Gender and Child Sensitive Social Protection in South Africa

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Defining social protection

The term is widely used in the literature to refer to cash and in-kind support, including basic social and health services that are of a public, private and informal nature to mitigate poverty, inequality, vulnerability and risks associated with social, economic and political changes in a society and globally (ILO and UNDP, 2011)
Structure of presentation

- Information on Child Support Grant (CSG)
- Conceptualisation & hypothesis
- Method
- Selected findings
- Implications for gender and child sensitive policies & further research

www.uj.ac.za/csda
Social assistance (cash transfers)

• **Unconditional** cash transfer; it is **fully publicly funded**

• **Social right that is** constitutionally guaranteed

• Targeted at older persons, disabilities & children

• One of the most important poverty reduction programs

• Reaching 16 million beneficiaries in 2013

• 31% of total population
Poverty indicators

• Over 50% of the population is defined as poor using a poverty line of R550 per month (US$ 60 per month)

• Poverty is most concentrated among Africans, Coloureds, African women, children, youth & people in rural areas

• Urban poverty is rising rapidly
Poverty indicators continued…

- 66% or two-thirds of children are income poor
- SA has a 25% unemployment rate
- Poverty is a gendered phenomenon
  - poverty rates for women have increased in real terms, women continue to be poorer than men
Child Support Grant (CSG)

- First rolled out in 1998
- CSG is paid to the primary care giver of a child 0-18 years of age
- CSG reaches more than 11 million children making up 59% of all children
- Funded from fiscus – 3.5% of GDP
- Means-tested, the criteria are relatively generous
- Eligibility to the grant is gender neutral
- Mostly female caregivers
- US$34 (R280) per month per child
Gender, social protection (SP) and child well-being

• A gender and development approach informed the study (Chant, 2010; Molyneux, 2006; Kabeer, 1994)
• SP is a social investment in children & in promoting gender equality & women’s empowerment
• Kabeer’s (1999) notion of empowerment
• Ability to make choices in 3 domains:
  o resources: material, human & social
  o agency, setting of goals & action: decision-making power
• Taken together, resources & agency are the capabilities needed to achieve alternative functionings (Sen, 1999)
Dimensions of empowerment

• Personal empowerment

• Decision-making power

• Financial independence

• Participation

• Other indicators: voice, rights, gender attitudes

Adapted Adato (2000) – Opportunidades, Mexico
Child Well-being

- Food security
- Health status, immunization
- School enrolment & performance
- Engagement of caregiver in children’s daily lives e.g. reading, playing with child
Questions

• How do women use resources (e.g. cash and other resources), agency (empowerment) to achieve particular outcomes for self and children?

• Does she have the power to manage her own life & does she have control over spending & and use of resources?

• What impact does this have on child-wellbeing?
Aim of study

• To investigate the relationship between cash transfers, women’s empowerment and child well-being

• These links have not been previously researched in the African context

• Some research was conducted in Latin America but the findings are uneven
Method

• We targeted households with **children under 15 years**
• **Doornkop, Soweto** – one of the poorest wards in Johannesburg with highest uptake of the CSG
• **344 households were surveyed** – 10% of households with children in the area
• **Sampled households systematically** to select the stands
• A primary caregiver of a child was selected by **random sampling on site**
• Final sample: both **CSG beneficiary (64.5%) and non-beneficiary households (28.5%)**
Doornkop, Soweto
Method continued...

• Household questionnaire
• Final year BASW students conducted the interviews
• SPSSS to analyse data
• Structural equation modelling to explore the relations between variables
• Data is generalizable only to urban areas with similar profiles
• Trends are suggestive of possible relations between the variables that would need further investigation
Structure of findings

- Profile of CSG households
- Livelihood activities
- Women’s power in the household
- Use of the CSG
- Gender and care
- Child well-being outcomes
- Involvement in care of child
- Links between empowerment & child well-being
Profile of CSG households

- 83% of households received a CSG
- Average of 2.1 CSGs per household
- 1.5 grants per caregiver
- 92% of CSG respondents were women; 8% were men
- More than half were married or had a partner (54%); most were not married (63%)
- 52% were female headed households; 38% male headed
- CSG respondents are younger women between 21 – 40 years old (57%)
- CSG mainly cared for young children: 44% of children were under 5 years old
Livelihood activities
Livelihood activities continued…

- 71% of receiving CSG households earned R2,500 or less per month compared to only 10% of non-CSG households (p=0.000)
- For all households receiving a CSG, on average the grant made up 31% (standard deviation 38) of the household’s income
- CSG was often the only regular source of income
  - CSG was the only source of income in households (14%)
  - CSG supplemented household income (86%)
- Households relied on multiple sources of income including other social grants
- CSG is pooled with other household income and consequently reaches non-CSG members of the household
- Over 80% received no external support (material & non-material)
Livelihood activities continued…

Figure 1: Livelihood activities of CSG-receiving respondents

- Work in exchange for food or housing: 4%
- Attend school/college: 3%
- Help unpaid in household business: 7%
- Do regular work for a wage, salary or commission: 13%
- Run your own business: 24%
- Do any occasional/irregular piece jobs for pay/wages: 24%
Women’s power in the household

Figure 2: Financial decision-making of CSG-receiving respondents
Women’s power in the household continued…

• **Use of grant**
  - 74% always, often and sometimes use it for food
  - 65% always, often and sometimes used it for school costs

• **Decision-making on children**
  - Women are the main decision makers about children’s health (77%) and education (81%)

• **Views**
  - “The grant makes my life better” (82%)
  - “The grant gives me power and courage” (66%)
Use of the CSG

Pay for food: 51% Always, 12% Often, 11% Sometimes
Pay for school fees or uniforms: 38% Always, 11% Often, 16% Sometimes
Pay for transport: 20% Always, 10% Often, 13% Sometimes
Pay for medicine or health services: 9% Always, 7% Often, 27% Sometimes
Pay for household or family events: 7% Always, 3% Often, 6% Sometimes
Save money / put money aside for future use: 6% Always, 5% Often, 6% Sometimes
Pay for a child minder to look after your child: 4% Always, 2% Often, 2% Sometimes
Pay off debts: 4% Always, 15% Often, 2% Sometimes
Pay for business costs: 2% Always, 4% Often, 2% Sometimes
Buy airtime: 2% Always, 12% Often, 2% Sometimes
Gender and care

- 85% of CSG respondents spend most of their time on care and domestic responsibilities
- 13% cared for other non-CSG children
- 61% of fathers who are not current partners of women never pay maintenance
- 31% said: “now that I get the grant fathers no longer provide support”
- High access to electricity, running water and flush toilets

Women face growing additional care demands, possibly due in part to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and more dependents in households due to social, economic and health stressors
Child well-being outcomes

- **Food security**
  - 80% said they were severely or moderately food insecure

- **Health status**
  - 97% children immunized; 92% children in good health

- **Education**
  - 100% attending school regularly; 70% not failed a grade

- **Family cohesion**
  - All (100%) children live with relatives – cared for in family system
  - 82% lived with 1 or both biological parents
  - 63% said “the grant helps keep my family together”
  - 93% of grants received by caregivers are for children who actually live in the household
Involvement in care of children

- CSG recipients were engaged in social care activities with their children either daily or often, such as:
  - help with homework (64%)
  - playing with or reading to them (58%), and
  - accompanying children to school (35%)
  - CSG recipients were engaged in these activities more often than CSG respondents

- The differences between CSG and non-CSG households that were statistically significant were in relation to watching television with their children (p=0.041), providing help with school work (p=0.009), and playing with or reading to the children (p=0.003)
How does women’s empowerment contribute to the well-being of the children?

Financial Independence (FI)

- Greater FI, fewer health problems
- FI contributes greatly to active involvement in care
- Greater FI results in more benefit participation

Financial Decisions (FD)

- FD relates highly to decision-making on children’s lives
- Household headship & FD are decisive in child well-being
Conclusions

• CSG enhances women’s power and control over household decision-making in financial matters, general household spending and had positive impacts on child well-being

• It has positive effects on women’s empowerment & may have some positive social transformation effects

• Women continue to bear the greatest responsibility for care of children due to entrenched gender based patterns of care

• Unequal distribution of care burdens heightens gender inequality & contributes to poor quality of life of women

• We know little about the impact of CSG on men and child well-being
Conclusions continued…

• Huge domestic & care responsibilities of beneficiaries remains largely unacknowledged by policy makers

• Helping to lessen care burdens is positive but we need to be cautious about positioning maternalism as the key to the successful outcome of poverty reduction programs

• Caution against viewing women as conduits to reach children & child well-being

• The unconditional way in which the grants are provided in SA (including being gender neutral) contributes to their individual incomes and their financial decision-making power
Conclusions continued…

- Social protection outcomes should improve child well-being AND the status and position of women

- Social protection cannot do this alone - must work in concert with other public policies
Thank you for listening