

# **The Child Support Grant in South Africa**

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Presentation at UNU-WIDER Conference, Hanoi  
30<sup>th</sup> June 2014

# The broad South African context at democratic transition, 1994

- Racialised poverty and inequality – what role for state redistributive measures?
- Need for spatial reintegration of racially separate administrations
- Changing world of work – less income security, high unemployment
- High HIV&AIDS prevalence, with high burden of care: state spending on health and welfare buys a small fraction of the total amount of caring that needs to be done – and most of this is done by women on an unpaid basis

# **Social assistance legacy inherited at transition**

- Racial parity in the two largest grants (for elderly people, for people with disabilities) had been achieved in 1993
- Problem with State Maintenance Grant for women and children – not just a budgetary problem.
- Disruption of family life by colonialism and then apartheid, continuing to the present – complex and fluid households. What are appropriate forms of support?

# Migrant labour system and family life

- A large number of women have children outside/ before marriage, and successive children have different fathers
- A large number of men have two households, one rural and one urban
- Only one third of households conform to 'norm' of nuclear family of children and parents; one fifth have three generations or more present
- High rates of care by grannies and older women, often in the absence of children's parents



## In brief:

- Lund Committee of Enquiry into Support for Children and Families – 1995
- 9 months to come up with recommendations
- Main (and not the only) recommendation – cash transfer for children age 0 to 7<sup>th</sup> birthday
- Introduced April 1998 at R100 per month (about US\$10 in today's terms)
- Within ten years (April 2008), CSG reached 8 million children up to 14<sup>th</sup> birthday at R200 a month
- By 2013, 11.3 million children, up to age 18, at R300 per month.
- Now stabilising.

# Institutional environment

- 17 apartheid welfare administrations integrated, but under strain
- Spatial settlement patterns – poorest were in more remote and underserved areas, but with bloated civil services
- High rhetoric about developmental state, transformation, services for all, inclusive reforms
- AND – a system for allocation and delivery of pensions and grants that was working, albeit with some problems.



# Pension paypoint at a tribal authority office, KwaZulu-Natal



# Men and women at pension-day markets



# Automated teller machines built into 4x4 delivery vehicles



# Blind pensioner gets assistance with entering her fingerprints



# **Research evidence for unconditional pension for elderly people: Targeting, and development impacts**

- In poorer areas, cash transfer for older people is pooled as household income
- Well targeted for rural areas
- Well targeted to women – more women than men qualify in terms of the means test, women draw it earlier, live longer, and ‘spend it better’
- Links with enterprise creation
- Links with employment seeking behaviour
- ‘Crowds in’ a lot of caring by elderly people

**Not ‘just’ ‘wasteful welfare spending’**

# **Policy innovations in the Child Support Grant: what the Committee wanted**

- Universal – not targeted (“First Call for All Children”)
- ‘Follow the child’ – taking into account mobility of younger children
- Via the ‘primary caregiver’ – not necessarily the biological parent
- Unconditional (as with the other grants in SA)
- Synergies with health services – esp. vaccination coverage

# Policy innovations: what was accepted by Cabinet

- X Universal, not targeted – means test was imposed
- ✓ ‘Follow the child’
- ✓ Via the ‘primary care giver’
- ✓ Unconditional (until 2012)
- X Synergies with health services – vaccination coverage

# Difficult areas

- Department of Home Affairs (responsible for birth registration and identity documents) – remains a problem today
- Insufficient information to the public of the purpose of the CSG (new more open government, but little experience of interaction with the public)
- Continuing myths about the CSG ‘causing’ teenage pregnancy, despite well-publicised research which shows this is not so
- Conditionality introduced in 2012 – WHY? WHO SAID?

# Participation

- Committee asked for time for consultation – with civil servants, and with the public
- Civil society outrage (especially in urban areas) after the new policy went through (losing the State Maintenance Grant) – damage to government’s legitimacy early after the democratic transition
- ‘Trade-off’ – would more time for consultation have stalled the grant?

# Level versus years of eligibility

## Lessons (so far....)

- Delivery of the CSG was dependent on existing delivery system for pensions and grants
- Importance of good research
  - Evidence from other SA cash transfer programmes, and from other programmes for children
  - For managing and monitoring implementation
  - Of impact and outcomes (eg importance of presence of biological mother)
- Evidence from other countries was coming in – easy to argue there was no need for pilots or RCTs
- SARS was successfully improving revenue-raising, and allocated large parts of the ‘surplus’ to pensions and grants

# Finally ...

- Inclusive reform
- Fiscally sustainable
- Not transformative – the amount per child is too small
- Parallel programmes - with which synergy may have been possible - have had mixed success
- Many lessons for other countries from both the success and the failures