Children & social assistance: Investing in children

Why invest in social grants for children

The right to social assistance

- Parents have the primary responsibility for providing for their children’s well-being but families are unable to meet children’s basic needs, the Constitution says they are entitled to receive state support: “Everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to maintain themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance.”
- “The State must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of [this right].”

Mitigating child poverty

- Poverty undermines people’s dignity and compromises children’s survival, growth, employment, and education.
- The need for social grants is widespread: 6 out of 10 children live below the upper poverty line in households with a per capita monthly income of less than R93 in 2014 prices.
- Where there is little or no income from work, social grants can help families meet children’s basic needs.

Supporting care of children

- Three-quarters of children live with their biological mother, while 38% live with their biological fathers, and only one-third live with both their parents.
- Women often carry a double burden of care and financial support for children. Yet women are less likely to find employment, and when they do find work, they are likely to earn less than men.
- Household forms are often fluid as adults and children move to access education, employment, and care: 20% of children in South Africa live with relatives rather than with their parents.
- This rises to 28% of children living in former homelands where families have historically taken on the burden of care for grandchildren.
- The Child Support Grant is therefore targeted at the child’s primary caregiver rather than only the biological parents, and is designed to “follow the child”.

How social grants benefit children


Nutrition

- The CSG enables households to increase expenditure on food and has a positive impact on child hunger and nutrition.

Schooling

- Access to the CSG is associated with improvements in school attendance, while early and continued receipt of the CSG may have a positive effect on grade progression and learning outcomes.

Adolescents

- The CSG has a protective effect in adolescence. Early receipt of the CSG is associated with reduced alcohol and drug use and delayed sexual debut among teenage girls. Household receipt of the CSG helps reduce the incidence of transactional sex and sex with older partners amongst teenage girls.

How the Child Support Grant has grown

- The CSG was introduced at R100 in 1998 to improve the nutrition of children under seven years old. The grant amount, age, and income thresholds have increased over time, so that in 2016 the CSG is valued at R360 and targets all income-eligible children under the age of 18.
- The CSG has a wide reach and provided essential income support to 10 million children in 2016.
- For the small grant amount of R360 per month (R12 a day) is not enough to meet children’s basic needs. In 2015 it was below the food poverty line (a measure of basic nutrition) and was less than half the value of the upper bound poverty line (which includes an allocation for basic shelter, clothing, transport and education). This remained true in 2016.

Some challenges remain

- Despite its rapid expansion, in five eligible children still do not benefit from the CSG, and 1.8 million children, take-up is particularly low among children under one year.
- The earlier a child receives the CSG the better the outcomes, so children should receive the grant as soon as they are born.
- Key barriers include: difficulty accessing the required documents, confusion around who qualifies for the grant, and an application process that is often time-consuming and costly.
- Beneficiaries are at times treated with disrespect – in particular teen mothers and refugees who report hostility and suspension from some SASSA officials. Yet caregivers are entitled to receive the CSG from the age of 16, and refugees have been entitled to receive the CSG since 2012.
- Accurate information is needed at community level and grant beneficiaries are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect.

Social grants for children

Three social grants are aimed at children. Each serves a different purpose and has different eligibility requirements:

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<tr>
<th>Social Grant</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Eligibility Requirements</th>
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| Child Support | Income support for caregivers of children living in poverty | - Caregiver (relative, mother) who is the primary caregiver
| Care Dependency | Income support for caregivers of children with a physical or mental disability who require additional care or support services (requires a medical assessment) | - Caregiver (relative, mother) who is the primary caregiver
| Foster Child | Support for foster parents who have been legally appointed by the court to care for a child (requires a valid court order) | - Foster parent who has been legally appointed by the court to care for a child

Know your rights

Who can apply for the Child Support Grant?

The person who applies for the grant must:

- Be the primary caregiver of the child (the person responsible for meeting the daily care needs of the child)
- Be over the age of 16
- Be a South African citizen, permanent resident or refugee
- Be living in South Africa

What documents do you need?

- Identification documents:
  - A birth certificate, an identity document (ID), a foreign passport or a refugee permit is required.
  - This must contain the applicant’s full name, date of birth, and identity number.

How will you be paid?

- If your application is approved, you will receive your first payment within 10 working days of submission.
- You will receive the full grant amount for the remainder of the month.
- You can use the money for food, clothing, education, or any other needs.

Are deductions allowed?

- If you have a disability, you may be entitled to receive additional support in the form of disability grants.
- If you have a tax liability, you may be required to pay income tax on any benefits you receive.
- If you are claiming any other social grant, you may be required to notify the SASSA of this.

For more information

Call the SASSA toll-free hotline: 0800 36 10 11.
For more information, visit SASSA’s website: www.sassa.gov.za.