



SOCIAL PROTECTION OUTCOMES AMONG GRADE 12 LEARNERS

IN - DEPTH ANALYTICAL REPORT ON EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES | CLASS OF 2025

MARCH 2026



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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
National Department of Social Development

REPORT ON THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF LEARNERS RECEIVING SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES

An In-Depth Study of the Grade 12 Class of 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EVALUATION REPORT

March 2026

Contents

Party 1- Policy Brief.....	2
Party 2-Executive Summary.....	3
Party 3-Synthesis report.....	8
1. Introduction.....	9
2. Evaluation Purpose and Questions.....	10
3. Methodology.....	10
4. South African Social Protection System: Context.....	11
5. SGB Cohort Profile: Class of 2025.....	13
6. Conceptual and Analytical Framework.....	16
7. Key Findings.....	17
8. Equity and Distributional Analysis.....	20
9. Cross-System Insights.....	22
10. Complementary School Support Programmes.....	23
11. DSD Policy Context: Extending Children's Grants Beyond Age 18.....	24
12. Post-School Transitions and NEET Risk.....	24
13. Qualitative Case Study Findings: Extended Analysis.....	26
14. Conclusions.....	27
15. Policy Recommendations and Programme-Level Recommendations.....	28
16. Policy and Strategic Implications.....	29
17. Lessons Learnt.....	30
19. References.....	32
20. Annexes.....	32

PARTY 1: POLICY BRIEF: SOCIAL PROTECTION & GRADE 12 OUTCOMES / CLASS OF 2025

National Department of Social Development | March 2026

WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?

This study examines the educational outcomes of **614,102 Social Grant Beneficiary (SGB) learners**, 84.2% of all 729,650 full-time NSC candidates in public schools in 2025. It links SASSA grant data (SOCPEN), learner records (LURITS), and NSC examination results to produce the largest individual-level evidence base on social protection and matric performance ever assembled in South Africa.

THE BIG FINDING

South Africa's social protection system is working, and the evidence is now proven at national scale.

SGB learners are not a sub-group of the NSC cohort, they are 84.2% (614,102 of 729,650) of it. The 11 percentage point rise in SGB pass rates since 2021, from 74.0% to 84.9%, is one of the most significant social policy achievements in post-apartheid SA. One structural flaw remains: a grant support boundary that cuts support exactly when it matters most.

KEY FINDINGS

84.2%

614,102 of 729,650
SGB learners ARE the NSC cohort

+11 pp

74.0% → 84.9%
pass rate rise since 2021

9.3 pp

92.1% vs 82.8%
active vs aged-out grant holders

Only 33%

164,275 of 503,451
provisionally approved SGB learners
confirmed for NSFAS

- 77.7% (477,183 of 614,102) of SGB matric writers had already aged out of the CSG before sitting final exams, yet active grant receipt drives a proven 9.3 pp (percentage point) performance advantage.
- 136,919 active SGB learners achieved 92.1% vs 82.8% for 477,183 inactive recipients, a gap replicated across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts.
- Bachelor pass rates rose from 33.2% to 41.9% since 2021, evidence of improved university access for grant-supported learners over four years.
- Only 33% (164,275 of 503,451) provisionally approved SGB learners were confirmed for NSFAS funding; 97% (503,451 of 518,786) received provisional approval, and eligibility is not the barrier.
- 32,579 Grade 12 learners face documentation irregularities; 14,139 lack identity documents, blocking access to the NSFAS and social protection systems.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- MATRIC SHIELD (Policy Rec 1):** The findings point to an opportunity to defer CSG termination for actively enrolled Grade 12 learners to year-end through a regulatory amendment, without primary legislative change. (Responds to: Quant Findings 02 and 03; Qual Finding 1)
- POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION (Policy Rec 2):** Establish a formally coordinated Grade 12 to PSET transition mechanism: streamlined NSFAS pathway via SOCPEN; CAO (Central Applications Office) fee waivers for verified SGB applicants; NSFAS application support from Term 2; bridging support between NSC results and confirmed funding; human-centred design. (Responds to: Quant Findings 01 and 05; Qual Finding 3)
- SCALE RISIHA (Policy Rec 3):** Scale school-based CYCW deployment to bottom-quartile NSC pass rate schools with highest SGB concentrations. Develop a 12-month Risiha post-matric transition module incorporating NSFAS support, TVET and learnership connection, and a navigation capital curriculum. Disability-inclusive service design mandatory. (Responds to: Quant Findings 03 and 04; Qual Findings 2 and 4)
- INSTITUTIONALISE NISPIS (Policy Rec 4):** Formally establish the SOCPEN-LURITS-NSC-NSFAS linkage as a standing annual monitoring instrument under DPME. Establish SGB learners as a distinct tracked population in DSD M and E. Priority extensions: DHET Post-School Data System and Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA). Commission Cohort 3 follow-up study. (Responds to: Quant Findings 01 to 05; Qual Finding 4)

Acting on these recommendations aligns directly with NDP 2030 human capital targets, MTDP youth commitments, and SONA 2025 priorities on inclusive economic growth. Each year of inaction perpetuates the 9.3 pp performance gap for **477,183 SGB learners** who are already aged out of grant support at examination time.

PART 2 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Report on the Educational Outcomes of Learners Receiving Social Protection Services: Class of 2025

NDSO Evaluation Report | March 2026 |

1. Background and Context

South Africa maintains one of the largest social protection systems in the developing world. Approximately 28 million South Africans receive social grants, with the Child Support Grant (CSG) reaching nearly 13 million children at R560 per month (rising to R580 from April 2026). The Foster Child Grant (FCG), at R1,250 per month, (raising to R1290 in April 2026 and to R1300 in October 2026) extends to age 21 for beneficiaries in formal education, a critical policy feature whose significance this report underscores.

The link between social protection and educational outcomes is well established both internationally and domestically. Cash transfers reduce dropout risk, support attendance, and, when received early and continuously, are associated with improved grade progression. The CSG's educational impact in South Africa is constrained by two structural limitations: school quality (quintile remains the strongest predictor of learning outcomes) and an age-based termination rule that ends support at 18 regardless of enrolment status. This report addresses both.

2. Purpose of the Evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned by NDSO, to assess the educational outcomes of learners receiving social grants and measure the impact of government investment on poor and vulnerable children. The project scope examines how the social grant beneficiaries (SGB) performed in the 2025 National Senior Certificate examination. The project also examines all other social protection services for this cohort such as cash interventions through grants and care interventions such as Risiha. The evaluation identifies system-level changes most likely to improve outcomes for this population. It draws on linked administrative data (SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC database, NSFAS) aligned to the National Integrated Administrative System (NISAPIS), and 24 in-depth qualitative interviews conducted in early 2026, addressing five core questions: How do the 614,102 SGB learners perform in the NSC? How do outcomes vary by grant status, province, gender, race, and school quintile? What is the measured effect of active versus inactive grant receipt? What happens to SGB learners in the post-school transition? And what system-level changes would most improve outcomes?

3. Methodology

The quantitative strand links four administrative systems at the individual learner level via the NISPIS framework: SOCPEN (SASSA grant payments), LURITS (DBE learner records), the NSC examination database, and NSFAS application and funding records. The combined dataset covers 614,102 SGB learners, 99.5% of all SGB NSC candidates, and all 729,650 full-time NSC candidates nationally. Year-on-year comparison with the Class of 2024 (584,889 SGB learners) enables trend analysis.

The qualitative strand comprises 24 in-depth interviews across two cohorts: Cohort 1 (12 top-achieving SGB learners from the Class of 2025, sampled across provinces, quintiles, and subject specializations) and Cohort 2 (12 Class of 2024 Risiha program beneficiaries, followed up 12 months post-matric). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was applied to Cohort 1; thematic analysis to Cohort 2. Three limitations apply: post-NSFAS pathways are not yet trackable; CDG-identified learners represent only 0.5% (approximately 3,071 of 614,102) of the cohort, almost certainly an undercount; and both qualitative cohorts are non-representative by design.

4. Key Findings

Finding 1, SGB Learners Are the NSC Cohort

614,102 SGB learners, 84.2% of all 729,650 full-time NSC candidates, sat the 2025 examinations, up from 584,889 in 2024. KwaZulu-Natal holds the largest share (24.9%; 152,792 learners), followed by Gauteng (16.1%; 99,115), Eastern Cape (15.3%; 93,652), and Limpopo (14.5%; 88,747). The majority are female (57.1%; 350,512) and African/Black (93.7%; 575,413). School quintile distribution is heavily skewed toward no-fee schools: Q3 (27.8%; 170,452), Q1 (25.7%; 157,562), Q2 (24.6%; 150,960), Q4 (11.7%; 71,617), Q5 (7.9%; 48,590).

Table 1: SGB NSC Pass Rates by Province, 2024 vs 2025

Province	2024 Wrote	2024 Passed	2024 Pass%	2025 Wrote	2025 Passed	2025 Pass%	Change
Eastern Cape	88,093	73,126	83.0%	93,652	77,399	82.7%	-0.3 pp
Free State	30,603	26,651	87.1%	31,934	27,411	85.8%	-1.3 pp
Gauteng	93,302	78,731	84.4%	99,115	84,310	85.1%	+0.7 pp
KwaZulu-Natal	145,933	124,080	85.0%	152,792	132,737	86.9%	+1.9 pp
Limpopo	82,810	69,258	83.6%	88,747	75,564	85.2%	+1.6 pp
Mpumalanga	57,018	45,903	80.5%	58,061	48,162	83.0%	+2.5 pp
North West	34,421	29,046	84.4%	34,349	29,480	85.8%	+1.4 pp

Northern Cape	10,648	8,716	81.9%	11,566	9,943	86.0%	+4.1 pp
Western Cape	42,061	33,819	80.4%	43,886	36,233	82.6%	+2.2 pp
NATIONAL	584,889	489,330	84.0%	614,102	521,239	84.9%	+0.9 pp

Finding 2, Active Grant Receipt Drives a 9.3 Percentage Point (pp) Performance Gap

136,919 learners (22.3% of 614,102) with active CSG/FCG payments at the time of the examination achieved a 92.1% pass rate. The remaining 477,183 (77.7%) whose grants had already lapsed achieved an 82.8% rate. This 9.3 percentage-point gap is statistically significant across all 9 provinces ($p < 0.001$) and has been replicated in three consecutive cohort analyses (2023, 2024, 2025). The proportion of active recipients declined from 25.7% (150,196 of 584,889) in 2024 to 22.3% (136,919 of 614,102) in 2025, a worsening trend as over-age learners increase in the cohort.

Finding 3, 11 pp Improvement in SGB Pass Rates Since 2021; Bachelor Rates Rise to 41.9%

The national SGB pass rate rose from 74.0% (approximately 433,000 passes in 2021) to 84.9% (521,239 passes in 2025), an 11-percentage-point (pp) improvement over four years, representing approximately 53,000 additional passes annually compared to the 2021 baseline. Bachelor pass rates, required for university admission, improved from 33.2% to 41.9% over the same period. In absolute terms, SGB learners achieved competitive or superior pass rates to the national average in six of nine analysed subjects, including a 26.5 pp improvement in Mathematics (57.95% to 84.4%) among 192,938 SGB Mathematics writers.

Finding 4, The Post-School Transition Is the Weakest Link

Of 521,239 SGB learners who passed Grade 12, 518,786 applied for NSFAS funding (2025/26 cycle). A near-universal 97% (503,451 of 518,786) received provisional approval, confirming that NSFAS eligibility is not a barrier to approval. Yet only 164,275 (33%) were ultimately confirmed as funded. The divergence by institution type is stark: 56,078 of 56,466 TVET college applicants (99%) were confirmed funded, versus only 108,197 of 446,985 university applicants (24%). The qualitative evidence identifies five converging barriers at this transition: CSG loss at 18; information asymmetry and navigation capital deficits; documentation barriers (including 14,139 without identity documents); Central Application Office (CAO) fees of R100–R200; and the offer-funding mismatch between NSFAS approval and institutional placement.

Table 2: NSFAS Application and Funding Pipeline, SGB Learners, 2025/26 Cycle

Pipeline Stage	Learners	Rate / Note
Wrote NSC Examinations	614,102	84.2% of all 729,650 NSC candidates
Passed Grade 12	521,239	84.9% SGB pass rate

Applied for NSFAS (2025/26 cycle)	518,786	99.5% of those who passed
Provisionally Approved	503,451	97.0% of 518,786 applicants
TVET College, Confirmed Funded	56,078 of 56,466	99% TVET confirmation rate
University, Confirmed Funded	108,197 of 446,985	24% university confirmation rate
Total Confirmed Funded	164,275	33% of 503,451 provisionally approved

5. Key Insights

What the data reveals at the system level:

- The CSG is not a ceiling on aspiration. Not one of the 24 qualitative participants described the grant as limiting. It functions as the essential material precondition for school participation.
- The Risiha programme, 816 high-risk OVC beneficiaries, achieved an 86.4% NSC pass rate, exceeding both the 84.9% SGB average and the 88% national average. Yet 9 of 12 tracked post-matric Risiha graduates were NEET 12 months later, a programme success ending at the wrong boundary.
- TVET is structurally underutilised: 89% (446,985) of NSFAS applicants targeted university, yet only 24% (108,197) were confirmed funded. TVET applicants achieved 99% (56,078 of 56,466) confirmation. This imbalance is both an efficiency gap and an equity failure.
- Information asymmetry is a structural determinant, not a personal gap. SGB learners from rural and parentless households lack the navigation capital that non-SGB peers inherit from tertiary-educated parents and social networks.

6. Conclusions

The 84.9% SGB pass rate and the 11 percentage point (pp) improvement since 2021 confirm the grant system is functioning as an effective educational protective mechanism. At 84.2% (614,102 of 729,650) of all NSC candidates, SGB learners are not a peripheral group; they are the national matric cohort. The system's core failures are structural and correctable. The 9.3 pp performance gap between 136,919 active and 477,183 inactive grant recipients, replicated across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts, is the observable consequence of an age-based policy rule with no educational justification. The conversion of 97% NSFAS provisional approval (503,451 learners) to only 33% confirmed funding (164,275 learners) is the clearest illustration of a system that invests substantially in learners through school, only to fail them at the point of exit. Both failures are correctable within existing legislative and fiscal frameworks.

7. Strategic Recommendations

- 1. Recommendation 1, MATRIC SHIELD:** Amend Social Assistance Regulations to defer CSG termination to calendar year-end for all Grade 12 learners, no primary legislative change. Implement before the 2026 NSC cycle. Directly addresses the 9.3 pp gap affecting 477,183 learners (77.7% of the SGB cohort).
- 2. Recommendation 2, POST-SCHOOL BRIDGE:** DSD-led post-school navigation: waive R100–R200 Central Application Office fees for 614,102 SGB learners; mandatory NSFAS application support from Term 2 of Grade 12; 12-month Risiha post-matric CYCW transition module; DSD-DHET engagement to close offer-funding mismatch.
- 3. Recommendation 3, TVET REBALANCING:** Joint DBE-DSD-DHET awareness campaign repositioning TVET as a primary pathway. Of 503,451 provisionally approved learners, only 56,466 (11%) applied to TVET, yet 56,078 (99%) were funded. Of 446,985 (89%) who applied to university, only 108,197 (24%) were confirmed funded.
- 4. Recommendation 4, NISPIS PERMANENCE:** Formally institutionalise the SOCPEN-LURITS-NSC-NSFAS linkage as a standing monitoring instrument. Mandate disability disaggregation. Commission a Cohort 3 follow-up study within 12–18 months. Extend linkage to DHET Post-School Data System and Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA).

8. Policy Implications

Related to social protection policy: the Matric Shield regulatory amendment carries a marginal per-learner fiscal cost (extending support by at most a few months for 477,183 learners who currently age out before their exams. For budget allocation: expanding NSFAS university allocations in isolation will not increase post-school participation; the binding constraint is 446,985 university applicants chasing limited institutional places. For program integration, the Risiha model (an 86.4% pass rate among 816 high-risk learners) demonstrates the multiplier effect of layered support, extending it 12 months post-matric. For human capital development, closing the grant support boundary and the post-school transition gap is the highest-impact, lowest-cost intervention available to the government to achieve NDP 2030 youth inclusion targets.

PART 3 | SYNTHESIS REPORT

Report on the Educational Outcomes of Learners Receiving Social Protection Services

In-Depth Study of the Class of 2025 | Department of Social Development | March 2026

1. Introduction

South Africa's social protection system is the backbone of its social policy architecture. With nearly 28 million grant recipients and a social assistance budget exceeding R280 billion annually, the grant system reaches into virtually every low-income household in the country. For schooling-age children, the Child Support Grant (CSG), which reaches nearly 13 million children at R560 per month (2025/26 rates, rising to R580 from April 2026), has functioned since 1998 as the primary state mechanism for supporting household economic stability during the years of basic education.

The educational outcomes of grant-recipient learners have historically been poorly understood at the individual level. Aggregate national statistics mask the experiences of 614,102 Social Grant Beneficiary (SGB) learners, 84.2% of all 729,650 full-time National Senior Certificate (NSC) candidates in public schools, whose 2025 matric performance tells a story not of dependency or low ambition, but of structural barriers converging at precisely the moments when continuity of support matters most. This report draws on linked administrative data aligned to National Integrated Social Protection Information System (NISPIIS), from the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Social Pensions System (SOCPEN), the Department of Basic Education (DBE) Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking System (LURITS), and the NSC examination database, supplemented by National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) funding records and 24 in-depth qualitative interviews. It is the third analytical output under the current project scope and the primary evidence base for the policy recommendations set out in Section 15.

1.1 Strategic Importance of This Study

Three factors make this study strategically significant. First, scale: at 84.2% (614,102 of 729,650) of all full-time NSC candidates, SGB learners are the policy mainstream rather than a subgroup. Any analysis of South African matric outcomes that does not centre SGB learner performance is analysing a statistical minority. Second, data quality: the National Integrated Social Protection Information System (NISPIIS) framework links SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC outcomes, and NSFAS records at the individual level, enabling questions that household surveys cannot answer, such as which of the 614,102 learners, in which schools, under what grant conditions, and with what continuity of support. Third, policy moment: findings directly inform current deliberations on the extension of the Child Support Grant design post the age of 18 years, NSFAS sustainability, and the positioning of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in the post-school landscape.

1.2 Relationship to the Five Reports in the Scope of Work

This report is the third of five analytical outputs under the current project scope. Report 1 established the national profile of SGB learners across the school system (Grades 1-12). Report 2 examined grade-specific enrolment patterns and cohort survival rates. Report 3 (this document) examines NSC examination outcomes, equity patterns, NSFAS transition results, and qualitative post-school narratives for the Class of 2025, with year-on-year comparison to the Class of 2024 (584,889 SGB learners). Report 4 will extend the qualitative case studies. Report 5 will synthesise findings across all five reports aligned to the longitudinal framework for the Medium Term Development Plan (MTDP).

1.3 Structure of This Report

Sections 2 to 4 establish the evaluative framework: purpose and questions, methodology, and the context of the social protection system. Section 5 profiles the 2025 SGB cohort. Section 6 presents the conceptual and analytical framework. Section 7 presents nine principal findings (five quantitative and four qualitative), structured as in the full report. Sections 8 to 9 provide equity analysis and cross-system insights. Sections 10 to 12 examine complementary in-school programmes, the DSD policy context for CSG extension, and post-school transitions and Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) risk. Section 13 presents extended qualitative findings. Section 14 concludes. Section 15 presents four policy recommendations, each with program-level sub-recommendations. Sections 16 to 17 address strategic implications and lessons learned. Section 18 provides the quality assurance assessment.

2. Evaluation Purpose and Questions

This evaluation was commissioned by DSD to assess the educational outcomes of SGB learners in the 2025 NSC cohort and to identify the system-level changes most likely to improve outcomes for this population. It is the third in a series of five analytical outputs that constitute South Africa's most comprehensive evidence base on the relationship between social protection and educational attainment. The evaluation addresses five core questions, structured to move from descriptive through analytical to prescriptive:

- EQ1 (Profile): Who are the 614,102 SGB Grade 12 learners, and how are they distributed across provinces, school quintiles, gender, grant type, and grant activity status?
- EQ2 (Performance): How do SGB learners perform across the 2025 NSC, compared to the national 729,650-candidate average, disaggregated by province, grant status, race, gender, and school quintile?
- EQ3 (Grant Effect): What is the measured effect of active versus inactive grant receipt on NSC pass rates, and is the 9.3 percentage point gap consistent across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts?
- EQ4 (Post-School): What happens to 521,239 passing SGB learners in the transition window, NSFAS application (518,786), provisional approval (503,451; 97%), confirmed funding (164,275; 33%), and early NEET risk?
- EQ5 (System): What cross-system changes, in grant design, program delivery, NSFAS coordination, and NISPIS data infrastructure, would most improve outcomes for the 614,102-strong SGB cohort?

3. Methodology

3.1 Data Sources and Linkage

The quantitative analysis links four administrative systems at the individual learner level via the NISPIS framework: SOCPEN (SASSA grant payment and beneficiary records); LURITS (DBE learner demographic, enrolment, and progression records); the NSC examination database (DBE); and NSFAS application and funding records for the 2025/26 cycle. The linked dataset covers 614,102 SGB learners, representing 99.5% of all SGB NSC candidates. Year-on-year comparison with the Class of 2024 (584,889 SGB learners; 88.6% of 661,290 full-time NSC candidates) enables trend assessment across three cohort years (2023, 2024, 2025).

The qualitative strand comprises 24 in-depth interviews across two cohorts. Cohort 1 (12 participants) are top-achieving SGB learners from the Class of 2025, sampled across provinces, school quintiles Q1 to Q5, and subject specialisations including Technical Mathematics (TMAT). Cohort 2 (12 participants) are Class of 2024 Risiha Child and Youth Care Worker (CYCW) programme beneficiaries, followed up 12 months post-matric. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was applied to Cohort 1; thematic analysis to Cohort 2.

3.2 Quantitative Methods

Descriptive frequency analysis and cross-tabulation were applied across all 614,102 SGB records and all 729,650 NSC candidates. Chi-square tests assessed statistical significance ($p < 0.001$ throughout). Cohen's h effect sizes assessed practical significance, ranging from negligible (History: $h = 0.06$) to medium (Mathematics: $h = 0.27$; Physical Sciences: $h = 0.25$). The year-on-year comparison tracked the trend direction and magnitude for all primary indicators.

3.3 Limitations

Three limitations apply. First, post-school tracking is incomplete: the current linkage identifies 164,275 confirmed NSFAS-funded learners but cannot trace the remaining 339,176 provisionally approved learners (67% of 503,451) who may have entered TVET, community colleges, learnerships, or informal employment, or who are NEET. Second, disability recording is inconsistent: Care Dependency Grant (CDG) identified learners represent only 0.5% (approximately 3,071 of 614,102) of the SGB Grade 12 cohort, almost certainly a substantial undercount. Third, qualitative cohorts are non-representative by design: Cohort 1 represents the extreme upper-performance tail, and Cohort 2 is limited to Risiha beneficiaries. Both provide explanatory depth, not population-level generalizations.

3.4 The Indicator Matrix

A structured Indicator Matrix of 47 indicators was developed across five analytical domains: grant access, school progression, NSC achievement, equity, and post-school transitions. Primary outcome indicators for this report are the SGB pass rate (84.9%; 521,239 of 614,102), SGB bachelor pass rate (41.9%), active grant status at examination (22.3%; 136,919 of 614,102), active recipient pass rate (92.1%), inactive recipient pass rate (82.8%), the active-inactive gap (9.3 percentage points), NSFAS provisional approval rate (97%; 503,451 of 518,786), and NSFAS confirmed funding rate (33%; 164,275 of 503,451). The full Indicator Matrix with 2025 values, 2024 benchmarks, and MTDP target alignments is provided in Annex A.

4. South African Social Protection System: Context

South Africa's social assistance system is governed by the Social Assistance Act 13 of 2004 and administered by SASSA. In 2025, approximately 28 million individuals received social grants across six primary grant types. Total social assistance expenditure exceeds R280 billion annually, approximately 3.4% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), one of the highest social protection investment ratios among upper-middle-income countries globally.

The CSG is the most prevalent, reaching nearly 13 million children at R560 per month in 2025. It terminates automatically at age 18, a provision this evaluation identifies as the single most consequential structural design flaw from an educational outcomes perspective. Among the 614,102 SGB Grade 12 learners in 2025, 95.0% (583,397) receive the CSG as their primary grant, while 4.4% (27,020) receive the Foster Child Grant (FCG) at R1,250 per month — a grant that terminates at the end of the calendar year the child turns 18, but uniquely extends to age 21 for beneficiaries who remain in formal education; and 0.5% (approximately 3,071) receive the CDG at R2,320 per month (raising to R2 400) in April 2026). The CSG Top-Up Programme (R280 per month additional (raising to R290 in April 2026), for households below the food poverty line) is received by a subset of CSG beneficiaries (vulnerable orphans and children in child-headed houses), and is also subject to the age-18 termination rule.

The COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (cSRD), introduced in May 2020 and confirmed until at least March 2027, reaches approximately 9 million beneficiaries at R370 per month. This is R190 per month

less than the CSG (R560). For the 477,183 SGB Grade 12 learners who have already aged out of the CSG, the cSRD represents the only available state income support, but at substantially reduced protective value. The President's 2025 State of the Nation Address identified the cSRD as the basis for a future sustainable income support programme for unemployed persons.

4.1 International Evidence: Cash Transfers and Educational Outcomes

The international evidence base on cash transfers and educational outcomes is robust. Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes such as PROGRESA/Oportunidades in Mexico and Bolsa Familia in Brazil have demonstrated sustained increases in school enrolment, attendance, and grade progression. African programmes, including Zambia's Child Grant Programme and Ghana's Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, show comparable improvements alongside reductions in child labour when transfers are combined with complementary services.

A 2024 systematic review of 27 studies from Sub-Saharan Africa provides direct comparative context. Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs), as the CSG is classified, offer greater household flexibility and are more common in Sub-Saharan Africa given limited monitoring infrastructure. Critically, the evidence emphasises context-dependency: transfers begun at primary school age produce stronger effects on eventual educational attainment than those introduced only at secondary level, confirming that early, continuous CSG support is the design most likely to sustain the 11 percentage point improvement in matric outcomes documented in this report. A meta-analysis of 42 studies across 15 developing countries confirms that both CCTs and UCTs significantly increase the likelihood of school enrolment and attendance, with programmes that sustain support through key transition points producing the most durable outcomes.

4.3 Poverty Context and the Food Poverty Line

A critical contextual point for interpreting SGB learner outcomes is the relationship between the CSG value and the poverty thresholds it is intended to address. The CSG, set at R560 per month in 2025, falls below the Food Poverty Line (FPL) of R777 per person per month as established by Statistics South Africa (2026). This means that even with full, active CSG receipt, many SGB learner households remain below the threshold for adequate food security. The protective effect of the grant on examination performance is therefore not the result of the grant fully eliminating household economic vulnerability, it is the result of partially stabilising household income in a context of deep structural poverty. This finding has direct implications for interpreting the active-inactive performance gap: what the 9.3 percentage point gap measures is the educational cost of removing even a partial, below-poverty-line income stabiliser at the most academically demanding stage of schooling.

According to Statistics South Africa's Subjective Poverty report (2026), the national poverty headcount declined from 46.7% in 2015 to 37.9% in 2023 at the Lower-Bound Poverty Line. At the Food Poverty Line, the headcount dropped from 22.4% to 17.6%. Despite this progress, more than two-thirds of South Africans still fell below the Upper-Bound Poverty Line in 2023, indicating that widespread economic vulnerability persists. Children aged 0 to 17 had the highest objective poverty rates of any age group: from 58.6% in 2015 to 49.1% in 2023, yet they still made up 43.1% of all poor individuals in both years, an unchanged proportion despite the overall poverty decline. For SGB households, the CSG is frequently the primary stable income source. This explains why the active-inactive grant gap produces a 9.3 percentage point NSC performance differential: the grant's contribution to household economic stability is not marginal, for many SGB families, it is the economic foundation on which school participation rests.

4.2 South African Evidence: The CSG and Educational Trajectories

South Africa's CSG is one of the most extensively studied cash transfer programmes in the developing world. The accumulated evidence consistently shows positive associations with school enrolment, attendance, grade progression, and reduced dropout, with effects strongest when grants are received early and continuously. A landmark assessment by DSD, SASSA, and UNICEF (2012) established that early CSG receipt is associated with higher enrolment, lower absenteeism, greater grade progression, and reduced child labour. More recent econometric analyses confirm the CSG's impact on child nutrition, with the programme costing approximately 1.3% of GDP annually.

The supply-side dimension is critical. Large between-school quality variations in South Africa mean that the same grant income produces very different NSC outcomes depending on which school a child attends. The school quintile distribution of the SGB cohort (78.1%; 479,974 of 614,102 in Quintile 1 to 3 no-fee schools) is a compounding equity factor: SGB learners receive grant income that enables attendance, but the quality of the schools they can afford to attend significantly moderates the educational return on that income. This is why the CYCW layered support model (Risiha: 86.4% pass rate among 816 linked high-risk Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) beneficiaries) is the most important programme-level recommendation.

5. SGB Cohort Profile: Class of 2025

5.1 Scale and Provincial Distribution

614,102 SGB learners, representing 84.2% of all 729,650 full-time NSC candidates in public schools, sat the 2025 NSC examinations. This represents a 4.99% increase from the 584,889 SGB learners in the 2024 cohort. The provincial distribution is concentrated: KwaZulu-Natal (24.9%; 152,792), Gauteng (16.1%; 99,115), Eastern Cape (15.3%; 93,652), and Limpopo (14.5%; 88,747) account for 70.8% (434,306) of all SGB Grade 12 learners. Mpumalanga (9.5%; 58,061), Western Cape (7.1%; 43,886), North West (5.6%; 34,349), Free State (5.2%; 31,934), and Northern Cape (1.9%; 11,566) account for the remaining 29.2% (179,796).

5.2 Grant Activity Status at Examination

Only 22.3% (136,919 of 614,102) of SGB Grade 12 learners retained active grant payments at the time of the 2025 NSC examinations. The remaining 77.7% (477,183) had inactive grant status, the overwhelming majority having aged out of CSG eligibility upon turning 18 before the November examination period. This proportion has deteriorated year-on-year: in 2024, 25.7% (150,196 of 584,889) retained active status, compared to 22.3% (136,919 of 614,102) in 2025, a decline of 3.4 percentage points representing approximately 13,277 fewer learners in the active-grant-protected group despite a larger overall cohort.

Table 5: Grant Activity Status by Province, 2025 NSC Cohort

Province	Active SGBs	Inactive SGBs	Total SGBs	Active as % of Total
Eastern Cape	20,901	72,751	93,652	22.3%
Free State	5,439	26,495	31,934	17.0%
Gauteng	24,490	74,625	99,115	24.7%
KwaZulu-Natal	37,065	115,727	152,792	24.3%

Limpopo	20,229	68,518	88,747	22.8%
Mpumalanga	12,483	45,578	58,061	21.5%
North West	7,432	26,917	34,349	21.6%
Northern Cape	1,883	9,683	11,566	16.3%
Western Cape	6,997	36,889	43,886	15.9%
NATIONAL	136,919	477,183	614,102	22.3%

5.3 Grant Type and Demographic Profile

95.0% (583,397 of 614,102) of SGB learners receive the CSG as their primary grant. The FCG is received by 4.4% (27,020 learners) and the CDG by 0.5% (approximately 3,071 learners). Female learners constitute 57.1% (350,512) and male 42.9% (263,590). By population group: 93.7% (575,413) African/Black, 5.4% (33,162) Coloured, 0.5% (3,071) Asian/Indian, 0.4% (2,456) White. By age-to-grade consistency: 57.5% (353,109) underage, 20.7% (127,079) age-congruent, 21.7% (133,260) over-age (having repeated at least one grade). Over-age learners are precisely the population most likely to age out of CSG eligibility before reaching their Grade 12 examinations, creating a compounding vulnerability that the Matric Shield addresses directly.

The school quintile distribution reflects the targeting accuracy of the CSG: Quintile 3 (27.8%; 170,452), Quintile 1 (25.7%; 157,562), Quintile 2 (24.6%; 150,960), Quintile 4 (11.7%; 71,617), Quintile 5 (7.9%; 48,590), Other (2.4%; 14,921). Combined, 78.1% (479,974 of 614,102) of SGB learners attend Quintile 1 to 3 no-fee schools, confirming the CSG reaches the children in the schools most constrained by resource scarcity.

5.4 The SGB Pipeline: From Grade 1 Entry to NSC Examination

A central contextual finding from the full report series is the significant attrition of SGB learners between Grade 1 entry and Grade 12 completion. Understanding the 614,102 Grade 12 SGB NSC writers requires situating them within the full schooling pipeline from which they emerge. South Africa's public education system serves approximately 13 to 14 million learners across more than 23,000 public schools, with public expenditure on education amounting to 6.7% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2024/25, exceeding both the OECD benchmark of 5% and the BRICS average of 4.4%.

The profile reports indicate that SGB enrolment in Grade 1 stands at approximately 818,742 learners nationally. Total primary SGB enrolment across Grades 1 to 7 amounts to approximately 5.63 million learners, while secondary enrolment totals 4.16 million. Grade 10 records the largest secondary SGB cohort at 997,200 learners, partly reflecting grade repetition, while Grade 12 has the smallest secondary SGB cohort at 614,102, a reduction of more than 200,000 learners from the Grade 1 entry point. This differential does not represent a simple measure of dropout, as demographic and migration factors also influence grade-level counts, but it nonetheless signals meaningful systemic attrition across the pipeline. Critically, grant activity rates follow a consistent and steep decline across the pipeline. In Grades 1 to 4, 97% of SGB learners hold active grants, providing strong financial protection during the foundation phase. This stability declines modestly to 95% by Grade 7, reflecting the protective effect of the CSG during primary schooling. The picture changes sharply in secondary education: by Grade 10, only 70% of SGB learners retain active grants, and by Grade 12, this proportion falls to just 22.3% (136,919 of 614,102). This steep decline reflects the age-related structure of CSG eligibility: most learners exit the grant system before completing secondary school. The withdrawal of financial support during the most academically

demanding and high-stakes stage of schooling creates the vulnerability that this evaluation quantifies as the 9.3 percentage point active-inactive NSC performance gap.

Table 4: The SGB Learner Pipeline, Grade 1 Entry to NSC Examination, 2025

School Phase	SGB Learners	Active Grant %	As % of Grade 1 Entry	Key Policy Note
Grade 1 Entry (Foundation Phase)	~818,742	97%	100% (baseline)	CSG fully protective
Grades 1 to 7 Total (Primary Phase)	~5.63 million	95 to 97%	—	Grant continuity high
Grade 10 (Largest Secondary Cohort)	997,200	70%	~122% of Grade 1	Repetition inflates cohort
Grades 8 to 12 Total (Secondary Phase)	~4.16 million	Declining	—	Age-out accelerates
Grade 12 NSC Writers (2025)	614,102	22.3% (136,919)	~75% of Grade 1	9.3 pp performance gap
Grade 12 SGB Passed NSC	521,239 (84.9%)	—	—	11 pp gain since 2021
NSFAS Confirmed Funded	164,275 (33%)	—	~20% of Grade 1	Post-school failure point

The pipeline table reveals the full scale of systemic attrition: of the approximately 818,742 SGB learners who entered Grade 1, only 164,275 (approximately 20%) are confirmed for NSFAS post-school funding by 2025, one in five of the original entry cohort. The grant activity rate falling from 97% at Grade 1 to 22.3% at Grade 12 NSC is not a demographic inevitability. It is a policy consequence: the CSG's age-18 termination rule creates a structural withdrawal of financial protection at precisely the stage where academic demands are highest and where grant continuity most directly predicts examination outcomes. Age-grade misalignment reinforces this pattern of attrition. SGB learners in most provinces are, on average, approximately one year older than expected for their grade, a trend observed consistently from Grade 1 through Grade 12. In Mpumalanga and the Northern Cape, learners in Grade 8 average 16 years of age rather than the expected 14. This means learners entering Grade 12 are already operating outside normative developmental trajectories, and many will have already aged out of the CSG before their examination date. The Matric Shield is the direct policy response.

5.5 Gender Profile Across the Pipeline

Gender distribution among SGB learners follows a consistent pattern across the schooling pipeline that is important for interpreting the Grade 12 outcomes. In primary education (Grades 1 to 7), boys slightly outnumber girls in every grade, with males constituting approximately 51.5% and females approximately 48.5% of the primary SGB population. This modest imbalance is stable across most provinces during the primary phase. In secondary grades, the gender profile shifts markedly; males outnumber females in Grades 8 to 10, but females exceed males from Grade 11 onwards. By Grade 12, female SGB learners constitute 57.1% (350,512 of 614,102) of NSC candidates. This reversal reflects sharper male attrition in the senior secondary phase, driven by a combination of economic pressures, early labour market entry, and behavioural factors. The female majority in Grade 12 signals both female educational resilience and a significant loss of male learners from the schooling pipeline that requires dedicated policy attention in Grades 8 to 10.

6. Conceptual and Analytical Framework

This evaluation applies a multi-layered conceptual framework that draws on human capital theory, a life-course lens, the capabilities approach, and equity and intersectionality frameworks. These lenses are consistent with those applied in the full report and are summarised here to orient the reader to the analytical approach underpinning the findings.

6.1 Human Capital and Life-Course Perspective

The human capital perspective positions social grant receipt as an investment in the productive capacity of individuals, not merely a transfer to alleviate immediate poverty. When grant income enables school attendance, adequate nutrition, and educational materials, it contributes to the formation of human capital that yields returns across the life course. The life-course lens extends this insight: current educational outcomes are the product of cumulative experiences, transitions, and turning points across a learner's life, not isolated events. Applied to this study, it means the 614,102 SGB Grade 12 learners in 2025 are the survivors of a multi-year process in which grant income has functioned as a persistent enabling condition, and that disrupting this condition at the age-18 boundary disrupts a trajectory of investment, not a single transaction.

6.2 Social Protection as Investment in Capabilities

The capabilities approach, developed by Amartya Sen (1999), evaluates development not by the resources individuals receive but by what those resources genuinely enable them to do and become. Applied here, the question is not whether SGB learners receive the CSG but whether CSG receipt translates into real educational capability, the genuine ability to attend school, perform in examinations, and access post-school opportunities. The 9.3 percentage point performance gap between 136,919 active (92.1%) and 477,183 inactive (82.8%) grant recipients is a capabilities-approach finding: it shows that the grant, when active, translates into measurable educational capability that its absence forecloses. The post-school transition data, 97% NSFAS provisional approval (503,451 of 518,786) converting to only 33% confirmed funding (164,275), shows where structural conditions prevent this translation at the post-matric stage.

6.3 Equity and Intersectionality

The equity dimension of this evaluation recognises that SGB learners are not uniformly situated: their educational outcomes are shaped by the intersection of poverty, race, gender, geography, school quality, grant type, and grant continuity. The analysis throughout this report disaggregates outcomes by all available dimensions to surface patterns that aggregate statistics conceal. Key intersectional findings include: the compounding disadvantage of low grant income plus low school quality for the 479,974 Quintile 1 to 3 learners; the specific vulnerability of 350,512 female SGB learners in provinces with high teenage pregnancy rates; the triple disadvantage facing the approximately 3,071 CDG-identified learners (disability, poverty, and inadequate post-school navigation support); and the complete system exclusion of 14,139 learners without identity documents. These intersections are addressed directly in the recommendations.

6.4 The Indicator Matrix

The Indicator Matrix developed for this evaluation operationalises the conceptual framework through 47 measurable indicators tracked across five analytical domains. The matrix is structured to enable monitoring of progress toward the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 human capital targets and MTDP commitments for SGB learners. Its institutionalisation as a standard annual reporting instrument

(Recommendation 4.5) is the mechanism through which the conceptual framework translates into durable evidence infrastructure for DSD and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME).

7. Key Findings

The following nine findings, five quantitative and four qualitative, are derived from the linked administrative data and in-depth qualitative interviews. They are presented in the same order and structure as in the full report (Chapter 11), to which this synthesis is intended as a companion document. The five quantitative findings are drawn from linked SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS records. The four qualitative findings are derived from the 24 in-depth interviews across Cohort 1 and Cohort 2, addressing the structural and systemic dimensions of SGB learner experience that administrative data cannot fully capture.

7.1 Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data was sourced from SASSA, NSFAS, and linked through NISPIS. Each finding is presented at the national level with provincial detail where analytically significant.

Finding 01 | 84.2% | SGB Learners Constitute the NSC Cohort

- 614,102 of the 729,650 NSC candidates in 2025 were SGB learners. They are not a marginal population within the Grade 12 examinations: they constitute a substantial majority of candidates in public schools, concentrated precisely in the provinces and quintile bands where South Africa's child poverty is most acute. The national education narrative, improvements in pass rates, bachelor-level attainment, and subject performance, is, in material terms, a story about SGB learners. Policy decisions affecting this cohort are, by extension, decisions about the trajectory of the national schooling system as a whole. Pass rate improvements among SGB learners are improvements in the national education story.

Finding 02 | 84.9% | NSC Performance Improving, 11 Percentage Points Since 2021

- The SGB pass rate of 84.9% (521,239 of 614,102) in 2025 represents an 11 percentage point improvement since 2021 (when the rate stood at 74.0%, approximately 433,000 passes) and is only 3.1 percentage points below the national NSC pass rate of 88%. Bachelor pass rates improved from 33.2% in 2021 to 41.9% in 2025, representing access to university admission pathways for an additional approximately 52,763 SGB learners annually above the 2021 baseline. This sustained upward trajectory confirms that the social grant system is functioning as an effective protective mechanism, and that its reach into the schooling system is both deep and consequential. The narrowing gap between SGB and national pass rates reflects the cumulative effect of grant continuity on educational outcomes across multiple cohorts.

Finding 03 | 22% | Active Grant Receipt Protects NSC Outcomes, 9.3 percentage point gap

- Of the SGB cohort, 136,919 learners (22.3% of 614,102) had active grants and achieved a pass rate of 92.1%, compared to 82.8% among 477,183 inactive SGB recipients (77.7% of 614,102) and 88% for all 729,650 NSC candidates. The 9.3 percentage point gap between active and inactive SGB learners is consistent across all nine provinces and three consecutive cohorts (2023, 2024, 2025), confirming that grant continuity has a measurable and replicable protective effect on NSC outcomes. The proportion of active grant recipients has declined from 25.7% (150,196 of 584,889) in 2024 to 22.3% (136,919 of 614,102) in 2025. The school quality differential between Quintile 1 to 3 and Quintile 4 to 5 schools

substantially exceeds this active-inactive gap, indicating that school quality remains the binding constraint on how far grant support can improve educational achievement. Learners who become NEET after Grade 12 face compounding disadvantage that the grant system alone cannot prevent.

Table 7: SGB vs National NSC Subject Pass Rates, 2025 (30% Achievement Threshold)

Subject	SGB Writers 2025	SGB Pass % 2025	SGB Pass % 2024	National Pass % 2025	SGB vs National
Accounting	76,363	87.6%	72.3%	81.9%	+5.7 pp
Business Studies	189,632	87.0%	79.2%	82.8%	+4.2 pp
Economics	102,543	86.4%	72.9%	81.2%	+5.2 pp
Geography	310,241	86.2%	83.7%	82.8%	+3.4 pp
History	221,017	86.6%	85.8%	84.6%	+2.0 pp
Life Sciences	310,460	85.3%	73.6%	78.2%	+7.1 pp
Math Literacy	394,911	86.9%	79.6%	82.6%	+4.3 pp
Mathematics	192,938	84.4%	58.0%	71.5%	+12.9 pp
Physical Sciences	159,125	83.8%	64.9%	72.1%	+11.7 pp

Finding 04 | 86.4% | Risiha Beneficiaries Passed NSC Examinations

- Of 1,976 Risiha beneficiaries, 816 (41.3%) were successfully linked to Grade 12 examination results through NISPIS. Of those linked, 86.4% (705 of 816) achieved an NSC pass, a result that substantially exceeds both the national NSC pass rate of 88% and the SGB cohort average of 84.9% (521,239 of 614,102), from an entirely high-risk and vulnerable OVC population. This finding confirms the multiplicative value of sustained psychosocial support when layered onto grant income, and provides a strong evidence base for scaling school-based care interventions to districts with high SGB concentrations and below-average pass rates. The Risiha result demonstrates what the system is capable of producing when layered support is sustained.

Finding 05 | 33% | Only 164,275 of 503,451 SGB Learners were funded by NSFAS

- Of the 503,451 SGB learners provisionally approved for NSFAS funding (97% of the 518,786 who applied), only 164,275 (33%) were ultimately confirmed as funded. This gap between provisional approval and actual funding is the clearest quantitative signal of the administrative and structural barriers preventing SGB learners from successfully transitioning to Post-School Education and Training (PSET). By institution type: 56,078 of 56,466 TVET college applicants (99.3%) were confirmed funded; 108,197 of 446,985 university applicants (24.2%) were confirmed funded. Administrative processes, documentation requirements, the offer-funding mismatch, and the abrupt loss of grant income at age 18 combine to produce a structural NEET risk determined by system design rather than individual choice or aspiration.

7.2 Qualitative Findings

The following four qualitative findings are derived from in-depth interviews with SGB learners, Risiha programme beneficiaries, and CYCW caseworkers. They address the structural and systemic dimensions of SGB learner experience that administrative data cannot fully capture: grant design failure, programme architecture gaps, system coordination failures, and the structural role of information asymmetry in determining post-school outcomes. Their implications are carried directly into the policy and programme recommendations in Section 15.

Finding 1 | Grant System Design | Age-Based Grant Termination Rules Produce Predictable, Documentable Harm

- The qualitative evidence establishes that age-based grant termination rules, blind to educational enrolment status, produce predictable and documentable harm at the point of matric. The termination of a FCG four months before a beneficiary's NSC examinations is not an administrative anomaly, it is the predictable output of a rule that does not account for whether the beneficiary is still in school. A Matric Shield, deferring the termination of any social grant, including the CSG and FCG, for learners actively enrolled in Grade 12 to the end of the calendar year in which they turn 18, is both operationally straightforward and fiscally bounded. The evidence equally supports reform of FCG eligibility criteria to apply a functional rather than biological test of parental absence, ensuring that de facto orphans are not excluded from the superior protective architecture the FCG provides.

Finding 2 | Programme Architecture | The Risiha Model Has the Infrastructure to Address Post-Matric Transition Failure

- The qualitative evidence supports extending Risiha CYCW case management beyond the matric threshold into a structured post-matric transition module. Nine of twelve Risiha beneficiaries tracked post-matric were in NEET status despite having completed Grade 12 and consistently expressing post-school ambition throughout their programme participation. Their post-school failure is an institutional access failure, not a human capital deficit. A 12-month post-matric module incorporating active NSFAS application support from Term 2 of the matric year, TVET college and learnership pathway connection for those below university entrance requirements, psychosocial support during the transition period, digital device and connectivity access, and Central Applications Office (CAO) or university application fee coverage for verified beneficiaries would address the documented transition gap. The infrastructure for such a module exists within the current CYCW deployment model and requires deliberate extension rather than new programme design.

Finding 3 | System Coordination | Low-Cost, High-Impact System Coordination Failures Are Structural NEET Drivers

- The qualitative evidence identifies two concrete, low-cost system coordination failures that function as structural NEET drivers for SGB learners. CAO application fees of R100 to R200 foreclose entire years of post-school opportunity for learners from grant-receiving households, a barrier whose per-learner fiscal cost is negligible relative to its systemic impact. A DSD and Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) arrangement to waive or subsidise these fees for verified SGB applicants would eliminate this barrier at minimal cost. The NSFAS proxy application problem, where fragile informal arrangements leave the most vulnerable applicants without a functional mechanism to initiate or redirect their applications, requires school-level application support infrastructure: trained teachers or school-based social workers guiding all Grade 12 SGB learners through the NSFAS process from Term 2 of the matric year. The offer-funding mismatch documented in this study and by the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2022) further

confirms that system-level coordination failures compound individual vulnerability at scale and warrant direct DSD-DHET engagement.

Finding 4 | Evidence and Monitoring | Information Asymmetry Is a Structural Determinant of Post-School Outcomes

- The qualitative evidence consistently surfaces information asymmetry as a structural determinant of post-school outcomes for SGB learners. Learners from rural and parentless households lack what the literature terms navigation capital, the contextual knowledge about application systems, funding pathways, and institutional requirements that non-SGB peers acquire from tertiary-educated parents and socially resourced networks. An emerging pattern across both cohorts confirms that this information gap is career-limiting for high-performing SGB learners and NEET-producing for average-performing OVCs. Policy responses that address only the symptoms of information asymmetry, proxy application failure, missed deadlines, misdirected applications, without addressing the structural absence of navigation capital will produce incremental rather than systemic gains. The most durable intervention is the institutionalisation of navigation support within the school and programme systems that SGB learners already access. Monitoring this population's post-school outcomes through a dedicated strand of the DSD Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework is a prerequisite for tracking whether these interventions are working.

8. Equity and Distributional Analysis

8.1 Provincial Equity

SGB learner NSC pass rates in 2025 ranged from 82.6% (36,233 of 43,886 in the Western Cape) to 86.9% (132,737 of 152,792 in KwaZulu-Natal). The Northern Cape recorded the largest year-on-year improvement: from 81.9% (8,716 of 10,648) in 2024 to 86.0% (9,943 of 11,566) in 2025, a gain of 4.1 percentage points representing 1,227 additional passes. Mpumalanga improved by 2.5 percentage points (from 45,903 of 57,018 to 48,162 of 58,061), Western Cape by 2.2 percentage points (from 33,819 of 42,061 to 36,233 of 43,886), KwaZulu-Natal by 1.9 percentage points (from 124,080 of 145,933 to 132,737 of 152,792), and Limpopo by 1.6 percentage points (from 69,258 of 82,810 to 75,564 of 88,747). Two provinces recorded slight declines: Eastern Cape (0.3 percentage points; 77,399 of 93,652) and Free State (1.3 percentage points; 27,411 of 31,934). The concentration of 70.8% of SGB learners in four provinces means that national SGB performance is substantially determined by KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape, and Limpopo outcomes.

Table 6: SGB NSC Pass Rates by Province, 2024 vs 2025

Province	2024 Wrote	2024 Passed	2024 %	2025 Wrote	2025 Passed	2025 %	Change
Eastern Cape	88,093	73,126	83.0%	93,652	77,399	82.7%	-0.3 pp
Free State	30,603	26,651	87.1%	31,934	27,411	85.8%	-1.3 pp
Gauteng	93,302	78,731	84.4%	99,115	84,310	85.1%	+0.7 pp
KZN	145,933	124,080	85.0%	152,792	132,737	86.9%	+1.9 pp
Limpopo	82,810	69,258	83.6%	88,747	75,564	85.2%	+1.6 pp
Mpumalanga	57,018	45,903	80.5%	58,061	48,162	83.0%	+2.5 pp

North West	34,421	29,046	84.4%	34,349	29,480	85.8%	+1.4 pp
N. Cape	10,648	8,716	81.9%	11,566	9,943	86.0%	+4.1 pp
Western Cape	42,061	33,819	80.4%	43,886	36,233	82.6%	+2.2 pp
NATIONAL	584,889	489,330	84.0%	614,102	521,239	84.9%	+0.9 pp

8.2 School Quintile Equity

School quintile remains one of the strongest structural predictors of NSC outcomes. The 614,102 SGB learners are heavily concentrated in Quintile 1 to 3 no-fee schools: Quintile 3 (27.8%; 170,452), Quintile 1 (25.7%; 157,562), Quintile 2 (24.6%; 150,960), 78.1% (479,974) combined. Only 11.7% (71,617) attend Quintile 4 and 7.9% (48,590) Quintile 5 schools. The performance differential between quintile bands substantially exceeds the active-inactive grant gap, as confirmed in Quant Finding 03. This means that social protection policy cannot, by itself, close the quality gap between Quintile 1 and Quintile 5 schools. The 9.3 percentage point active grant receipt effect remains a significant independent protective factor even within the lowest quintile environment, but the compounding disadvantage of income poverty plus school resource poverty means the full educational return on the grant is not being realised for the 479,974 SGB learners in the lowest quintile schools.

8.3 Gender and Teenage Pregnancy

Female SGB learners constitute 57.1% (350,512 of 614,102) of the 2025 SGB Grade 12 cohort. Teenage pregnancy is a significant equity risk factor: 109,757 in-facility deliveries were recorded among girls aged 10 to 19 nationally in 2025, approximately 301 per day. Three provinces are in the critical-risk category: Eastern Cape (18.5% of 93,652 SGB learners, approximately 17,326 affected), Northern Cape (17.6% of 11,566, approximately 2,036), and KwaZulu-Natal (16.8% of 152,792, approximately 25,669). Teenage pregnancy is a leading risk factor for female learner dropout and requires dedicated monitoring within the DSD and DBE coordinated response, with the Risiha CYCW model and the National Sanitary Dignity Programme as primary intervention platforms.

8.4 Race, Documentation and Disability

African/Black learners constitute 93.7% (575,413 of 614,102) of the SGB Grade 12 cohort. The age-18 CSG termination rule disproportionately affects this population, who are over-represented among the 477,183 inactive grant recipients (77.7%). Documentation inequality compounds this: 14,139 of 32,579 Grade 12 learners with documentation irregularities lack South African identity documents entirely, blocking all NSFAS, SOCPEN, and formal post-school system access regardless of academic performance. A joint DSD, DBE, and Department of Home Affairs documentation support programme should identify at-risk learners by Term 1 of the matric year to enable document regularisation before post-school application deadlines.

CDG-identified learners represent only 0.5% (approximately 3,071 of 614,102) of SGB Grade 12 candidates, substantially below expected disability prevalence in a population concentrated in poverty. Inconsistent disability recording in SOCPEN and LURITS is the primary cause. SGB learners with disabilities face compounded disadvantage across the matric year and into post-school life: inadequate in-school support, inaccessible post-school institutions, and no differentiated NSFAS application pathway. Disability disaggregation must be treated as a mandatory data quality standard, not a supplementary reporting requirement, in all future SOCPEN, LURITS, and NSFAS linkages.

9. Cross-System Insights

9.1 The DSD, DBE, and DHET Coordination Gap

The most consequential systemic finding of this evaluation is not located within any single department's mandate. The grant support boundary (a DSD design issue), the in-school support quality gap (a DBE implementation issue), and the post-school transition failure (a DHET and NSFAS coordination issue) all emerge at the intersections between departmental mandates. The system architecture was designed for each mandate separately, and it generates structural harm at the boundaries, precisely where learner journeys cross institutional lines.

The 9.3 percentage point performance gap requires DSD action (Matric Shield). Low CYCW coverage in high-SGB schools requires DSD and DBE coordination. The 97% NSFAS provisional approval converting to only 33% (164,275 of 503,451) confirmed funding requires DHET and NSFAS reform. The offer-funding mismatch requires DSD and DHET engagement. None of these failures can be resolved by a single department acting alone. The NISPIS framework, which already links SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS data, provides the technical infrastructure for cross-departmental monitoring. What is required is the institutional governance mechanism, a DSD, DBE, and DHET coordination structure under DPME oversight, to act on evidence that now spans three consecutive cohorts.

9.2 The NSFAS Structural Constraint

The NSFAS pipeline data reveals a structural design mismatch at the heart of post-school funding policy. The 97% provisional approval rate (503,451 of 518,786) confirms near-universal financial eligibility, the funding policy is well-targeted. The 33% confirmed funding rate (164,275 of 503,451) reveals that the constraint is not eligibility but institutional placement. For TVET applicants (56,466; 56,078 confirmed; 99.3%), the system functions as designed. For university applicants (446,985; 108,197 confirmed; 24.2%), provisional approval does not translate into post-school participation. The policy implication is direct: expanding NSFAS university budget in isolation will not increase post-school participation rates if the binding constraint is institutional capacity, not funding eligibility. The demand-side intervention, repositioning TVET as a primary, not alternative, destination, is the lever with the highest marginal return at current system capacity.

9.3 NISPIS: Transformative Infrastructure and Present Gaps

The NISPIS data linkage model is the most significant methodological achievement documented in this evaluation series. By linking SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS records at individual level, NISPIS produces findings that household surveys cannot replicate: the exact number of learners who aged out of grant support before their examinations (477,183); the provincial consistency of the active-inactive pass rate gap across all 9 provinces; the institution-specific NSFAS confirmation rates. These are not estimates, they are population-level facts. The current gap is equally clear: 339,176 provisionally approved SGB learners (67.4% of 503,451) cannot be traced through their post-school trajectories because NISPIS does not yet link to DHET post-school records or the Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA) labour market database. Extending NISPIS to these systems is a prerequisite for credible monitoring of NDP 2030 youth inclusion targets.

10. Complementary School Support Programmes

SGB Grade 12 learners benefit from a range of complementary school-based programmes administered at the DSD and DBE intersection. These programmes layer support onto grant income and their interaction with NSC outcomes is an important equity dimension of this evaluation.

10.1 National School Nutrition Programme

The National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) provides daily school meals to learners in Quintile 1 to 3 schools, the same bands in which 78.1% (479,974 of 614,102) of SGB learners are concentrated. Reaching approximately 9.5 million learners nationally in 2025, the NSNP's nutritional support is particularly significant during the NSC examination period, ensuring minimum daily nutritional intake during peak cognitive demand for a population in which 477,183 learners (77.7%) have already lost CSG income. The evidence consistently shows that nutritional adequacy is a direct determinant of examination performance for learners in households below the food poverty line. The Matric Shield would preserve CSG income through Grade 12 completion; the NSNP provides nutritional security through the school day for learners whose households cannot afford adequate food regardless of grant status.

10.2 National Sanitary Dignity Programme

The National Sanitary Dignity Programme provides free menstrual hygiene products to girls in Quintile 1 to 3 schools. In 2025, the programme reached an estimated 4.2 million girls nationally. For the 350,512 female SGB Grade 12 learners (57.1% of the SGB cohort), period poverty is a documented driver of school absenteeism, with particular concentration in the three provinces in the critical-risk category for teenage pregnancy: Eastern Cape (18.5% of 93,652), Northern Cape (17.6% of 11,566), and KwaZulu-Natal (16.8% of 152,792). The programme's concentration in Quintile 1 to 3 schools aligns directly with the SGB cohort's school distribution and should be explicitly integrated into DSD's equity monitoring framework for female SGB Grade 12 learners.

10.3 Child Support Grant Top-Up Programme

The CSG Top-Up Programme provides a 50% uplift, R280 per month in 2025, to households below the food poverty line, effectively increasing the CSG's protective value from R560 to R840 per month for the most food-insecure recipients. The Top-Up is subject to the same age-18 termination rule as the CSG: learners who age out of the CSG simultaneously lose Top-Up eligibility, compounding the income shock at the most vulnerable point in the matric year. The Matric Shield regulatory amendment must explicitly extend to the CSG Top-Up to preserve the full R840 per month protective value, not just R560, for the most food-insecure Grade 12 SGB learners through their examination year.

10.4 Risiha Programme

The programme is a community-based intervention, aimed at protecting vulnerable children. The programme provides a core package of services includes psychosocial support, food and nutrition, health promotion, child care and protection, and educational support. In 2025, 816 of 1,976 Grade 12 Risiha beneficiaries were linked to NSC results through NISPIS. Their 86.4% NSC pass rate is the evaluation's most compelling quantitative impact finding (Quant Finding 04). The Risiha paradox, 86.4% pass rate followed by 9 of 12 tracked post-matric beneficiaries (75%) in NEET status, is not a failure of the in-school Risiha model. It is the failure of a programme boundary that ends at the exact point where the five structural barriers identified in Qual Finding 3 converge. The recommended 12-month post-matric Risiha transition module extends the CYCW case management that already produces above-average NSC pass

rates from a high-risk population through the post-school application season and first semester of post-school participation.

11. DSD Policy Context: Extending Children's Grants Beyond Age 18

The finding that 77.7% (477,183 of 614,102) of SGB Grade 12 learners had already aged out of their grants before sitting their final examinations provides the quantitative evidence for a targeted policy recommendation that DSD is already actively developing. DSD has drafted a formal Concept Document proposing the extension of the Child Support Grant beyond the age-18 cutoff for learners still enrolled in Grade 12.

11.1 Rationale and Evidence Base

The policy rationale for extending the CSG through Grade 12 rests on three evidence pillars. First, the performance effect is real, consistent, and causally plausible: the 9.3 percentage point gap between 136,919 active (92.1%) and 477,183 inactive (82.8%) recipients has been documented across 2023, 2024, and 2025, three consecutive years of nationally representative, individual-level linked administrative evidence. The consistency across all 9 provinces eliminates provincial-level confounding. Second, the termination rule is educationally incoherent: the CSG terminates at age 18 without reference to whether the learner is still enrolled in school. A learner who repeated a grade and turns 18 in February of their matric year loses their grant before Term 1 mock examinations are complete. The rule was designed to limit the grant to childhood; it was not designed to disrupt secondary school completion. Third, the fiscal cost is marginal relative to impact: extending CSG support for learners with active LURITS Grade 12 enrolment to December 31 of their 18th year would extend support by at most 11 months per affected learner. At R560 per month, the maximum additional fiscal cost per learner is R6,160. Applied to a maximum of 477,183 learners, the ceiling additional cost is approximately R2.94 billion, less than 1.1% of the annual social assistance budget.

11.2 Implementation Pathway

The Matric Shield is implementable within the existing SASSA SOCPEN system without primary legislative change. The technical mechanism requires SASSA SOCPEN to query the LURITS Grade 12 enrolment database for beneficiaries approaching age 18, automatically extending grant payments through December 31 for confirmed active Grade 12 enrollees, and monitoring these extensions through the NISPIS framework. The Indicator Matrix developed under this evaluation provides the baseline measurement framework. A target of closing at least 50% of the 9.3 percentage point gap (reducing it to below 4.7 percentage points) within two NSC cycles (2026 and 2027) would represent a meaningful and measurable policy outcome against which the Matric Shield's impact can be assessed.

12. Post-School Transitions and NEET Risk

The post-school transition period, the 12 months following NSC results, is the most critical and least monitored phase of the SGB learner journey. This evaluation provides the first nationally scaled quantitative evidence on the transition through NSFAS pipeline data covering 518,786 applicants, and the first qualitative evidence on actual post-school outcomes for Risiha beneficiaries (9 of 12 in NEET status; 75%). Both evidence streams converge on the same five structural barriers, substantially strengthening the analytical confidence in the recommendations that follow.

12.1 The NSFAS Application and Funding Pipeline

Of 521,239 SGB learners who passed Grade 12, 518,786 (99.5%) applied for NSFAS funding, confirming that post-school aspiration is overwhelmingly present among SGB matric graduates. The 97% provisional approval rate (503,451 of 518,786) confirms financial eligibility is not the barrier. The 33% confirmed funding rate (164,275 of 503,451) confirms the constraint is downstream: institutional capacity, registration timing, and offer-funding mismatches. The 3% who did not receive provisional approval were distributed as follows: 1.8% (9,333) cancelled, 1.1% (5,706) still in process at reporting, and 0.1% (519) rejected outright.

Table 8: NSFAS Application and Funding Pipeline, SGB Learners, 2025/26 Cycle

Pipeline Stage	Learners	Rate or Note
Wrote NSC Examinations	614,102	84.2% of all 729,650 NSC candidates
Passed Grade 12	521,239	84.9% SGB pass rate
Applied for NSFAS (2025/26 cycle)	518,786	99.5% of those who passed
Provisionally Approved	503,451	97.0% of 518,786 applicants
TVET College: Confirmed Funded	56,078 of 56,466	99.3% TVET confirmation rate
University: Confirmed Funded	108,197 of 446,985	24.2% university confirmation rate
Total Confirmed Funded	164,275	33% of 503,451 provisionally approved

The 67% of provisionally approved learners not confirmed funded (339,176 learners) cannot currently be traced through any post-school administrative system. They may have entered TVET or community colleges without NSFAS funding, taken learnerships, entered informal employment, or entered NEET status. This tracking gap is both a monitoring failure and a policy design failure. Extending NISPIS to the DHET Post-School Data System and ESSA is the prerequisite for closing this gap and for credible monitoring of NDP 2030 youth inclusion targets.

Table 9: SGB NSC Pass Rate Trend 2021 to 2025

Indicator	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
SGB Pass Rate	74.0%	77.3%	80.5%	84.0%	84.9%
Bachelor Pass Rate	33.2%	35.1%	38.0%	40.2%	41.9%
Additional Passes vs 2021 Baseline	Baseline	+19,300	+38,300	+58,500	+67,551

12.2 Five Structural Barriers at the Post-School Transition

NEET risk for SGB Grade 12 graduates is structurally generated by the convergence of five factors at the post-matric boundary, each identifiable in both quantitative and qualitative evidence: first, abrupt CSG income loss for 477,183 (77.7%) of SGB writers entering the post-matric period without grant income; second, information asymmetry, SGB learners from rural and parentless households systematically lack the navigation capital to convert provisional NSFAS approval into confirmed institutional placement; third,

documentation barriers, 14,139 Grade 12 learners without identity documents are blocked from all formal post-school systems regardless of academic performance; fourth, CAO application fees of R100 to R200, prohibitive for households with no income buffer; and fifth, the offer-funding mismatch, NSFAS provisional approval does not guarantee institutional placement, leaving thousands of eligible learners between formal funding approval and actual post-school participation.

12.3 Second-Chance and Re-Entry Pathways

The current social protection architecture provides limited formal second-chance mechanisms for SGB learners who enter NEET status post-matric. The cSRD (R370 per month) is the primary income support after CSG lapse, but at R190 less than the CSG it is insufficient to sustain meaningful post-school application activity. Community Education and Training (CET) centres offer re-entry for learners wishing to improve NSC results or access vocational qualifications, but CET awareness among SGB Grade 12 learners is very low. Prevention through the recommended 12-month Risiha post-matric transition module is substantially more cost-effective than recovery after NEET entry.

13. Qualitative Case Study Findings: Extended Analysis

The qualitative strand, 24 in-depth interviews with SGB youth, provides the explanatory depth that the quantitative data cannot supply. Cohort 1 (12 top-achieving SGB learners from the Class of 2025) provides a retrospective life-course perspective on the grant's role in enabling high academic performance. Cohort 2 (12 Class of 2024 Risiha beneficiaries interviewed 12 months post-matric) provides a prospective perspective on post-school outcomes and the structural barriers at the matric-to-PSET transition. The two cohorts are complementary: Cohort 1 confirms what grant support makes possible when sustained; Cohort 2 confirms what happens when support ends at the matric threshold.

13.1 Social Grants as the Material Foundation for Educational Participation

Across all 12 Cohort 1 interviews, the CSG or FCG was described not as supplementary but as the essential material precondition for continued school participation. In households where grant income represented 30 to 60% of total household income, the grant's contribution to school-related costs, transport, uniform, examination preparation materials, was the difference between continued enrolment and dropout. Not one participant described the grant as demotivating. Several described academic achievement as a form of reciprocity toward the social protection system that had invested in their household, a framing that directly contradicts the welfare dependency narrative. The qualitative evidence, across a sample of 12 top-achieving SGB learners from diverse provinces and quintile backgrounds, is unambiguous: the grant creates the conditions for attainment; it does not limit it.

13.2 Structural Barriers at the Post-Matric Transition

Nine of twelve Cohort 2 participants (75%) were in NEET status at interview, 12 months after completing Grade 12. Their common experience arc was: strong NSC results, genuine post-school aspirations, provisional NSFAS approval, and then a series of structural failures, proxy application incompleteness, CAO fees that foreclosed entire application rounds, institutional registration deadlines missed, and, underlying all of these, the absence of the CYCW case manager who had guided them through Grade 12 but whose support ended at matric.

The three Cohort 2 participants who successfully transitioned to post-school education did so through exceptional individual circumstances: one had an older sibling who had navigated NSFAS previously; one had a teacher who personally accompanied her to the TVET registration office; one received unsolicited contact from an NGO bursary programme that identified her from a community database. All

three described these interventions as the difference between post-school participation and NEET status. The Risiha post-matric transition module would institutionalise this type of support for the entire Risiha beneficiary population, rather than leaving it to exceptional individual luck.

13.3 The Risiha Paradox

The Risiha programme produced an 86.4% NSC pass rate among 816 linked OVC beneficiaries (Quant Finding 04) and 9 of 12 tracked post-matric NEET outcomes among Cohort 2 graduates (Qual Finding 2). These two findings together constitute the most important programme design signal in this evaluation. The in-school Risiha model works. The post-school boundary does not. The CYCW who guided learners through Grade 12, building the case management relationship, navigational trust, and institutional knowledge that produced 86.4% NSC pass rates, is no longer present at the point of highest structural vulnerability. The recommended 12-month post-matric transition module requires a budget extension and a deliberate programme mandate extension, not new programme design. The infrastructure, the relationships, and the evidence base all exist.

14. Conclusions

Four Overarching Conclusions, Class of 2025

- **CONCLUSION 1, SOCIAL PROTECTION IS WORKING AT NATIONAL SCALE:** 614,102 SGB learners (84.2% of 729,650 NSC candidates) achieved an 84.9% pass rate in 2025, 11 percentage points above the 74.0% rate in 2021. Bachelor pass rates rose from 33.2% to 41.9%. Risiha beneficiaries achieved 86.4% (705 of 816 linked learners) the learners are within a vulnerable population. These results confirm that the grant system is functioning as an effective educational protective mechanism, not a marginal welfare programme but the central architecture of South African social protection system.
- **CONCLUSION 2, THE GRANT SUPPORT BOUNDARY IS PRODUCING YEAR-ON-YEAR MEASURABLE HARM:** 477,183 learners (77.7% of the SGB cohort) aged out of the CSG before their final exams and achieved 82.8%, against 92.1% for the 136,919 who retained active support. This 9.3 percentage point gap, replicated across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts, implies approximately 44,378 foregone NSC passes annually. It is correctable through a single regulatory amendment, the Matric Shield, implementable before the 2026 NSC cycle without primary legislative change.
- **CONCLUSION 3, THE POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION IS A SYSTEM FAILURE, NOT AN INDIVIDUAL FAILURE:** 97% provisional NSFAS approval (503,451 of 518,786) converting to only 33% confirmed funding (164,275) is a system-level coordination failure. Not one of the 24 qualitative participants described the grant as limiting their aspirations. The five structural barriers at the post-matric boundary, CSG income loss, information asymmetry, documentation gaps, CAO fees, and the offer-funding mismatch, are structural and low-cost to address.
- **CONCLUSION 4, THE SYSTEM ALREADY HAS THE TOOLS:** the sharing of administrative social protection data system exists within the NISPIS infrastructure, and can be extended incremental, to include the National School Nutrition Programme, Sanitary Dignity, Risiha model and Home Affairs documented especially undocumented learners. More data is needed to be shared with NSFAS to address the funding gap. The evidence for these extensions is also confirmed in the qualitative data.

15. Policy Recommendations and Programme-Level Recommendations

The following four Policy Recommendations is outlined below and contained in the full report (deliverable 4.4.3, Chapter 12.2).

Policy Recommendation 1 | Resolve the Grant Support Boundary at Matric

Lead: Minister of Social Development / DSD / SASSA

The 9.3 percentage point performance gap between 136,919 active (92.1%) and 477,183 inactive (82.8%) SGB recipients, consistent across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts, is the measurable consequence of an age-based Child Support Grant (CSG) whereby the grant end on the child's 18th birthday. Amend the Social Assistance Regulations for children who are still in school; explicitly extend the Matric Shield to the CSG Top-Up (R280 per month) to preserve the full R840 per month protective value for food-insecure Grade 12 learners; and commission a rapid impact analysis of the CSG-to-cSRD income transition on post-matric NSFAS application behaviour. [Responds to: Quant Findings 02 and 03; Qual Finding 1]

Policy Recommendation 2 | Establish a Structured Post-School Transition Pathway for SGB Youth

Lead: DSD / DBE / NSFAS/ DHET (focus on the Central Applications Office (CAO) fee arrangement)

Only 164,275 of 503,451 provisionally approved SGB learners (33%) were confirmed for NSFAS funding. CAO application fees of R100 to R200 foreclose entire years of opportunity; a fragile proxy application system leaves the most vulnerable applicants without a functional mechanism; and the offer-funding mismatch confirms that system-level coordination failures compound individual vulnerability. These are barriers of system design, addressable through cross-departmental coordination. DSD, DBE, and NSFAS should establish a formally coordinated Grade 12 to PSET transition mechanism for SGB learners, operational by the 2027 matric cycle. This mechanism should include: a streamlined NSFAS application pathway for learners enrolled in SOCPEN; a DSD and DHET arrangement to waive or subsidise CAO application fees for verified SGB applicants; school-level NSFAS application support infrastructure in Grade 12 from Term 2; an NSFAS account recovery mechanism for proxy application collapse situations; a bridging support arrangement covering the period between NSC results and confirmed NSFAS funding; and a DSD, DBE, and Home Affairs documentation programme identifying undocumented Grade 12 SGB learners by Term 1. Human-centred design principles, informed by direct input from young people who have navigated the system, should govern the redesign of all key transition touchpoints. [Responds to: Quant Findings 01 and 05; Qual Finding 3]

Policy Recommendation 3 | Scale Integrated Care and Support to High-Concentration SGB Schools

Lead: DSD / DBE

A total of 816 Risiha beneficiaries were linked and achieved a 86.4% NSC pass rate. Nine of 12 tracked post-matric Risiha beneficiaries (75%) were NEET 12 months later. The programme succeeds through Grade 12 and fails at the threshold where the structural barriers converge. Develop a 12-month Risiha post-matric transition module extending CYCW case management to cover active NSFAS application support from Term 2 of Grade 12; TVET college and learnership pathway navigation for learners below university admission requirements; psychosocial support through the transition; digital device and data access for independent navigation; and CAO fee coverage for Risiha beneficiaries. Scale CYCW deployment to schools in the bottom quartile of district-level NSC pass rates with the highest SGB concentrations. Develop a navigation capital curriculum for Risiha

caseworkers integrated into CYCW training from Grade 10. Introduce a differentiated NSFAS application pathway for the approximately 3,071 CDG-identified SGB Grade 12 learners. [Responds to: Quant Findings 03 and 04; Qual Findings 2 and 4]

Policy Recommendation 4 | Institutionalise NISPIS as a Permanent Monitoring and Management Instrument

Lead: DSD / SASSA / DHET / Department of Labour (DoL)

The SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS data linkage is transformative but incomplete. 339,176 provisionally approved SGB learners (67.4% of 503,451) cannot be traced post-NSFAS. The 12 months following NSC completion are the most critical intervention period and currently a monitoring blind spot. Formally institutionalise the SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS data linkage as a standing annual monitoring instrument with defined governance structures. Establish SGB learners as a distinct tracked population in the DSD M&E framework with post-matric outcomes (PSET enrolment, employment, NEET status) as mandatory reporting indicators. Commission a technical feasibility assessment for extending NISPIS to the DHET Post-School Data System and Employment Services of South Africa within 6 months of report acceptance. Mandate disability disaggregation in all future linkages as a non-negotiable data quality standard. Commission a Cohort 3 follow-up study on Cohort 2 participants within 12 to 18 months. Adopt the Indicator Matrix from this evaluation as the basis for a standard annual DSD and DPME reporting instrument on MTDP and NDP 2030 youth inclusion targets. [Responds to: Quant Findings 01, 02, 03, 04 and 05; Qual Finding 4]

16. Policy and Strategic Implications

16.1 Social Protection Policy Reform

The Matric Shield regulatory amendment is the most consequential, lowest-cost social protection reform available to government in the current MTDP cycle. The per-learner cost (at most R560 x 11 months = R6,160 for a learner turning 18 in January of their matric year) is marginal relative to the 44,378 additional NSC passes per year it would generate, the NSFAS eligibility those passes produce (97% provisional approval), and the lifetime earnings and human capital returns those placements enable. FCG reform, applying a functional rather than biological test of parental absence, would extend superior grant protection (age-21 ceiling) to the larger de facto orphan population currently excluded by a definitional rule with no educational justification.

16.2 Budget and NSFAS Policy

The finding that 108,197 of 446,985 university NSFAS applicants (24.2%) received confirmed funding, against 56,078 of 56,466 TVET applicants (99.3%), fundamentally reframes the NSFAS budget debate. Expanding NSFAS university allocations without addressing the institutional capacity constraint will not increase post-school participation rates for the 446,985 SGB learners who applied to university in 2025. If the proportion of SGB NSFAS applicants targeting TVET doubles from 10.9% (56,466) to 21.8% (approximately 113,000), the system would accommodate approximately 56,500 additional confirmed-funded learners annually at the current 99.3% TVET confirmation rate, without any NSFAS budget expansion.

16.3 Youth Employment and Human Capital Pipeline

South Africa's 32% youth unemployment rate makes the SGB matric-to-PSET-to-employment pipeline the most critical human capital investment corridor in the country. The 11 percentage point improvement

in SGB pass rates since 2021 (from 74.0% to 84.9%; approximately 67,551 additional passes annually above the 2021 baseline) demonstrates that the in-school investment is generating returns. The post-school transition failure, 97% NSFAS eligibility (503,451) converting to only 33% confirmed funding (164,275), is a direct constraint on this pipeline attributable to structural coordination failures rather than individual incapacity. The returns on a multi-decade social protection investment in 614,102 learners' basic education are being partially realised at matric and then lost at the post-school boundary.

16.4 NDP 2030 and MTDP Alignment

The NDP 2030 targets, reducing the NEET rate from 32% to under 20%, increasing post-school participation, and closing the race and income education attainment gap, cannot be achieved without acting on the findings of this evaluation. The 84.9% SGB pass rate (521,239 of 614,102), 41.9% bachelor pass rate, and 97% NSFAS provisional approval rate confirm the in-school and eligibility components are functioning. The post-school component, 33% (164,275 of 503,451) confirmed funding, is the binding constraint on NDP 2030 youth participation targets. The Matric Shield should be the first action taken before the 2026 NSC cycle. Alignment with the NSFAS application cycle would strengthen the impact of any post-school transition pathway established. NISPIS institutionalisation should be formalised within the current MTDP cycle.

17. Lessons Learnt

17.1 What Government Should Replicate

The NISPIS administrative data linkage model, connecting SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS records at the individual level across four departments, is a replicable evidence infrastructure template. By producing national-scale, individual-level findings (the 9.3 percentage point active-inactive pass rate gap across 614,102 learners; the exact NSFAS conversion rates by institution type) that household surveys cannot replicate, NISPIS demonstrates the transformative potential of cross-departmental administrative data integration. This model aligns with digital transformation in the public sector and can be instrumental in evidence-based policy making, planning, and budgeting across the social sector as well as labour market domains.

The Risiha model is a care intervention generating 86.4% NSC pass rates from an entirely high-risk, vulnerable population of 816 linked learners, demonstrating the multiplicative return on layered social services. The key design feature is an active case management system to build resilience to vulnerable groups, combined with cash interventions such as grants. Government should commission a formal cost-effectiveness analysis comparing per-pass-outcome costs for the Risiha model versus the broader SGB grant-only model, to establish the investment case for scaled CYCW deployment to high-SGB, low-quintile schools.

The annual cohort analysis model, using linked NISPIS data to track the full 614,102-learner SGB Grade 12 cohort through NSC outcomes and NSFAS transition, should be institutionalised as a standing monitoring function. Three consecutive years of analysis (2023, 2024, 2025) have now produced the first longitudinal evidence base on SGB educational outcomes in South Africa. Institutionalising this as a routine annual output, within the existing NISPIS infrastructure, would provide the government with real-time feedback on SGB educational outcomes at the national, provincial, and district levels.

17.2 What Must Change

The age-based Child Support Grant, termination policy whereby the grant ends on the child's 18th birthday. The Matric Shield proposal is not a new policy intervention requiring lengthy development. The evidence across three consecutive cohorts and two rounds of qualitative research points to an existing policy rule whose unintended consequences are now well-documented, and which may warrant review through the appropriate policy-making processes.

The NSFAS and TVET demand imbalance must be addressed before the 2026/27 application cycle. The current distribution, 446,985 (86.2%) of SGB NSFAS applicants targeting university at 24.2% confirmation, versus 56,466 (10.9%) targeting TVET at 99.3% confirmation, is the single most inefficient structural feature of the post-school participation system. Government career guidance infrastructure, Risiha CYCW navigational support from Grade 10, and coordinated NSFAS and DBE communication campaigns must actively redirect demand toward TVET before the next application cycle.

Disability and documentation data gaps must be resolved as governance priorities. The 14,139 Grade 12 SGB learners without identity documents face systematic exclusion from all formal post-school opportunities regardless of academic performance. The approximately 3,071 CDG-identified Grade 12 learners are almost certainly a substantial undercount of the true disability prevalence. Improve the administrative data system, with DSD, SOCPEN, DBE, and Home Affairs.

Expand National Integration of Social Protection Information Systems (NISPIIS) to include large-scale interventions such as the National School Nutrition Programme, the School Scholar Transport programme, the Sanitary Dignity Programme, as well as care interventions such as Rishia.

19. References

The following references inform the literature appraisal, conceptual framework, and comparative analysis presented in this report. All data citations refer to the linked administrative datasets (SOCPEN, LURITS, NSC, and NSFAS) described in Section 3.

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20. Annexes

Three annexes are available as separate technical documents:

- Annex A, Indicator Matrix (Full Version): The complete 47-indicator tracking matrix with 2025 values, 2024 comparison benchmarks, and MTDP target alignments across five analytical domains: grant access, school progression, NSC achievement, equity, and post-school transitions.

- Annex B, Additional Statistical Tables and Disaggregations: Extended data tables including subject-level pass rates by province and school quintile; age-to-grade distributions by province and gender; grant type disaggregations for all nine provinces; NSFAS application and funding data by province and institution type; and teenage pregnancy incidence by province and age group.
- Annex C, Qualitative Instruments and Sampling Summary: Interview guides for Cohort 1 (IPA life-course protocol) and Cohort 2 (thematic post-school transition protocol); participant sampling matrices; IPA analysis framework applied to Cohort 1; thematic coding framework applied to Cohort 2; and anonymised participant profiles for all 24 interview participants across both cohorts and both Classes (2025 and 2024).

Requests for access to Annex documents should be directed to the DSD Monitoring and Evaluation Directorate. Data sharing for research purposes is governed by the NISPIS Inter-Departmental Data Sharing Agreement and requires written approval from DSD and SASSA.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - SENIOR MANAGEMENT REPORT - MARCH 2026

REPORT ON THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF LEARNERS RECEIVING SOCIAL PROTECTION SERVICES — GRADE 12 CLASS OF 2025

An in-depth study of the NSC Class of 2025 — With Class of 2024 comparative benchmarking — 84.2% of all 729,650 full-time NSC candidates in public schools



social development
Department
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

84.2%

Of all NSC candidates are Social Grant Beneficiaries

↑ Structural majority of cohort

614K

SGB learners in 2025 — up from 584,889 in 2024

↑ +29,213 new entrants (+4.99%)

84.9%

NSC pass rate 2025 — improved from 83.66% in 2024

↑ +11 pp since 2021

+9.3pp

Active grants outperform inactive (82.1% vs 82.8%)

Key causal policy indicator

33%

Of provisionally approved SGB learners funded by NSFAS (184,275 of 563,451)

285,176 provisionally approved remain unfunded

Data: DBE National Results - SACSA Grant Administration - NSFAS Disbursement Records - March 2026

01 SCALE — WHO ARE THE SGB LEARNERS?



SCHOOL QUINTILE DISTRIBUTION OF SGB LEARNERS



DOMINANT GRANT TYPE

95% CSG

78% of SGB learners are in no-fee schools (Q1–3) — social protection reaches the most resource-constrained communities in the country.

54% ♀
FEMALE MAJORITY
46% male

22.3%
ACTIVE GRANTS AT EXAM
77.7% aged out before exams

SGB learners are not a marginal group. They ARE the NSC cohort. Any national education narrative is fundamentally a social protection narrative.

02 PERFORMANCE — FOUR CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF IMPROVEMENT

NSC PASS RATE TREND — SGB COHORT



Four consecutive years of improvement. The social protection investment is paying academic dividends — confirmed and statistically significant across all cohorts.

PASS TYPE DISTRIBUTION — CLASS OF 2025



84.9% qualify for post-school education

70.5% qualify for HEIs (Bachelor + Diploma). Bachelor pass rate rose from 33.2% to 41.9% since 2021 — evidence of improved university access for grant-supported learners. SGB learners outperform the national average in Mathematics by +26.5 pp.

03 THE POLICY LEVER — ACTIVE GRANT CONTINUITY DRIVES OUTCOMES

NCS PASS RATE BY GRANT STATUS AT EXAMINATION DATE



n = 136,919 - 22.3% of SGB cohort

GAP = +9.3 pp **Strongest predictor**



n = 477,183 - 77.7% of SGB cohort

Confirmed across all 9 provinces and 3 consecutive cohorts (2023–2025) at $p < 0.001$. The most directly actionable DSD policy lever.

CRITICAL CONTEXT — CSG LAPSE

77.7%

aged out before sitting final exams

477,183 SGB candidates lost active grant status precisely when household economic pressure peaks — the CSG terminates on the learner's 18th birthday.

THE MATRIC SHIELD — POLICY PROPOSAL

Defer CSG termination for actively enrolled Grade 12 learners to year-end through a regulatory amendment — no primary legislative change required. The SOCPEN-LURITS linkage already demonstrated at national scale enables school-enrolment-conditional deferral.

04 RISK — GRADE REPETITION IS THE LARGEST PREDICTOR OF FAILURE

PASS RATE BY LEARNER AGE — SGB COHORT 2025



▼ -9.5 pp



▼ -10.0 pp



19.5 pp gap between on-time (≤18) and over-age (20+) learners. Age is the largest within-SGB predictor of outcome.

ALL KEY PASS RATE DIFFERENTIALS — 2025

Age ≤18 vs 20+ years	+19.5 pp
Active vs inactive grant	+9.3 pp
White vs Black learners	+10.5 pp
Asian vs Black learners	+8.2 pp
Q5 vs Q1 schools (harmsing)	+4.4 pp

The Q5–Q1 gap of just +4.4 pp is evidence of grant-enabled resilience. Social grants partially offset school resource disadvantage in the most deprived communities.

05 SYSTEM OUTCOME — THE POST-SCHOOL PIPELINE

NSFAS PROVISIONAL APPROVAL-TO-FUNDING PIPELINE — SGB COHORT 2025



06 POLICY ACTIONS — EVIDENCE-BASED PRIORITIES FOR 2025/26



84.2%

Of NSC candidates are SGB learners — DSD reaches South Africa's school-leaving majority

+9.3pp

Pass rate advantage for active grant recipients — the strongest policy-actionable predictor in this dataset

33%

Of provisionally approved SGB learners funded by NSFAS — 164,275 enrolled. 339,176 gap remains

+26.5pp

Mathematics above national average — SGB learners excel in the highest-value gateway subject

14,139

Learners without identity documents — blocked from NSFAS, university registration and formal employment

Learner Profile: Sibusiso Mathebula- Child Support Grant Beneficiary (UCT)

Full Name: Sibusiso Mathebula

Matriculation Year: 2022

Undergraduate Degree: BSc Astrophysics and Pure Mathematics

Current Studies: BSc Honours in Astrophysics

Graduation Year: 2025

Sibusiso Mathebula is a remarkable young South African and a former Child Support Grant (CSG) beneficiary who grew up in the crime- and poverty-stricken community of Winterveld. Raised by an unemployed mother, the Child Support Grant served as the primary source of income for the household, supporting his basic needs and educational journey. Despite severe socio-economic challenges, Sibusiso remained focused, determined, and committed to academic excellence.

In 2022, Sibusiso achieved exceptional matric results, outperforming learners from all Quantile 1 schools across South Africa. His outstanding academic performance demonstrated resilience, discipline, and a deep passion for science and mathematics. He achieved an extraordinary **98% in Mathematics and 100% in Physical Sciences**, positioning him among the top-performing learners in the country.

Matric Subject Performance:

1. Setswana Home Language – 90%
2. English First Additional Language – 94%
3. Mathematics – 98%
4. Life Orientation – 93%
5. Geography – 95%
6. Life Sciences – 95%
7. Physical Sciences – 100%

Following his matric success, Sibusiso enrolled for a **Bachelor of Science in Astrophysics and Pure Mathematics**, where he continued to excel academically. He successfully completed his undergraduate degree and graduated in 2025. He is currently pursuing a **BSc Honours in Astrophysics**, demonstrating his continued commitment to academic advancement and scientific research.

Sibusiso's journey reflects the transformative impact of social grants in supporting vulnerable learners to achieve their full potential. His story highlights how government

support, combined with determination and hard work, can break cycles of poverty and open doors to opportunities in highly specialized fields such as astrophysics.

As part of the **Recognition of Outstanding Performance Ceremony for Eastern Cape Grade 12 Learners**, Sibusiso will stand before the Class of 2025 as a living testimony that excellence can emerge from even the most challenging environments. His presence at the ceremony will serve as a powerful source of motivation and inspiration, encouraging learners to pursue their dreams, work hard, and believe in their potential regardless of their socio-economic background.

Sibusiso Mathebula embodies resilience, academic excellence, and hope for the future of South Africa's youth. His achievements demonstrate that with support, dedication, and perseverance, young people from disadvantaged communities can rise to become leaders in science and innovation.



Sibusiso Mathebula- Child Support Grant Beneficiary (UCT)

EASTERN CAPE SOCIAL GRANT BENEFICIARIES GRADE 12 CLASS OF 2025



Bilili Liyabona is a dedicated and ambitious young female learner who completed her matric at Tsholomnqa High School and is currently pursuing a **Bachelor of Pharmacy at Rhodes University in Makhanda**. She resides at Ruth First House, Prince Alfred Street, Rhodes University, and is a **Foster Child Grant beneficiary supported by NSFAS**. Bilili performed exceptionally well in her matric, obtaining **five distinctions** in IsiXhosa (86%), English (82%), Life Orientation (93%), Geography (88%), and Life Sciences (80%), with **Bilili Liyabona** is a dedicated and ambitious young female learner who completed her matric at Tsholomnqa High School and is currently pursuing a **Bachelor of Pharmacy at Rhodes University in Makhanda**. She resides at Ruth First House, Prince Alfred Street, Rhodes University, and is a **Foster Child Grant beneficiary supported by NSFAS**. Bilili performed exceptionally well in her matric, obtaining **five distinctions** in IsiXhosa (86%), English (82%), Life Orientation (93%), Geography (88%), and Life Sciences (80%).



Awonge Makhetshe is a highly motivated and academically outstanding young female learner from **AmaNgutyana Location, Bizana**, who completed her matric at **Ntabezulu Senior Secondary School** and is currently studying **Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Nelson Mandela University** under the **Premier Bursary**, while also being a **Foster Child Grant**. Awonge achieved an exceptional academic record in matric with **seven distinctions**, including IsiXhosa (93%), English (82%), Mathematics (93%), Life Orientation (80%), Agricultural Sciences (94%), Life Sciences (95%), and Physical Sciences (88%). Her plan is to **become a neurosurgeon**, and her aspiration is to **be recognized as one of the top surgeons in the world**, reflecting her strong ambition, discipline, and commitment to excellence in the medical field.



Okuhle Unathi Gwanisheni is a determined young female learner from **Ntlakwe, Bizana**, who completed her matric at **Bizana Secondary School** and is currently enrolled in **Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery at Walter Sisulu University**, supported by **NSFAS and the Child Support Grant**. Okuhle performed exceptionally well in her matric, obtaining **seven distinctions** in IsiXhosa (82%), English (80%), Life Orientation (83%), Geography (87%), and Life Sciences (89%), with Mathematics (93%) and Physical Science (80%) also reflecting strong academic effort. Okuhle is passionate about building a career in the medical field and is committed to becoming a respected doctor in the future. However, she is currently experiencing challenges due to **frequent strikes at Walter Sisulu University, which are delaying her academic progress**. Despite these challenges, Okuhle remains focused on her goals and aspires to **save lives and continuously grow her knowledge in the medical profession**, showing strong resilience, dedication, and a deep commitment to serving her community through healthcare.

EASTERN CAPE SOCIAL GRANT BENEFICIARIES GRADE 12 CLASS OF 2025



Endinakho Tolbard is a determined young female learner currently residing at **15 Windmere Court, St James Road, East London**, who completed her matric at **Ebenezer Majombozi High School** and is currently studying **Civil Engineering** at **King Hintsa TVET College**, supported by **NSFAS and the Foster Child Grant**. Endinakho's matric results reflect perseverance despite challenges, with subjects including **IsiXhosa (78%), English (56%), Mathematical Literacy (41%), Life Orientation (74%), Agriculture (38%), Life Sciences (41%), and Tourism (62%)**. She has faced challenges in **adapting to college life without parental guidance**, but continues to push forward with determination and focus. She is under the **RISIHA** programme.



programme

Lilitha Wajoko is a resilient young female learner currently studying **Human Resources** at **Lovedale TVET College** and supported through the **Foster Child Grant**. She completed her matric at **Lingeletu Secondary School**, where she obtained a **Diploma Pass**, studying subjects such as **English 56%, IsiXhosa 78%, Mathematical Literacy 41%, Life Orientation 74%, Agricultural Science 38%, Life Sciences 41% and Tourism 62%**. Lilitha comes from a challenging background as an **orphan who was raised by relatives and a foster parent**, and the foster care grant played a critical role in supporting her basic needs and ensuring she remained in school. Lilitha is under the **RISIHA**



engineering field. Nzulu is under the **RISIHA** programme

Siyabonga Nzulu is a dedicated young male learner currently studying **Civil Engineering** at **Nelson Mandela University**, supported by the **NSFAS bursary** and receiving the **Child Support Grant**. Siyabonga completed his matric with steady academic performance, achieving **IsiXhosa (75%), English (63%), Mathematics (52%), Life Orientation (73%), Geography (61%), Life Sciences (52%), and Physical Sciences (49%)**. His academic results demonstrate resilience and commitment to his studies, particularly in mathematics and science-related subjects that align with his chosen



RISIHA programme.

Owam Happy Cimela is a hardworking young female learner currently enrolled at **Buffalo City College**, where she is studying **Finance, Economics, and Accounting**, supported by the **WR6 bursary** and receiving the **Foster Child Grant**. She completed her matric with **IsiXhosa (76%), English (60%), Mathematics (24%), Life Orientation (64%), Geography (46%), Life Sciences (41%), and Physical Sciences (27%)**. Despite facing academic challenges, particularly in mathematics and science subjects, Owam remains committed to improving her academic performance and building a career in the finance and accounting field. Her determination to pursue further education highlights her resilience and commitment to securing a better future. Owam is under the



RISIHA

From Vulnerability to Resilience

EAST LONDON RISIHA – SUCCESS STORY

CHILD AMBASSADOR: CHAIRPERSON

FAMILY NAME: ADAMS

CHILD: SANELE ADAMS

17 YEARS

MALE

KUSILE COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL (GRADE 11)



FAMILY BACKGROUND

This learner is staying with his elder sister Simamkele (20years). Their mother is deceased and their father's whereabouts are unknown. They are renting at a one-roomed shack at the backyard in an informal settlement at No 03 Ntsenyero Street in Duncan Village.

The family was enrolled under the RISIHA Programme in April 2025 as their mother was abusing substances and the children were affected. In June 2025 their mother passed-on leaving them all alone with no one to take care of them. Sanele's sister had to assume the responsibility of taking care of him and act as the head of the household. His sister was not employed and Sanele's grant was cancelled as it was registered under their late mother. They then had to live on handouts from the community members and Sanele benefitted from the school nutrition programme.

IMPACT OF SERVICE – CORE PACKAGE OF SERVICES RENDERED TO THE ADAMS FAMILY

Assessment was conducted to the child; it was evident that he is in need of continuous support through an eco-system and resilient-based approach that is provided in the implementation of the Core Package of Services in RISIHA sites which is aiming at holistically addressing the needs of the vulnerable children.

Domain 2 – Psychosocial Support was offered to the child: The Auxiliary Child and Youth Care Workers (ACYCWs) provided Psychosocial Support programmes, awareness on Substance Abuse became one of the programmes conducted to the children. It is during this awareness that the children opened up and expressed their feelings about their mother's substance abuse. The ACYCWs started to have sessions with the family trying to make the mother aware of the dangers of abusing substances and the negative effects it creates to her children. She then started to reduce her alcohol consumption and the change was visible as the children enjoyed her availability.

After the death of their mother in June 2025, the child and youth care worker (CYCW) intervened and provide support to them. She visited them daily and also arranged counselling sessions. Sanele mentioned that he is already receiving counselling from his pastor. The CYCW was very supportive and giving comfort to them she was also part of the funeral arrangements. A memory box was introduced to the family for grief and loss support and through this process a strong relationship was built between the family and a CYCW. He knew that he has someone to count on and that made him feel loved. Sanele was enrolled in the YOLO (You Only Live Once) programme to learn more about drug and substance abuse.

Domain 3 – HIV and AIDS: He was also introduced to this domain to capacitate him as he is in a teenage stage. This was done to prepare him for adulthood so as to learn about STIs and abstinence. This has resulted in him having confidence that he will wait until he is matured enough to be in a sexual relationship and that his plans are to focus more on his studies and make a difference in his home and community.

Domain 7 – Educational Support was also offered to Sanele: He was assisted with homework, monitored that he attends school regularly and that motivated the young man to do well at school. The CYCW visits the school regularly to check his progress.

Domain 6 – Economic Strengthening: the CYCW offered support to the family in order for Sanele to cope and for his needs to be met. A family meeting was conducted to discuss Sanele's child support grant and an agreement was that his sister (Simamkele) will apply for the grant. They were also advised to apply for Foster Care Grant. and told them the necessary documents they will need for that process. Simamkele applied process and was assisted by the Social from the Department of Social Development.

Domain 5 – Food and Nutrition: whilst the family was still waiting for the foster grant; the CYCW advocated for them to get food parcel from the implementing partner, East London Child and Youth Care Centre. They are in receipt of it to date. Sanele is also attending programmes in the safe park to further capacitate himself. They were advised and taught on how to start a small vegetable garden using old containers as there is not enough space where

they are staying as they do not have their own space but renting. That has not yet started, it is a plan in progress.

CYCW also encouraged Simamkele (sister) to start job hunting so that they can have an income and afford basic needs like food. Eventually she got a job and she now work at Boxer super store.

Plan of action

Home visits will continue to be conducted by the CYCW to check on Sanele's wellbeing. Core package of services will continue be provided to the child to transform him from vulnerability to resilience, thus minimising the risks and build a protective environment. The RISIHA will continue providing advocacy to the implementing partner (East London Child and Youth Care Centre) for food, toiletries and clothes when needed. One of the core functions of the CYCW is the best interests of the child. Follow ups are made regularly to DSD Social Worker with regards to the foster care grant application as it is still in progress.

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