



# **SOUTH AFRICAN CHILD SOCIAL POLICY: WHAT ROLE FOR A CASH PLUS CARE APPROACH?**

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# Background Context

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- Existing social policy responses to childhood poverty and vulnerability in South Africa include the provision of basic services such as education, healthcare, clean water and sanitation, in-kind transfers such as school feeding schemes and nutritional supplements, immunisation and nutrition advice, and cash transfers (CTs).
- Even though we have a comprehensive basket of interventions and instruments targeting children from low-income households, our child health and wellbeing outcomes do not reflect this level of investment:
  - High levels of stunting -27% prevalence
  - Rising rates of child hunger
  - High school enrolment rates, but lower school retention and achievement rates

# Background Context

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- In the last few years, attempts to understand why we have child outcomes that do not reflect our standing as an upper middle-income country, have raised some important factors:
  - We do not have a coordinated, integrated response to childhood poverty
  - Child-centred policies are implemented in a vacuum without recognising the needs of the caregivers who raise them
  - While we have a robust social grants system, evidence on CTs across low and middle-income countries shows that cash alone is not enough to achieve strong, tangible impacts on more concrete outcomes such as child nutritional status and school retention and achievement

# Background Context

- Identified potential policy solutions to these limitations include:
  - Implementation of a “Cash Plus” framework
  - Provision for low-income primary caregivers of children who are recipients of state social assistance through maternity protection in pregnancy; a caregivers allowance post-delivery
  - Basic income support for all working-age, able-bodied people living in South Africa
- For today’s presentation I will only be focusing on the first one –the Cash Plus approach

# CASH PLUS CARE: A FRAMEWORK

A systems strengthening approach

Supports the building of social welfare services and community-based care

While addressing structural drivers of adverse child health and wellbeing outcomes

Emphasis on cross-sectoral linkages

## The Child Support Grant as part of a basket of services

- The Child Support Grant (CSG) makes up the cash transfer component of the basket of services, and is the country's foremost CT programme
- It covers more than 12 million children, making it the country's largest CT programme
- It is acknowledged as SA's most important poverty alleviation strategy
- It is non-contributory, means-tested and unconditional. In 2023 it transfers R500/about €25 per child, per month



# The Child Support Grant as part of a basket of services

- Early evidence suggested positive correlation of the CSG with child health and wellbeing outcomes, including nutritional growth, school attendance, health care utilization
- But increasingly, CSG impact on these outcomes reduced with high prevalence of stunting, poor school retention/achievement, and
- Overall dilution of the CSG on “multiple uses, and multiple users” –high unemployment rate in SA results in CSG often being the only source of income in households

# The Child Support Grant as part of a basket of services

- Besides food and household expenses, a significant proportion of the CSG goes to school-related expenses such as transport, lunch, uniforms, fees, stationery, this is because primary caregivers of CSG recipients often prioritise educational needs above any other expense in the household.
- These additional expenses, which should be provided free of charge to children from low-income households, erode the value of the CSG and contribute to its dilution
- Also, no formal linkage of CSG recipients with social welfare services
- Linking each CSG recipient to free basic services would reduce the erosion of the grant, and would contribute towards attaining and sustaining gains from cash transfer programs.
- Linkage to welfare services would ensure that CSG recipients who are de facto vulnerable are monitored and receive timeous intervention

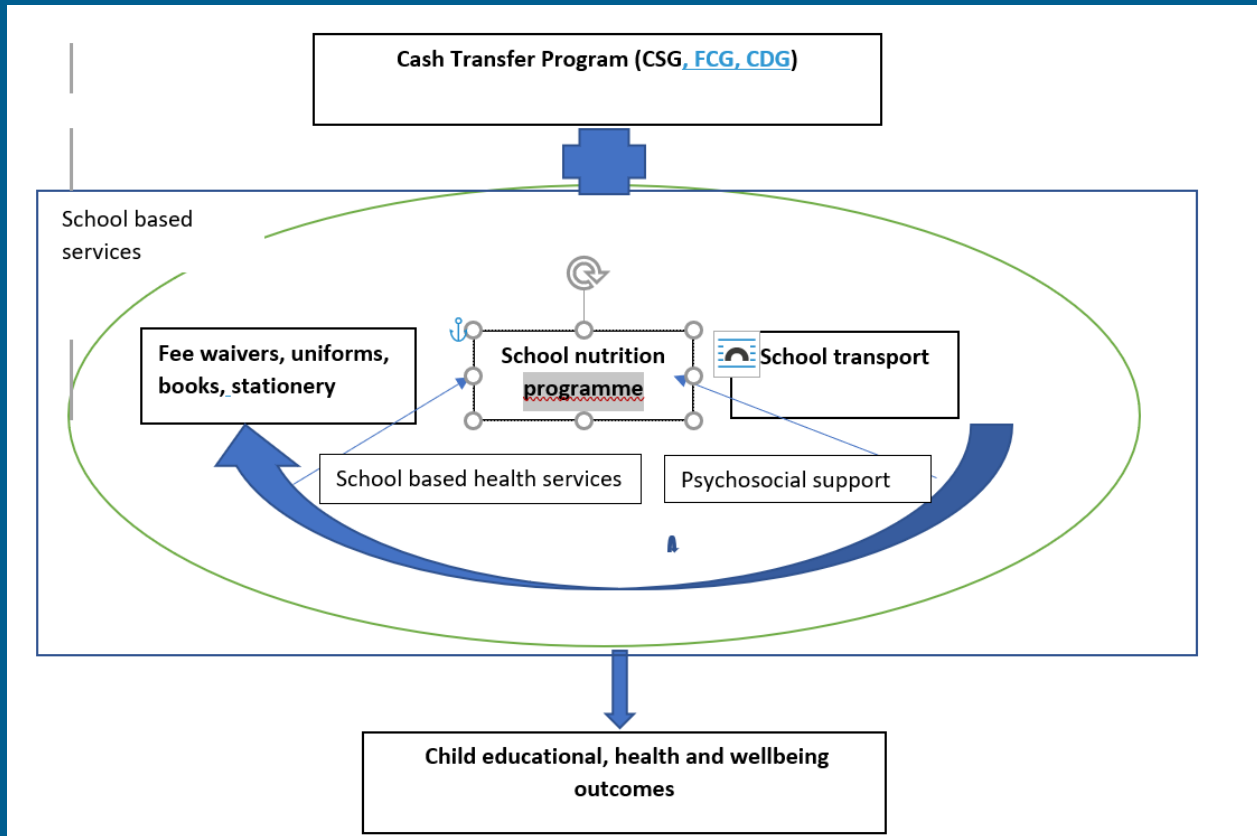




## CHILD GRANTS PLUS SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES

- Schools offer a unique opportunity for targeting low-income children with multiple impactful services and programs as part of a Cash Plus framework
- The potential impact of the CSG and other child grants can be maximized if they are linked to and integrated with complementary school-based services targeting young children.
- Allows for follow-up and monitoring of children who are recipients of child grants as part of integrated social work services

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR CASH PLUS SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES



# Child Grants Plus School-Based Services

**In the  
framework, child  
outcomes are  
improved when  
child grants are  
linked to free  
basic services**



# CHILD GRANTS PLUS SCHOOL-BASED SERVICES

- In SA many of these services and concessions already exist
- However, some of the challenges are:
  - Some services suffer from incomplete, uneven, inconsistent implementation (e.g school learner transport policy, integrated school health programme; free school uniforms)
  - Limited capacity to implement and monitor policies (no-fee schools policy)
  - Lack of compliance (integrated school health programme)
  - Poor linkage with children receiving the CSG
  - Lack of integration with social work services targeting children and families
  - Limited ability to adapt to change –SA's attempts to contain the spread of Covid-19 included the complete closure of schools during alert levels 5 and 4 of the lockdown

# WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- South Africa certainly has most of the elements needed to implement a Cash Plus School-Based Services Framework.
- Challenges are:
  - Ensuring that each element or service works well,
  - Ensuring proper linkages with the CSG and the rest of the components of the framework,
  - Ensuring integration with social work services targeting children and families
- Covid-19 has presented challenges for the delivery of services that rely on full time contact learning at school(e.g school nutrition programme, integrated school health policy);
- This has created opportunities for innovation and creativity; and
- Raises important questions about whether and how school-based services can be adapted and reformed to ensure that they continue to run when unexpected crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic hit
- Beyond schools, an introduction of a basic income support cash transfer (e.g universal basic income grant), and maternity protection would reduce the erosion of the grant and ensure that it is only used for the needs of intended beneficiaries

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**Thank you, Ndiyabonga,  
Enkosi!**



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