

Children's access to social assistance

Johannes John-Langba, Double-Hugh Marera and Lizette Berry (Children's Institute)

The Constitution of South Africa, section 27(1)(c), says that "everyone has the right to have access to ... social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance".

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that every child has the right "to a standard of living adequate for his or her development" (Article 27) and obliges the State "in case of need" to "provide material assistance".

Article 26 guarantees "every child the right to benefit from social security".

The number of children aged 0 – 13 years receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG) in South Africa

Social assistance is made up of non-contributory social grants to adults and children, funded as part of the national social security budget. 'Non-contributory' means that grant recipients do not pay any monetary contributions toward the fund, as is the case with other social security schemes, such as social insurance.

The fundamental purpose of the right to social assistance is to ensure that persons living in poverty are able to access a minimum level of income sufficient to meet basic subsistence needs so that they do not live below minimum acceptable standards. The government is obliged to support children directly when their parents or caregivers are not able to support them adequately due to poverty. This is done primarily through social assistance programmes such as the Child Support Grant – a cash grant to the value of R200¹ per month per child as of April 2007. It is the single biggest programme for alleviating child poverty in South Africa with take-up having increased dramatically since its introduction in 1998 as the grant became better known and as age eligibility was extended.

In July 2007, 7.9 million children aged 0 – 13 years were receiving the CSG in South Africa. This represents an increase of 34% from 2005. Across all the provinces, the number of children

receiving the CSG increased over time. The Northern Cape province, with 174,604 children receiving the grant in July 2007, had the highest percentage increase (72%) for the 2005 to 2007 period. The KwaZulu-Natal (1,945,026), Eastern Cape (1,489,191) and Limpopo (1,249,818) provinces had the highest numbers of children receiving the grant at the end of July 2007. The increases in the number of children accessing the CSG in these provinces since 2005 are 45%, 38%, and 26% respectively. The Western Cape and Free State provinces had the least percentage increase in the number of CSG recipients in the period 2005 to 2007.

In order to access the grant, children's caregivers make an application and pass an income test. Children younger than 14 years² are eligible for this grant if their primary caregiver and his/her spouse jointly have R800 per month or less in income and live in an urban area and a formal house. Those who live in rural areas or informal housing in urban areas must earn R1,100 per month or less to qualify for this grant. There is substantial evidence that grants, including the CSG, are being spent on food, education and basic goods and services (Samson, Lee, Ndlebe, Mac Quene, Van Niekerk, Gandhi, Harigaya & Abrahams 2004).

¹ The CSG will increase by R10 in April 2008 and by a further R10 in October 2008 to a total of R220 a month.

² To be extended to children younger than 15 years in January 2009.

TABLE 6: The number of children (0 – 13 years) receiving the Child Support Grant in South Africa in June 2005 – July 2007

Province	June 2005	July 2006	July 2007
Eastern Cape	1,078,442	1,413,830	1,489,191
Free State	361,318	417,076	438,230
Gauteng	723,432	862,346	921,509
KwaZulu-Natal	1,338,045	1,746,944	1,945,026
Limpopo	990,194	1,200,185	1,249,818
Mpumalanga	489,663	613,008	643,727
Northern Cape	101,728	121,332	174,604
North West	465,242	604,525	611,625
Western Cape	365,655	431,514	457,077
South Africa	5,913,719	7,410,760	7,930,807

Source: Department of Social Development (2005; 2006; 2007) SOCPEN database 2005 – 2007. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.

TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator reflects the number of children (aged 0 – 13 years) who are accessing the CSG. The Department of Social Development's SOCPEN database records the CSGs paid out per month according to the number of children and their caregivers (beneficiaries). Figures are taken from the SOCPEN daily reports for the last working day in June 2005 and July 2006 and 2007.

For more data, visit www.childrencount.ci.org.za

The number of children receiving the Care Dependency Grant (CDG) in South Africa

Children with special care needs have access to a social assistance grant called the Care Dependency Grant. This non-contributory monthly cash grant is provided to caregivers of children with severe disabilities who require permanent care. The value of the grant was R870³ per month from April 2007. Although the grant is targeted at children with severe disabilities, children with chronic illnesses are eligible for the grant once the illness becomes disabling. The grant can assist caregivers to care for children who are very sick with AIDS-related illnesses, for example.

It was not possible to develop a take-up rate of the CDG because there is little data on the number of children living with disability in South Africa, or on children who are severely disabled and in need of permanent care. In July 2007, 99,162 children were receiving the CDG in South Africa, an increase of 7% from the previous year. Within the three-year period between June 2004 and July 2007,

19,075 children became recipients of the CDG. Take-up improved steadily over this period, with an overall increase of 24% between June 2004 and July 2007.

The provincial figures show interesting, although disparate, trends in the number of children receiving the CDG. The Northern Cape province shows the largest increase (31%) of just over 800 children between 2006 and 2007. KwaZulu-Natal follows with an increase of 14% over this period. Over the June 2004 to July 2007 period, all provinces show an increase in the numbers of children in receipt of the grant, although most provinces did not increase by more than 20% over the three years. The Northern Cape province increased substantially, almost doubling in number between June 2004 and July 2007. The reasons for these trends are not clear, but may be influenced by increased awareness of the grant. A lack of understanding regarding the eligibility criteria may also be a factor.

³ The CDG will increase by R70 in April 2008 to a total of R940 per month.

TABLE 7: The number of children receiving the Care Dependency Grant in South Africa in June 2004 – July 2007

Province	June 2004	June 2005	July 2006	July 2007
Eastern Cape	18,246	19,925	20,367	20,274
Free State	3,210	3,401	3,679	3,871
Gauteng	10,522	11,468	12,140	12,672
KwaZulu-Natal	20,510	20,994	24,098	27,578
Limpopo	8,844	9,609	10,553	11,316
Mpumalanga	4,188	4,273	4,532	4,991
Northern Cape	1,853	2,186	2,582	3,394
North West	6,424	6,961	7,791	7,759
Western Cape	6,290	6,881	7,111	7,307
South Africa	80,087	85,698	92,853	99,162

Source: Department of Social Development (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) SOCPEN database 2004 – 2007. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.

TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator reflects the number of children (aged 0 – 17 years) who are accessing the CDG. The Department of Social Development's SOCPEN database records the CDGs paid out per month according to the number of children and their caregivers (beneficiaries).

Figures are taken from the SOCPEN daily reports for the last working day in June 2004, June 2005, July 2006, and July 2007.

The number of children receiving the Foster Child Grant (FCG) in South Africa

The Foster Child Grant is available to foster parents who have a child placed in their care by an order of the court. The grant was initially intended as financial support for children removed from their families of origin and placed in foster care for protection against situations of abuse or neglect. However, it is increasingly being used to provide financial support to children whose parents have died. The FCG is a cash grant to the value of R620⁴ per child per month as of April 2007.

The take-up of the grant has increased annually, with every province showing an annual increase of more than four percentage points since June 2004. By July 2007, a total of 421,883 children in South Africa were in the foster care system compared to 215,765 in 2004, an estimated increase of 20% since 2006 and 96% since 2004. KwaZulu-Natal province in July 2007 had the highest number

(108,423) of children receiving foster care – this figure has more than doubled since June 2004, indicating an increase of 119%. Other provinces that have shown significant increases and have more than doubled over the three-year period from June 2004 to July 2007 are Mpumalanga (181%), Limpopo (131%) and North West (121%). The Northern Cape province shows the lowest number of children receiving the FCG in 2007.

It is not possible to calculate a take-up rate for the FCG due to a lack of eligibility estimates. Although rough estimates can be made about how many children are likely to be eligible because they have been orphaned and in need of care, there is no accurate record of how many children are eligible for placement in foster care, and therefore for the Foster Child Grant, because of neglect or abuse or for other reasons.

4 The FCG will increase by R30 in April 2008 to a total of R650 per month.

TABLE 8: The number of children receiving the Foster Child Grant in South Africa in June 2004 – July 2007

Province	June 2004	June 2005	July 2006	July 2007
Eastern Cape	39,772	53,383	68,197	79,766
Free State	25,140	33,653	40,712	44,170
Gauteng	28,281	34,647	40,576	50,580
KwaZulu-Natal	49,462	57,351	81,420	108,423
Limpopo	18,718	25,615	36,020	43,291
Mpumalanga	7,642	12,662	18,252	21,436
Northern Cape	8,693	9,480	11,462	14,358
North West	14,154	19,000	27,737	31,341
Western Cape	23,903	26,026	27,326	28,518
South Africa	215,765	271,817	351,702	421,883

Source: Department of Social Development (2004; 2005; 2006; 2007) SOCPEN database 2004 – 2007. Pretoria: Department of Social Development.

TECHNICAL NOTES ON THE INDICATOR

This indicator reflects the number of children (aged 0 – 17 years) receiving the FCG as of the end of June 2004, June 2005, July 2006 and July 2007. The SOCPEN database records the FCGs paid out per month according to the number of children and their caregivers

(beneficiaries). Figures are taken from the SOCPEN daily reports for the last working day in June of 2004 and 2005, and in July 2006 and 2007.

SOURCES FOR CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

- *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. Act 108 of 1996.*
- Samson M, Lee U, Ndlebe A, Mac Quene, K, Van Niekerk I, Gandhi V, Harigaya T & Abrahams C (2004) *The Social and Economic Impact of South Africa's Social Security System.* Cape Town: Economic Policy Research Institute (EPRI).
- United Nations Children's Fund (1990) *First Call for Children. World Declaration and Plan of Action from the World Summit for Children.* New York: United Nations Children's Fund.

For more data, visit www.childrencount.ci.org.za