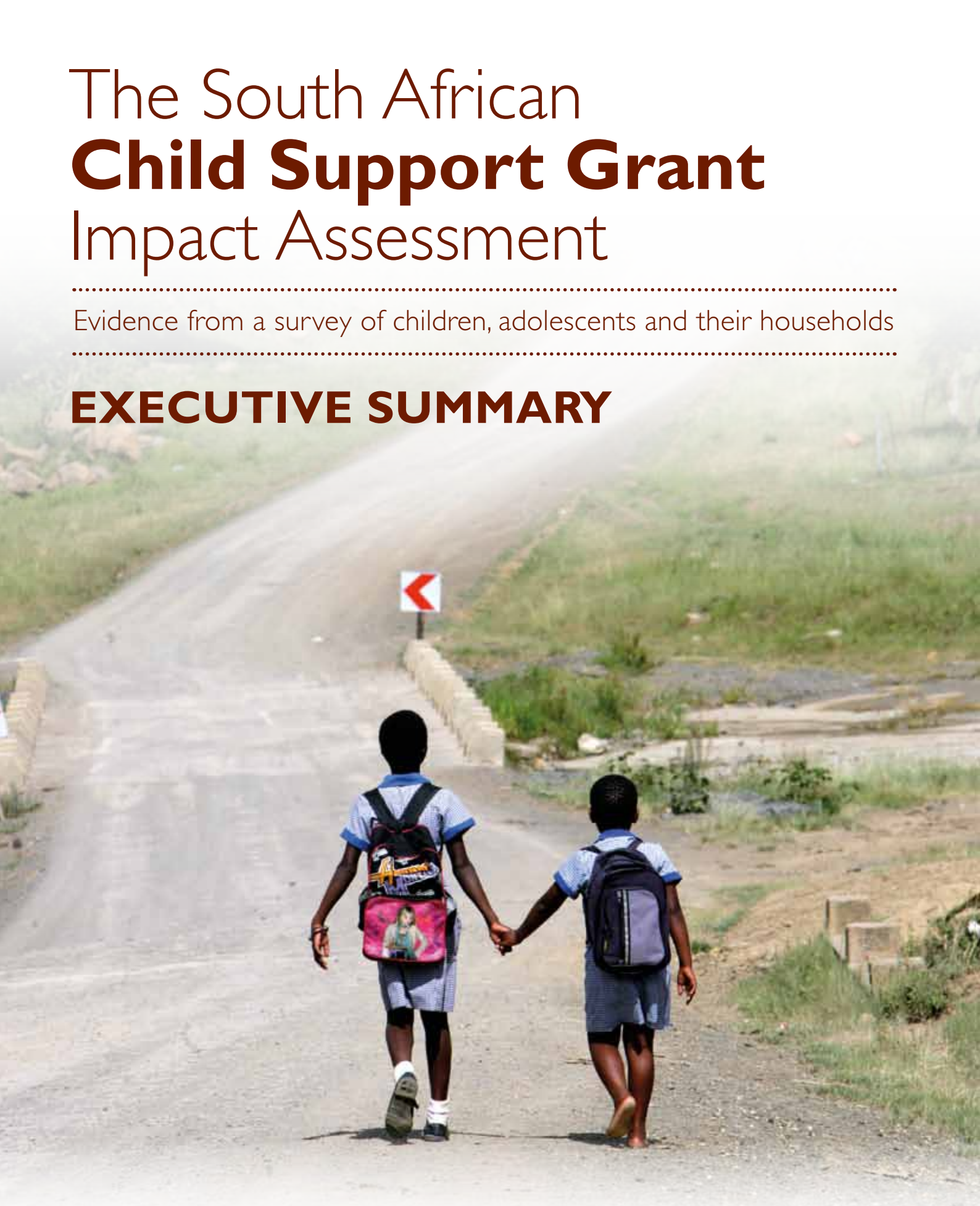


The South African **Child Support Grant** Impact Assessment

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Evidence from a survey of children, adolescents and their households
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



social development
Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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Overview and research questions

The Child Support Grant (CSG) is an important instrument of social protection in South Africa, reaching over 10 million South African children each month. This report presents the findings of a research team's analysis of a specially designed survey fielded in rural and urban areas of five South African provinces, supporting the rigorous impact assessment of how access to the CSG affects key aspects of child and adolescent well-being.

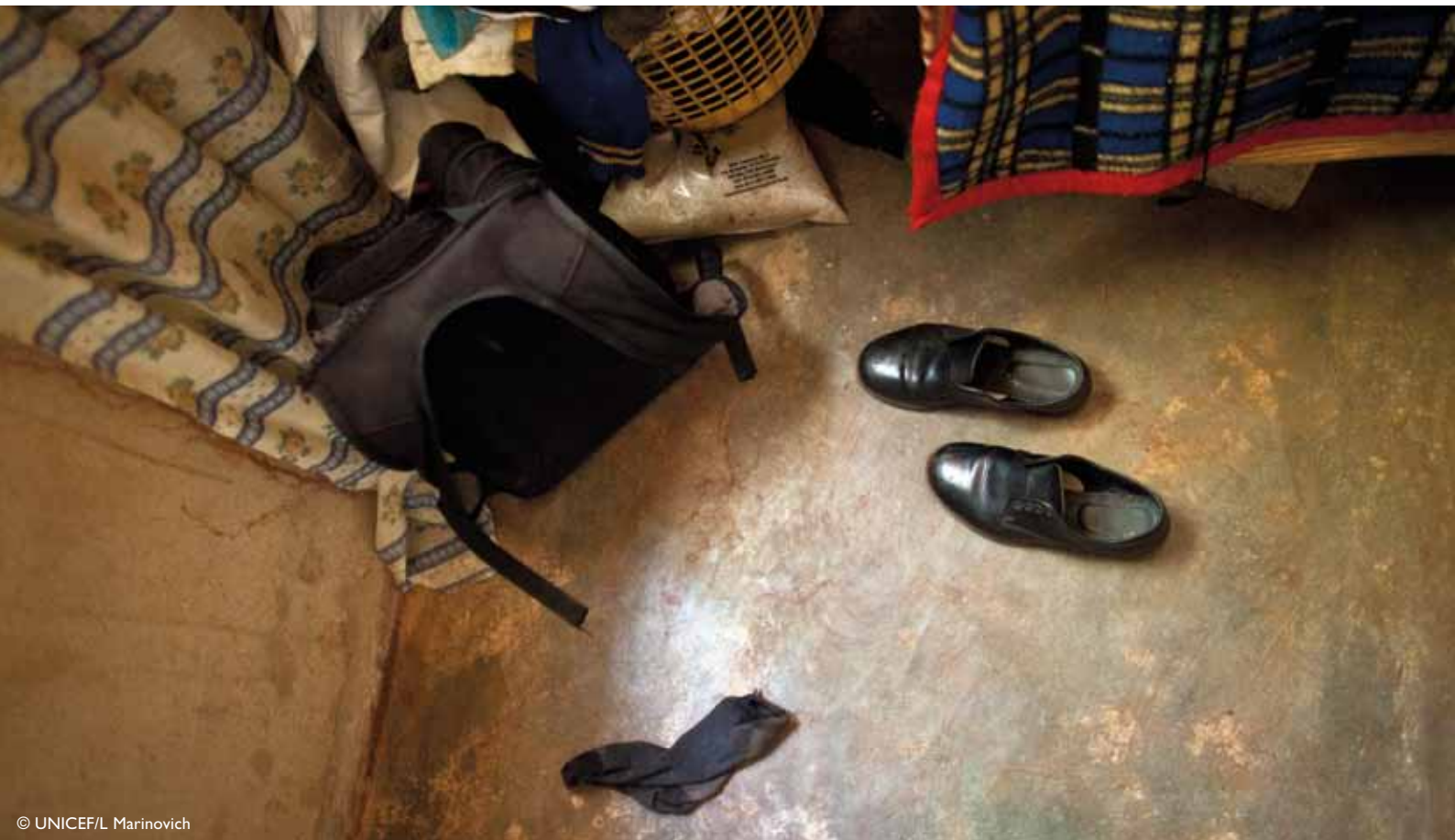
The South African Child Support Grant was first introduced in 1998. Over the past 14 years, South Africa's social grant programme has evolved into one of the most comprehensive social protection systems in the developing world. Expansions to the Child Support Grant's criteria for eligibility over this same period include an increase in the age limit from seven to eighteen years old, and adjustments to the income threshold to take inflation into account and improve equity.

Research design, questionnaires and data

Three questionnaires were designed to gather information on children, adolescents and their households. Households with participating adolescents were given the CSG Adolescent Questionnaire and the CSG Household Questionnaire, while homes with participating young children were given the CSG Young Child Questionnaire and the CSG Household Questionnaire. The sampling process took place in two stages. First, a random sample of locations, defined as the catchment areas for specific pay-points, was drawn from SASSA's administrative database. These locations were sampled from each of five provinces: Eastern Cape, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Western Cape. Second, children were randomly selected from the identified pay-points in order to identify a group of 10-year-olds who enrolled in the CSG programme shortly after birth, compared to a group enrolled later – at age four or older. In addition, adolescents were selected around the age cut-off for eligibility in 2010, including those receiving and not receiving the CSG. The research team compared the results of the survey with other national household surveys, including the 2008 National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS) and the 2010 General Household Survey (GHS), and found the sample largely representative of the national populations.

Impact evaluation methodology

The methodology of this evaluation aims to measure causal programme impacts as the difference between observed outcomes for the beneficiaries, and what would have been the outcomes if this group had not received the Child Support Grant or received it later versus earlier. The evaluation strategy controls for factors that might lead to an erroneous attribution of causality, including individual and household traits such as poverty status, exposure to shocks, demographic characteristics and other variables. The evaluation employs non-experimental approaches rather than a randomised experiment because there is no practical or legal scope for randomly allocating grants in South Africa, and the single cross-sectional survey, together with the sample variability in terms of timing and receipt of grants, appropriately supports and strengthens the evaluation approaches adopted for this study. The main method adopted for this study matches and compares households receiving the 'treatment' (such as the Child Support Grant from shortly after the child's birth) with a comparison group of households with similar observable characteristics that influence their probability of application for, or receipt of, the Child Support Grant. The study employs extensions of this approach to assess the impact of the duration of Child Support Grant receipt on outcomes of interest.



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Access to the Child Support Grant

Receipt of the CSG varies over different age groups. Take-up rates peak for children from seven to 10 years of age, while infants have relatively low take-up rates. Furthermore, youth in newly-eligible age groups have relatively low take-up rates. This finding helps explain why adolescents are relatively less likely to receive the CSG when compared to younger children. Receipt of the CSG is correlated with multiple household re-applications as well as household knowledge of the CSG from formal sources. Generally, relatively poorer and/or less educated households are more likely to have received the CSG. In Limpopo, however, adolescents who first began receiving the CSG between age 10 and 13 years have significantly lower odds of continuing to receive a CSG at age 15 or older, an unexpected result which is a subject of future research.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on outcomes in early life

Early life receipt of the CSG (in the first two years of life) increases the likelihood that a child's growth is monitored and improves height-for-age scores for children whose mothers have more than eight grades of schooling. Since children's cognitive development depends on receiving appropriate nutrition in the first few years of life, this result provides important evidence of the Child Support Grant's role as an investment in human capabilities – a critical determinant of multi-dimensional poverty reduction. This also suggests that a mother's education complements the Child Support Grant in strengthening important impacts.

Impact of the Child Support Grant on schooling and cognitive skills of children

Analysis of grade attainment, scores on mathematical ability tests and scores for reading and vocabulary tests provides evidence of the impact of the Child Support Grant on schooling outcomes of children who were 10 years of age at the time of the survey. Children who were enrolled in the CSG at birth completed significantly more grades of schooling than children who were enrolled at age six, and achieved higher scores on a maths test. Impacts for girls were particularly significant, with early receipt of the CSG increasing girls' grade attainment by a quarter of a grade, compared to those receiving the grant only at age six. The impact largely resulted from early receipt of the CSG, reducing delays in girls entering school by 27 per cent, with girls enrolling early obtaining higher scores on maths and reading tests. For children whose mothers have less than eight grades of schooling, the impacts were even greater. Early enrolment in the CSG raises grade attainment by 10.2 per cent (0.38 grades). The CSG appears to play a compensatory role for children with less educated mothers, narrowing the schooling gap between children whose mothers have less education and those who have more. In these ways the Child Support Grant promotes human capital development, improves gender outcomes and helps to reduce the historical legacy of inequality.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on children's health

Analysis of current illness- and health-related expenditures provides evidence of the impact of the Child Support Grant on child health. Early enrolment in the CSG reduced the likelihood of illness (as measured in a 15 day period prior to the survey), with the effect being stronger for boys, particularly. Boys enrolled at birth had a 21 per cent likelihood of being ill, compared to a 30 per cent likelihood for boys enrolled later. Children enrolled at birth whose mothers have eight or more grades of schooling have a significantly lower likelihood of being ill relative to otherwise comparable children enrolled at age six, again suggesting that a mother's education further complements the Child Support Grant in strengthening other important impacts, and that these positive impacts are fairly persistent.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on time allocation and labour supply of children

Analysis of the time allocation and labour supply of 10-year-old children provides evidence of the Child Support Grant's impact on the amount of time spent studying, doing chores or working outside the household. The study finds few 10-year-old children working for pay outside the household. The timing of CSG enrolment has no statistically significant impact on time spent studying or doing housework.

However, for children in households with no electricity, early enrolment in the CSG increases the amount of time spent studying, but the magnitude of this impact is small.

Variation in receipt of the Child Support Grant among adolescents

A significant pattern identified in the survey data played an important role in the evaluation of impacts of the Child Support Grant on adolescents. Adolescents who first started receiving the Child Support Grant at an early age (four years or younger), or more recently at age 14 years or older, are significantly more likely to be in households that are currently receiving the CSG for the adolescent (at the time of the survey). On the other hand, a comparatively low proportion of adolescents who first began receiving the CSG between the ages of 10 and 13 are in households currently receiving the grant for them, particularly in the province of Limpopo, which has one of the highest poverty rates in South Africa. This study finds that important predictors of successful



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Child Support Grant receipt by an adolescent's caregiver include (1) application for the grant by the adolescent's biological mother, (2) the mother of the adolescent being the head of the household, (3) adolescent awareness of the availability of the CSG programme, (4) lower educational attainment for the household head, and (5) persistent re-application for the CSG in the face of initial rejection.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on schooling outcomes of adolescents

Analysis of adolescent absences from school provides evidence of the impact of the Child Support Grant on schooling outcomes for adolescents. Receipt of the CSG by the household reduces adolescent absences from school, particularly for male adolescents, even when the household does not receive the grant specifically for the adolescent.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on work inside and outside the home

The households in the sample reported fairly similar responses about the degree to which adolescents worked inside the home. However, adolescents and their caregivers reported very different patterns of work outside the home: the household respondents indicated that only two per cent of the sampled adolescents work outside the home, while 18.5 per cent of 1,355 adolescents who answered this question indicated that they worked outside the home.

Early receipt of the Child Support Grant (in the first seven years of life) reduces the likelihood that they will grow up into adolescents who will work outside the home (as reported in the adolescent survey). Additionally, there appears to be a particularly important impact in terms of reduced work outside of the home for females who received the grant in early childhood.

The impact of the Child Support Grant on adolescent risky behaviours

Analysis of adolescent risky behaviours provides evidence of the Child Support Grant's impact in significantly reducing six main risky behaviours – sexual activity, pregnancy, alcohol use, drug use, criminal activity and gang membership. The evidence documents statistically significant associations between receipt of the Child Support Grant in adolescence and:

- ▲ reduced sexual activity and a fewer number of sexual partners, particularly when the adolescent also received the grant in early childhood;
- ▲ reduced pregnancy, again particularly when the adolescent also received the grant in early childhood;
- ▲ reduced alcohol and drug use, particularly for females, and with the effect strengthened by early childhood receipt of the CSG.

Conclusions

The results of this study identify the positive developmental impact of the Child Support Grant in promoting nutritional, educational and health outcomes. Early receipt significantly strengthens a number of these important impacts, providing an investment in people that reduces multiple dimension indicators of poverty, promotes better gender outcomes and reduces inequality. The study also finds that adolescents receiving the Child Support Grant are more likely to have some positive educational outcomes, are somewhat less likely to experience child labour, and are significantly less likely to engage in behaviours that put their health and well-being at serious risk. These results convey several key messages:

- ▲ The Child Support Grant generates positive developmental impact that multiplies its benefits in terms of directly reducing poverty and vulnerability;
- ▲ Early enrolment in the Child Support Grant programme substantially strengthens impacts. Promoting continuous access to the CSG for eligible children through adolescence would help to maximize the potential benefits of the grant;
- ▲ Receipt of the grant by adolescents generates a range of positive impacts, not least of which is the reduction in risky behaviours, which in the context of high HIV prevalence generates a particularly protective impact.

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