over the period April to September 2003. CSG data for April is aggregated, and there are only totals for grants for children aged 0 – 9 years. From May to July 2003, two categories are used; children 0 – 6 and children 7 – 9 years. In August and September the same year, the daily records include data disaggregated by age, by year. There is therefore access to the number of grants by category for children 0 – 1, 1 – 2, until the ages of 8 – 9 years.

In addition, a number of forms have been developed by the department to track the extension of the CSG, a very welcome addition to SOCPEN. There are five reports per province for each month, which – unlike daily records – are not cumulative. Report 1 (R01) records “continued”, “new” and “re-applications”, as well as applications “not yet approved” or “rejected”. Reports 2 and 3 (R02 and R03) record respectively the number of applicants lapsed by age group and the reason for that. Reports 4 and 5 (R04 and R05) include respectively applicants refused by age group and the reason. For the purposes of this paper, the author has drawn heavily on Reports 1, 3 and 5 for analysis as they include the data from Reports 2 and 4.

4. The need for the Child Support Grant

Social assistance grants constitute the South African government’s largest and most effective redistribution programme, and are a significant poverty alleviation mechanism. The Department of Social Development released a first draft baseline document in July 2003 for the development of a national policy for families. The document states that 59% of children aged 0 – 17 are poor, and that:

Poverty affects children by reducing their chances of living beyond their first five years, by stunting their growth, rendering them vulnerable to infectious diseases and disabling injury, reducing their confidence and hope in the future, and limit (sic) their education capacity for developing to their full intellectual potential. (Social Development 2003 (b), 5)

This poverty rate is based on estimates of household income using the Income and Expenditure Survey of 1999. According to Streak (2001, 23) “These child poverty estimates are conservative.

¹ Many thanks to Jane Jooste, Operations Manager for SOCPEN for giving me access to the data and for answering questions about its administration.

An alternative analysis suggests that when income poverty is defined in the absolute sense – as a situation in which a child does not have the income needed to meet his or her basic needs - the child poverty rate in South Africa is even higher – about 70%.”

Not only is poverty widespread but inequality is also marked and growing. Inequality between and within provinces is marked with African families, families headed by women, families affected by HIV, and families in rural areas are most impoverished. According to Streak (2001), “65% of poor children live in KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and the Northern Province (now Limpopo)”.

5. Barriers to Accessing the Child Support Grant

Despite the widespread poverty documented above, many poor children are not able to access the Child Support Grant. The South African Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by South Africa in 1996, define children as people under the age of 18. However, for all those children between the ages of 14 – 18, there is no provision for poverty alleviation through social security, and no measures to address this gap have been announced. Even within the age groups provided for under the current policy, many poor children are not able to access this vital social security measure. If the grant is to be effective in reaching all poor children, barriers to its access must be understood, and policy, regulations and administrative systems developed to overcome them. Some of the reasons why poor children are not able to get the social security that that they are entitled to are discussed below.

a. Access costs

It is not easy to get registered for a grant. For those families living in chronic poverty with little or no cash to their disposal, the costs of travelling to offices for applications, getting photographs for documentation, as well as travelling to Home Affairs offices for birth certificates, can be a significant barrier. The very poorest therefore may not have the resources necessary to access the benefit. Social development offices and police stations (to obtain an affidavit) are widely dispersed, particularly in rural areas. An applicant will need to travel to the nearest town, often on more than one occasion, before an application can be lodged with all the necessary documentation.

b. Documentation

To qualify for a grant, applicants must provide documentary proof that they are South African citizens residing in the country, that they are the primary caregiver of the child, and proof that their income is not over the minimum level. Proof of income is difficult in situations of extreme poverty, particularly in the context of an informal labour market. In addition, the applicant must have a bar-coded identity document (ID) and birth certificate for the child or children concerned. Many South Africans are not in possession of valid ID documents, a situation highlighted by the Independent Electoral Commission in its preparation for the 2004 elections. There are massive backlogs in applications, and many administrative problems in the issuing of documents. The lack of administrative efficiency in the Department of Home Affairs is the source of much hardship, and violates the right of poor people to an identity, and consequently social security grants.

c. Administration, corruption and inefficiency

In a study in Mount Frere, Ceres and Khayelitsha, De Swardt came to the conclusion that: “The administrative infrastructure for the existing grant system is cumbersome, under-resourced both in financial and human capital terms, and not geared towards dealing with developmental realities or needs in rural areas such as Mount Frere. The Departments of Social Development and Home Affairs have installed some promising outreach programmes. However, these are not meeting the enormous demand.” (De Swardt 2003)

At the same time, some welfare officers do not communicate effectively or respectfully with applicants. There have been reported cases of abuse and misuse of power by administrative officers, and in some areas problems are acute. The state of the administration in the Eastern Cape for example – one of the provinces with the greatest levels of poverty and an administration inherited from apartheid homeland systems – has recently received the attention of the Minister for Social Development for its high levels of corruption and maladministration. The effects on grant uptakes will be examined later in this paper.

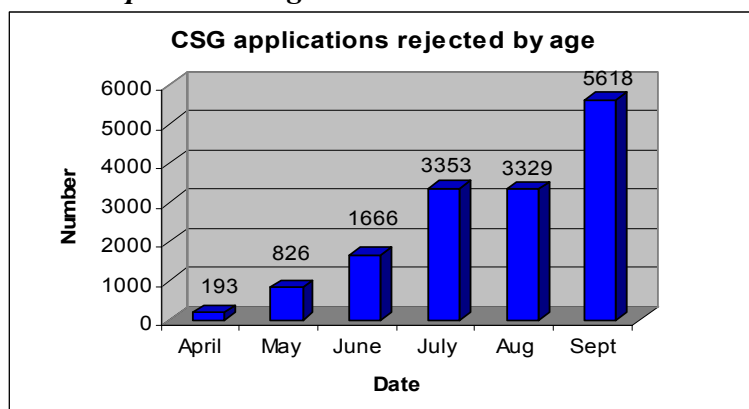
In addition, the phased-in approach is confusing to potential applicants as well as officials at grant offices. Early in 2003, the Children’s Institute and the Alliance for Children’s Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS) launched the Case Alert project to monitor problems experienced by applicants in accessing the extended CSG. Aside from all the problems mentioned above, some caregivers of eight year old children were being turned away from grant offices because they were told the children were too old, even though they were under the age of nine and therefore eligible to receive the grant.

The regulations are very clear in this regard. Any child who is not yet nine at the time of application and who qualifies on the other grounds, should receive the grant, even if only for the month or two before their ninth birthday. Even if the child is eight years and ten months old and it takes three months to process an application, the caregiver should receive in a lump sum two grant payments for the two months of eligibility. Despite this, the North West Province for example has been distributing pamphlets that state that only children under the age of eight are eligible for the child support grant².

The majority of applications refused in the 8 - 9 year group are on the grounds of age. This is likely to be the result of grant officials applying the criteria in an inconsistent manner. Over the six months period covered by this paper, 14 985 applications were rejected on the grounds of age. In September for example the 5 618 applications rejected for this reason constituted 74.1% of total rejections. This compares with 1 949 (25.7%) rejected because they failed the means test, and 14 (0.2%) rejected on the grounds of nationality. *Figure 1* on the next page indicates the number of CSG applications refused on the grounds of the child not having reached the prescribed age.

² Personal correspondence; Connie Mpokoto, CASE ALERT project.

Figure 1: CSG applications refused on the grounds that the child has reached the prescribed age



Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R05 reports April – September 2003

d. Means test inadequacy

There are many poor children under the age of nine who are not considered poor enough because their caregivers earn more than the means test threshold. These thresholds have not increased since 1998 despite inflation and cost of living increases, and clearly needs at least inflation-related adjustments. Two means test levels are used in assessing applications for the CSG. The cut-off level for the personal income of the caregiver and caregiver’s spouse is R9 600 per year (R800 per month) for people in urban areas. If the caregiver and spouse live in a rural area or in informal housing in an urban area, the cut-off level is R13 200 per year (R1 100 per month), irrespective of the number of children.

There can be no doubt that a family that includes three children under the age of nine, with a total monthly household income of R900, is living in poverty. And yet such a family would not qualify for a grant to support the children because, according to the means test, they are *not poor enough* to qualify. Similarly, the means test does not take into account how many children there are in a household, and therefore what resources are available for each child.

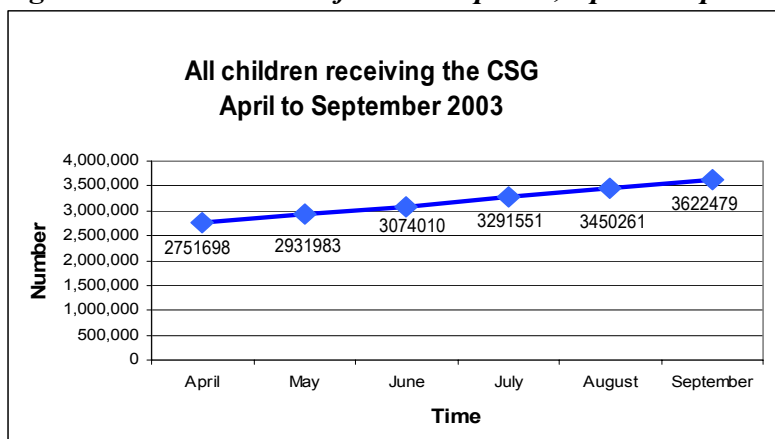
“There is an abundance of evidence demonstrating that the means test is not an effective mechanism for ensuring that eligible recipients receive their entitlements of government social security. Social grants allocations indeed often appear quite ineffective and even arbitrary in terms of various poverty criteria.” (De Swardt 2003) Aside from problems of bureaucracy and targeting, children without adult caregivers, such as children living in child-headed households, can not access grants because the law is interpreted that only adults can apply for grants on behalf of children. (Giese et al, 2003; Proudlock, 2003; Rosa 2003)

Cobus de Swardt writes: “Whilst the present social grant system assists a large section of the population over sustained periods of time, many desperately poor people are excluded (especially because of problems with take up) There also needs to be a simplification and reduction in the bureaucracy associated with administration of grants. An improved social grant outreach would be a low cost means of assisting, and empowering, the chronic and severely poor.” (De Swardt, 2003)

6. Uptake of the Child Support Grant for all children to the age of nine

By 30 September 2003, just over 3 and a half million (3 622 479) children were registered to receive the CSG. *Figure 2* tracks the steady and substantial growth in the number of children receiving the CSG since April. In the first 6 months of the extension of the CSG, 870 781 more children from birth to nine years were registered.

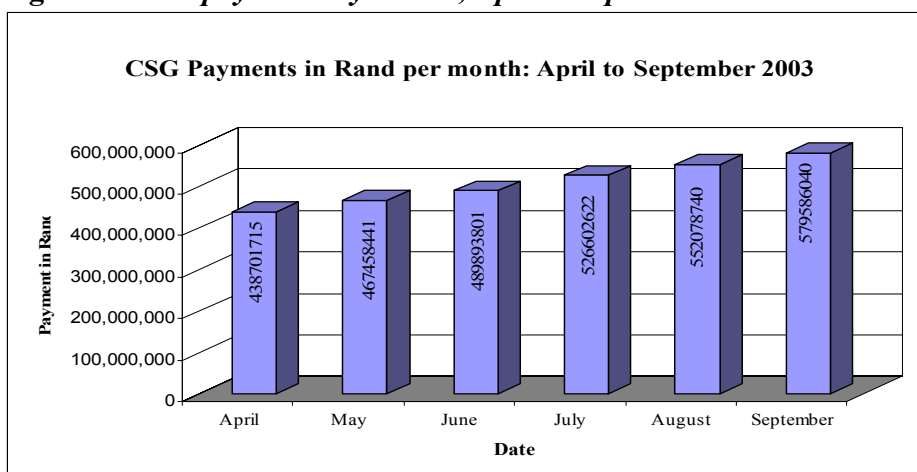
Figure 2: Total number of CSG recipients, April – September 2003



Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN daily records as at 30.10.03

The amount of the CSG grant disbursements has increased monthly over the period of the extension as more and more children are registered and receive grants. During the month of September, R579 586 040 was distributed as Child Support Grants across South Africa. The total disbursed over the six months period is R3 054 321 359, or a little over 3 billion Rand, a substantial redistributive effect. *Figure 3* illustrates the total monetary value of CSG payments per month.

Figure 3: CSG payments by month, April – September 2003



Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN daily records April – September 2003

So what proportion of poor children in the eligible age groups is receiving the CSG? According to Statistics South Africa, there were 8 482 677 children under the age of nine in October 2001, as recorded in the Census. According to the Department of Social Development, using a more conservative estimate of a 59% poverty rate, 5 004 779 of these children are poor. Using Haarman and IDASA's 70% estimate, 5 937 874 of these children are poor. In other words, there were between 5 and 6 million children under the age of nine living in poverty in South Africa in

2001. These figures will be slightly higher in 2003 due to population growth over the past two years.

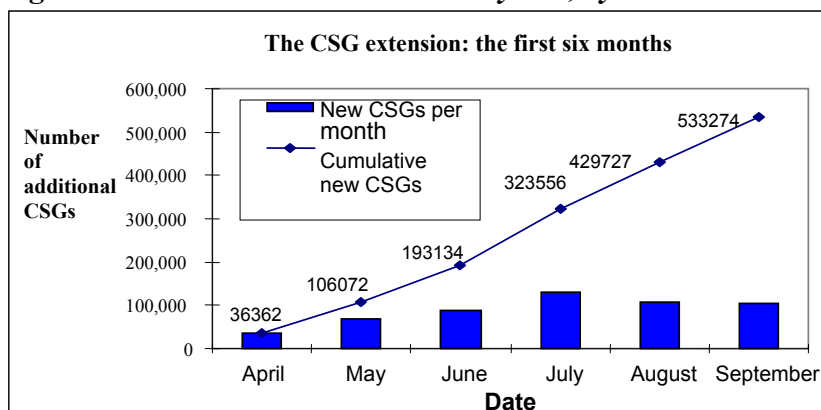
As shown in *Figure 1*, at the end of September 2003 a total of 3 622 479 children under the age of nine were receiving the CSG. Using the 59% poverty rate, this means that 72% of poor children under the age of nine are receiving the CSG. If we use the 70% poverty rate, we calculate that 61% of this group are receiving the grant. While this is an important increase in disbursement and a vital provision to those families receiving the grant, it still means that *between 28 – 39% of poor children under the age of nine are not accessing the Child Support Grant.*

7. Reaching out to children over seven

Discussion documents prepared for the regulations governing the extension of the CSG include projections on the number of children over the age of seven that will be added to the CSG programme over the next three years. According to minutes of a meeting of the Children’s Institute, ACCESS, the Black Sash and the Department of Social Development in April 2003, it was projected that 929 336 children aged seven and eight would be added between April 2003 to March 2004.

Figure 4 indicates the number of new grants to children over the age of seven per month, as well as the cumulative number of grant recipients added over the first six months of the extension. Six months into the extension, a little more than 530 000 seven and eight year olds have been added.

Figure 4: CSG to children over seven years, by month and cumulative

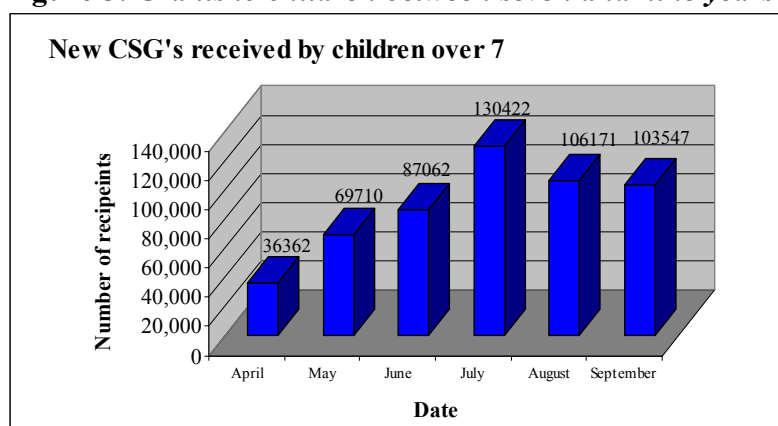


Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April – September 2003

According to the fact sheet produced by the department (Department of Social Development, 2003a), the South African Government included an allocation to the grant extension in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). The implementation of the CSG extension is funded by conditional grants to provinces. The conditional grant provision for this current financial year for the CSG extension (2003/04) is R1.1 billion. This increases to R3.4 billion in 2004/05 and R6.4 billion in 2005/06. In addition to this provision for the extension of grant payments, additional funding is also made available for administrative expenditure related to registration and payment and administrative and monitoring systems (Department of Social Development, 2003).

Figure 5 provides an overview of new CSG paid out to children between seven and nine years.

Figure 5: Grants to children between seven and nine years



Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April – September 2003

It is therefore possible to assess the extent of the CSG extension against the projections made by the Department of Social Development and the Treasury. Half way through the first year of extension, 533 274 or a little over half the projected number of children over the age of seven have been added. In addition, the rate of new recipients being added to the system is high but slowing down, and will most likely fall over the next six months. The department is therefore likely to meet or exceed its own targets for the extension. *Figure 6* gives a breakdown of the number of grants per province in the extension to children from their seventh birthdays until they turn nine.

Figure 6: Total grants registered April – September for 7 – 9 year olds

	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Totals
WC	2 379	3 276	4 680	6 711	7 336	5 289	29 671
FS	4 485	9 239	8 978	11 108	5 677	4 199	43 686
Gauteng	5 404	13 382	12 979	17 753	14 628	9 649	73 795
KZN	8 325	12 572	13 945	24 215	24 053	20 312	103 422
MP	2 549	7 682	10 154	12 133	9 154	7 482	49 154
NC	590	1 317	1 250	2 267	1 402	1 531	8 357
LP	4 426	8 672	17 305	36 877	19 133	26 548	112 961
NW	2 528	2 566	3 351	4 512	12 093	12 964	38 014
EC	5 676	11 004	14 420	14 846	12 695	15 573	74 214
Totals	36 362	69 710	87 062	130 422	106 171	103 547	533 274

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R05 reports April – September 2003

It is important to assess the success of the extension to poor children in the new age group not only by the number of new grants but also relative to the number of poor children in the age group.

Figure 7 on the next page outlines the percentage of poor children aged seven and eight years who are receiving the Child Support Grant per province.

The **first column** of figures is the total number of 7 – 8 year olds by province according to the 2001 Census (Statistics SA 2001). As mentioned above, these are slight underestimates because the population would have grown slightly since the Census date.

The **second column** of figures shows the provincial poverty shares as calculated by Ingrid Woolard, based with the 1999 October Household Survey, and quoted in Streak (2001). This rate

was calculated for children aged 0 – 6. Woolard’s research showed that poverty levels in this age group and the 0 – 17 year age group are very similar, so they have been used in this calculation. These poverty rates are the same, more conservative estimates quoted by the department of Social Development, where the national child poverty rate was calculated at 59%.

These provincial rates have been used to calculate approximately how many poor children aged seven and eight there are per province. Because the lower rates were used for this paper, the estimates are conservative.

The **third column** reflects the approximate number of children aged 7 – 8 years living in poverty. The **fourth column** of figures is taken from the table in *Figure 6* and includes how many children have been registered to receive a grant in this age category. Again, this is a conservative number of grant recipients as some of them would have had their grants lapsed because of their age or the death of a caregiver, for example.

Figure 7: Percentage of poor children aged 7 and 8 receiving the CSG per province

Province	Total 7 – 8 year olds	Provincial poverty shares	Approximate number of children 7 – 8 in poverty	Children 7 – 8 receiving grants	Percentage of poor 7 and 8 year olds by province
Eastern Cape	325 193	75.1%	244 220	74 214	30.4%
Free State	108 642	61.2%	66 489	43 686	65.7%
Gauteng	262 302	38.3%	100 462	73 795	73.5%
KwaZulu-Natal	444 452	63.8%	283 560	103 422	36.5%
Limpopo	289 615	68.4%	198 097	112 961	57.0%
Mpumalanga	146 232	59.4%	86 862	49 154	56.6%
Northern Cape	33 117	50.8%	16 823	8 357	49.7%
North West	149 796	60.4%	90 477	38 014	42.0%
Western Cape	162 308	25.3%	41 064	29 671	72.3%
Totals	1 921 657	Average: 59%	1 128 054	533 274	Average: 47.3%

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R05 reports April – September 2003; poverty shares from Streak (2001); uptake calculations by Leatt (2003)

From these calculations it is established that the provinces are performing very differently in their ability to extend the grants to children living in poverty in their province. Gauteng and the Western Cape are doing relatively well with 73.5% and 72.3% of poor children aged seven and eight being reached through the CSG extension within its first six months. They are however the two provinces with the lowest shares of child poverty (38.3% and 25.3% respectively), and with arguably the best grant administration infrastructure.

We noted earlier that the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal have the highest rates of child poverty in the country. According to Woolard (quoted in Streak, 2001) no less than 75% of children in the Eastern Cape are living without sufficient means to meet their basic needs. Similarly 68.4% of children in Limpopo and 63.8% of children in KwaZulu-Natal are poor.

Ongoing problems with grant administration have resulted in only 30.4% of poor children in the Eastern Cape being successful in accessing the CSG. This means that the Departments of Home Affairs and Social Development, together with their civil society partners will need to expend tremendous effort to meet the rights of the more than 170 000 poor seven and eight year olds in the Eastern Cape who have yet to access a CSG. Unlike many other provinces, the Eastern Cape is continuing to register more children each month, and has not yet seen a decline.

KwaZulu-Natal is performing only slightly better, with just 36.5% of poor children in this age category benefiting from the extension of the CSG to their age group. *Figure 7* on the previous

page however shows a decline in the number of new grants registered in the months of August and September 2003. This is worrying, considering the number of children yet to be reached. Limpopo Province on the other hand is performing relatively well with more than half the eligible children in this age group being reached within the first six months of the extension. This is an achievement because of the high levels of poverty in that province. To date approximately 57% of poor children living in the Limpopo Province have been reached, and the number of new grants registered each month had not yet started to decline by September 2003.

At national level, 47.3% of poor children in this age group have been able to benefit from the extension of the CSG. Given that the number of new applications has reduced for the last two of the six months under review, it is highly unlikely that all poor children in this age group will benefit unless there is continuous and concerted effort by the departments involved to overcome the barriers to accessing the grant.

8. Which 7 – 9 year olds are getting the Child Support Grant?

The rationale behind the extension of the Child Support Grant is to support as many as possible children living in poverty. This implies that children who are living in poverty and have never received the financial support of social security should be reached for the first time. New additions to the CSG are categorised in three ways in the SOCPEN system. Children receiving grants under the terms of the extension fall into one of three categories: new applicants who have not received grants before, those whose grants have continued as they have been eligible in the extended age categories, and those whose applications have lapsed and have successfully reapplied for the grant. We are therefore able to assess how many children previously excluded from the social security safety net are now being reached.

a. New CSG applications

Figure 8 sets out the number of children who have never before been registered for a CSG but who are now receiving it. This group are accessing the grant for the first time, either because they are newly eligible by age because of the extension, have heard about the grant and their eligibility in the substantial information campaign that has accompanied the extension and registration drive, or are in a position of deepened poverty which makes them eligible. They might also have managed to acquire the necessary documents for the first time, or been able to afford the travel and other costs of accessing the grant for the first time.

Figure 8: New applicants over the age of seven

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Totals
Western Cape	150	483	1 010	2 036	2 224	1 363	7 266
Free State	1 689	3 774	4 742	7 103	2 985	1 965	22 258
Gauteng	1 290	6 094	5 408	8 182	7 027	4 292	32 293
KwaZulu-Natal	456	1 449	2 358	6 326	7 122	5 625	23 336
Mpumalanga	351	3 118	3 513	4 014	4 100	2 785	17 881
Northern Cape	83	301	392	840	456	447	2 519
Limpopo	247	4 215	5 579	20 344	6 973	14 434	51 792
North West	356	212	402	1 113	4 087	5 852	12 022
Eastern Cape	1 018	4 387	5 331	5 524	4 761	5 621	26 642
Totals	5 640	24 033	28 735	55 482	39 735	42 384	196 009

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April – September 2003

The table shows that it took between two and three months in most provinces for information about the extension to be distributed and for systems to be established before larger numbers of new children were registered. While nearly 200 000 children over the age of seven are now able to access the grant, there is room for improvement in reaching out to more potential beneficiaries.

b. Continued CSG recipients

Without the extension, there are many children who would have stopped receiving the Child Support Grant on their seventh birthdays. *Figure 9* sets out how many children would have lapsed from the CSG had the eligibility policy not changed in April 2003 but who have now continued automatically to receive the grant because of the age extension as recorded on SOCPEN. This means that the recipient of the grant has not had to reapply, the continuation of the grant has been automatic. All provinces have slow and steady increases in the number of these children over the six months under review. It can be assumed that this is because the administration is getting better, and because of the general increase in the numbers of recipients of all ages for this period, a percentage of whom would fall in this age bracket.

Figure 9: Continued recipients over the age of seven

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Totals
Western Cape	2 109	2 151	2 230	2 317	2 374	2 456	13 637
Free State	1398	1 555	1 602	1 533	1 648	1 800	9 536
Gauteng	2 927	3 112	3 230	3 286	3 290	3 556	19 401
KwaZulu-Natal	7 259	7 645	8 017	8 003	8 590	10 133	49 647
Mpumalanga	2 144	2 264	2 332	2 319	2 386	2 667	14 112
Northern Cape	483	510	537	550	564	643	3 287
Limpopo	4 175	4 387	4 614	4 555	4 899	5 971	28 601
North West	2 162	2 266	2 492	2 382	2 481	2 613	14 396
Eastern Cape	4 357	4 458	4 946	4 755	4 992	6 073	29 581
Totals	27 014	28 348	30 000	29 700	31 224	35 912	182 198

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April to September 2003

c. CSG re-applications: the costs of poor policy

The most substantial problem with a phased-in extension of the grant over three years is that a large number of children reach the age at which eligibility ends before eligibility is extended for further age groups. For example, a number of children turned seven before the announcement of the extension, and their grants lapsed. When the age eligibility was extended, they were able to re-apply. *Figure 10* on the next page shows the number of children whose grants lapsed because of their age, and whose caregivers were then successful in the re-application described earlier. In total, 155 067 caregivers had to go through this process of re-application.

Figure 10: Lapsed re-applied recipients over the age of seven

Lapsed recipients who have successfully reapplied for CSG							
	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Totals
Western Cape	120	642	1440	2358	2738	1470	8768
Free State	1398	3910	2634	2472	1044	434	11892
Gauteng	1187	4176	4341	6285	4311	1801	22101
KwaZulu-Natal	610	3478	3570	9886	8341	4554	30439
Mpumalanga	54	2300	4309	5800	2668	2030	17161
Northern Cape	24	506	321	877	382	441	2551
Limpopo	4	70	7112	11978	7261	6143	32568
North West	10	88	457	1017	5525	4499	11596
Eastern Cape	301	2159	4143	4567	2942	3879	17991
Totals	3708	17329	28327	45240	35212	25251	155067

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April – September 2003

The HIV/AIDS Programme of the Children's Institute, UCT, and the Centre for Actuarial Research, UCT, recently completed a costing exercise on grant administration. It was calculated that the average cost of processing a CSG application in terms of salary and wages for administrative staff was R30.22 per grant³. This is a very conservative calculation based on the best case scenario of smooth applications, easy verification and no return visits for lost or missing documentation. The very conservative analysis allowed us to cost the processing of these 155 067 re-applications, which can be estimated at R4 686 125 for this first six months of the grant extension. This is equivalent to at least 29 288 grant payments, or 4 880 additional children supported by a CSG for these six months.

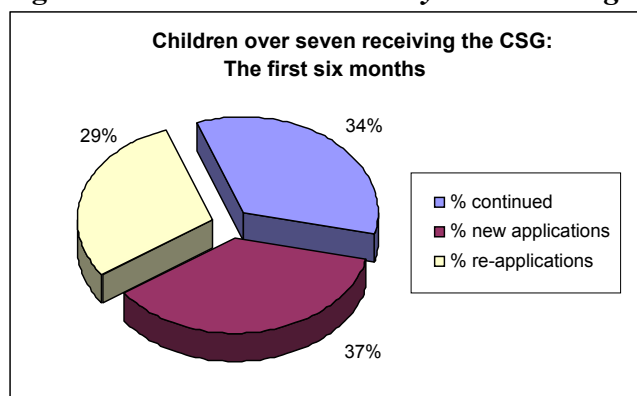
In other words, it can be estimated that nearly 4.7 million Rand has already been wasted by removing children who are eligible in terms of their poverty from the system, only to be re-registered later. Not only is this poor use of administrative resources but also a violation of these children's right to social security. Not only have they had to experience hardship and delay through bureaucracy but the time of the caregiver and the administrators were wasted too.

With a phased-in extension of the Child Support Grant, this situation is likely to continue for the three years of progressive age eligibility. Take for example a child who turns eight on the 28th of March 2003. As of the 1st of April 2003, she/he was able to apply for the Child Support Grant. However, when turning nine on the 28th of March 2004, she/he will fall off the system as she/he would no longer be eligible for the grant. When the extension to the age of 11 takes place on the 1st of April 2005, the child will once again have to cross all the barriers to re-apply. It should therefore be a priority of the department to attend to this problem of policy and administration.

Figure 11 on the next page shows the relative numbers and percentages of children over the age of seven now receiving the CSG according to whether they are first time applicants, children whose grants would have lapsed but have had them continued due to the extension, or those that have had their grants lapsed and have successfully re-applied. As the graph shows, 29% of children have had their grants lapse, and had to reapply.

³ Thanks to Debbie Budlender for the use of this costing prior to its publication.

Figure 11: Children over seven years receiving the CSG by application type



Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R01 reports April to September 2003

The next three years will see similar extensions in age: to 11 years in 2004/05 and to 14 years in 2005/06. The projections provided by the department for the number of additional children over the age of seven are 913 908 nine and ten year olds in 2004/05 and 1 336 063 eleven, twelve and thirteen year olds in 2005/06. Huge administrative costs will be incurred if the practice of letting children fall off the system and then having to re-apply as the ages are extended every year, is repeated. The Children's Institute therefore calls on the department to make a policy decision that once a child is on the system, they will not fall off until they turn 14 years.

9. Caregiver Mortality

There are a number of reasons why a Child Support Grant can lapse. In addition to the age-related reasons discussed above, the child can pass away, the family move or no longer reside in South Africa, or their income can increase so that they are no longer eligible according to the means test. Currently, aside from age, the most prevalent cause of a grant lapsing is the death of a caregiver. *Figure 12* includes the number of confirmed deaths of CSG recipients; all of them primary caregivers to child beneficiaries. Levels of mortality are staggeringly high⁴.

Figure 12: Caregiver mortality amongst CSG recipients, April – September 2003

Confirmed Deaths of CSG recipient Caregivers							
	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Totals
	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased	Confirmed Deceased
EC	226	276	263	434	391	529	2 119
FS	88	109	115	263	203	258	1 036
GAU	235	229	270	358	394	487	1 973
KZN	714	789	825	1 188	940	1296	5752
MP	105	151	173	283	199	316	1 227
NC	25	26	40	58	33	57	239
LP	217	168	191	306	253	364	1 499
NW	129	174	174	317	253	325	1 372
WC	74	65	99	141	93	118	590
Totals	1 813	1 987	2 150	3 348	2 759	3 750	15 807

Source: Leatt (2003) using SOCPEN R03 reports April to September 2003

⁴ These figures do not include relatively high rates of unconfirmed deaths, which are also cause for the lapsing of a CSG. They have not been included in Figure 12 because many of them will be confirmed at a later stage and would therefore appear twice in the calculations.

These figures raise a number of serious questions about care and provision for children who are made vulnerable by the death of a caregiver. Nearly 16 000 poor primary caregivers, mostly African women, have died in the six months under review. These figures are the highest in those areas most affected by HIV/AIDS – in KwaZulu-Natal alone 5 752 families have had to deal with the emotional and practical effects of the death of a caregiver. Looking at the ratio of children under the age of nine to beneficiaries of the CSG, on average each beneficiary receives a grant for 1.4 children under the age of nine. The ratio would of course be much greater for children of all ages. It can therefore be estimated that, amongst those who were receiving the CSG, at least 22 130 poor children under the age of nine have lost a caregiver in the last six months. Despite the fact that access to the ages of caregivers who passed away was not possible, it could be that a percentage of them were grandparents to the children in their care.

The current regulations stipulate that the payment of a Child Support Grant be stopped immediately upon the death of a caregiver, thus removing vital financial support at a time when the child is very likely to need it. Thus the death of a caregiver is recorded by the SOCPEN system as a reason for a grant to lapse. This contradicts the principle that the grant follows the child, and needs to be dealt with in terms of the policies of the Department of Social Development.

Many of these children would be eligible for the Foster Child Grant after the death of a primary caregiver. Although this would allow new caregivers to access more substantial financial support, it is administratively demanding and requires the intervention of social workers and the court system. Researchers from the Children's Institute have argued elsewhere (Meintjes et al, 2003; Giese, 2003) that directing interventions on the basis of children's orphanhood misdirects resources aimed at reducing vulnerability. The Foster Child Grant was designed for the protection of children primarily in cases of abuse or neglect. It is therefore vital that the department address the issue of the continuation of the CSG upon the death of a caregiver.

The analysis by Case et al (2003) of survey data from the Hlabisa district in KwaZulu-Natal in 2002 found that the "probability that a child receives a (Child Support) grant depends in large part on the presence of a child's mother... In fact, children whose mothers are non-resident, or dead, or whose survival status is unknown, are significantly less likely to receive a grant, holding constant the father's status." They note that "when a mother is absent, the child's primary caregiver may be less able to access the relevant documents necessary for registering the child's birth". (Case et al 2003, 15)" This once again raises the question of barriers which the means test and administration place in the way of poor families trying to access support for the care of children.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

In February 2003, South African celebrated the announcement by the State President that the Child Support Grant would be progressively extended to poor children up to the age of 14 years. It was a historic moment for the children of South Africa, and another step towards the realisation of their right to social security. There is no doubt that the investment by South Africa in social grants for children will substantially improve the quality of life and opportunities of those who receive it. For this the Department of Social Development, as well as non-governmental, community- and faith-based organisations, who have worked together to register children inform communities about the Child Support Grant extension should be congratulated. The fact that more than 3.6 million children to the age of nine are now registered for the Child Support Grant is a testimony to their commitment and efforts.

But there is still a long way to go before all poor children receive the support they are entitled to. Part of this support is financial. This paper has highlighted a number of problem areas in the extension of the Child Support Grant. It has also shown a number of areas in the general administration of the CSG that will need improvement to prevent the replication of the same problems that poor families experience in accessing the grant during each phase of the extension.

While supporting calls for the urgent extension of the CSG to all children to the age of 18 and the removal of the means test, this paper in addition calls for the implementation of the following critical changes in the administration of the current social security safety net:

1. Develop policy and practice guidelines so that, once registered for a CSG, children do not find that their grants lapsed due to age and then have to re-apply for the grant. Once a child is receiving the CSG, they should continue to do so until they reach the upper age limit of its provision.
2. Change the policy that grants lapse upon the death of a primary caregiver to ensure that the families of children in these circumstances are more able to support the child or children through this difficult time. This would also be in line with the principle of the grant following the child.
3. Work intensively with grant officers to clarify that children to the upper age limit of the grant extension are enabled to access the CSG. Clearly there are some officials acting against departmental policy in this matter.

In addition to these policy changes, the Provincial Departments of Home Affairs and Social Development must redouble their efforts to make the Child Support Grant available to those children who need it in the provinces most affected by poverty. Intervention by the National Department of Social Development in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, where the implementation of the extension of the grant has been disappointingly slow, would be welcomed.

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