



The Grant's barometer: The graph shows how many children were registered for the Child Support Grant as at the end of May 2004

* Number of poor children aged 0-7 in South Africa (Woolard, in Leatt, A. Granting Assistance, May 2004)

How good is service delivery now?

How did the first year of the CSG extension go?

Extracted from an article by Annie Leatt, the Children's Institute, UCT. For a complete copy go to www.uct.ac.za/depts/ci or contact Anthea@rmh.uct.ac.za.

This was the question that the Children's Institute tried to answer in a new working paper called Granting Assistance: An analysis of the Child Support Grant and its extension to seven and eight year olds. For this paper we asked the department of social development to provide us with reports for all grants at the end of each month, and for the special reports produced through SOCPEN for the purposes of recording the extension of the Child Support Grant. With this administrative information we were able to answer a whole lot of questions about how many children got the grant and under what circumstances.

By the end of March 2004, nearly 4.3 million children were getting a CSG every month. This is up from 2.6 million children one year earlier - which is a massive 62% increase. The biggest increase came through the extension, and 884,026 children aged seven and eight started receiving the grant from April 2003 to March 2004. Many more children up to the age of six also managed to get the grant, and in fact the numbers increased by 29%.

It is very pleasing that so many new children were able to access the Child Support Grant. But just knowing the numbers does not tell us if everyone who should be able to get the grant did, and which families couldn't manage to get grants. Further investigations revealed that on a national average, 85% of poor children (using a poverty line of R 215 per month per person) aged seven and eight were able to get a grant. However, the findings in

some provinces were much lower than this national average. For example, the Eastern Cape only managed to deliver Child Support Grants to 55% of eligible children in this age group. On the other hand, Gauteng and the Western Cape did much better than the national average.

Almost 220,000 children registered as newly eligible, but then fell off the system once they reached the prescribed cut-off age, forcing them to reregister when the next age limit kicked in. This is wasteful and difficult for care givers and the Department. Caregivers must make at least a second trip to reapply.

The minimum administrative cost to the Department is R6.6 million. This is what it would cost to give an extra 3,500 children the CSG for a year. Because of this, one of the recommendations of the report is that the department should change the way it interprets the regulations so that once a child is registered for a grant, they do not fall off again until they reach the upper age limit, which is 14.

Having looked at these, and other issues, the Children's Institute made a number of recommendations to the Department to improve the rollout this year to 9 and 10 year olds. This included working closely with the provinces with lower uptake to support improved access to more children in the next years of the rollout. The CI also congratulated the Department, ACCESS, church groups, CBOs and care givers on their hard work which has resulted in so many more children accessing the CSG.

How much are children's grants

As at 1 April 2004:

CSG - R 170.00 per month

CDG - R 740.00 per month

FCG - R 530.00 per month