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Child support grants increase enrolment in South Africa

Cash benefits for children are reducing the impact of poverty on school enrolment in South Africa. In KwaZulu-Natal, child support grants are helping children, particularly from the poorest families, to be educated. Families receiving such grants are more likely to send their children to school at earlier ages.

New non-conditional cash-based child support grants were introduced to South Africa in the late 1990s. By 2002, parents or primary caregivers with a monthly income of less than R1100 were entitled to a monthly payment of R110 per child under the age of seven. By 2005, payments had risen to R180 per child under the age of 14. This choice of non-conditional cash benefits as a means of addressing child poverty was a new policy measure. Making grants accessible to caregivers other than a

biological parent was also new.

Historically, the use of cash transfers by governments was standard practise in advanced industrial countries, but was less common in lower- and middle-income countries. Using data from the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies, researchers from Princeton University, University of KwaZulu-Natal and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine assessed the reach and impact of child support grants, in the Umkhanyakude district of KwaZulu-Natal. This district is poor, largely rural and exactly the type of area that the grants are intended to reach.

The research finds that:

- Child support grants are taken up for a third of all eligible children in the area.
- They are reaching those with low parental education, and few household necessities (cookers, furniture, farm tools) and luxuries (refrigerators, TVs, computers, cars).
- Children who have lost their father are more likely to receive a grant than those who have lost a mother.
- Girls are not disadvantaged.
- Children receiving the grant are more likely to go to school at ages six and seven than are other children at same ages.

● Older siblings (for whom no grant existed when they were six or seven) were less likely to have attended school. This provides evidence that the grants (and not other factors) have increased school enrolment. Furthermore, the finding that a higher percentage of grant-receiving children live with their mothers challenges the popular belief that mothers apply for child support grants and then leave their children in another's care.

This study reveals that many of the poorest children in KwaZulu-Natal are not receiving the grant they are entitled to. The researchers suggest that it is important to:

- identify the barriers to receiving the grant
- understand why children with absent mothers are overlooked for the grant.

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'The Reach and Impact of Child Support Grants: Evidence from KwaZulu-Natal', *Development Southern Africa* 22 (4), pages 467-482, by Anne Case, Victoria Hosegood and Frances Lund, 2005

Are donors offering the right support?

As education sector funders develop new patterns of collaboration they are re-directing support to education ministries or national budgets. Donor focus on formal primary education has been at the expense of support to adult literacy and other out-of-school programmes. Coordination among funding agencies may have led to neglect of national and local needs. The voices of teachers and other education workers are being silenced by reforms.

An evaluation team examined external support to basic education in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Uganda and Zambia.

Determining education aid is difficult due to the different ways donors classify and report their financial contributions. It is, nevertheless, clear that support to basic education did not increase from 1990 to 2000 at the rate expected from commitments made. There is still a wide gap between funding required to achieve EFA goals for 2015 and support actually being provided.

- Sector Wide Approaches (SWAs) may boost national ownership but do not necessarily improve partnerships when not

used as a flexible process.

- Donor reliance on templates and prescribed solutions to achieve EFA objectives has been detrimental to a commitment to partnership and sometimes limited the relevance of programmes and projects.
- Support for adult literacy, early childhood education and youth and adult life skills education is largely channelled through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), thus weakening capacity and commitment of responsible government ministries.
- The increase of SWAs has not noticeably reduced the administrative burden for host governments: developing joint administrative procedures has been slowed by donor reluctance to accept local processes as adequate.
- There has been a shift of technical assistance towards management rather than expertise such as teacher education and curriculum development.
- The goal of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary school enrolment is proving harder to reach than expanding overall levels of enrolment.

Some programmes to expand coverage and improve efficiency are seen as undermining teachers' professional status, such as measures to cut salaries or reduce training time. Reforms are being held back because there is no strong sense of ownership from

national governments.

The evaluation team recommends that donors should:

- support basic education through SWAs by appreciating the positive role projects can play in offering targeted support to marginalised groups
- attach more value to the views and participation of students, parents and teachers in programme design
- simplify and coordinate their administrative requirements with other external agencies and with partner governments
- stop channelling funds to non-formal education and adult literacy only through NGOs
- re-emphasise the importance of gender parity in policies
- offer long-term commitment to ensure achievement of EFA targets is not subject to dramatic fluctuations in short-term external support.

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Local Solutions to Global Challenges: Towards Effective Partnership in Basic Education, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by Ted Freeman and Sheila Dohoo Faure, September 2003

www.dci.gov.ie/Uploads/Effective%20Partnership%20in%20Development%20Education.pdf

Is the international community getting serious about EFA?

High-profile meetings in 2005 raised expectations that commitments to achieve the Millennium Development Goals would result in more aid for Education for All (EFA) programmes. But are donors ready to finally honour the EFA promises made in Dakar in 2000?

A chapter in UNESCO's 2006 Global Monitoring Report reviews trends in aid to education. Assistance to education has increased. However, education's share of total Official Development Assistance (ODA) – three quarters of which is provided by donor countries and the rest through multilateral agencies – declined from 8.8 percent in 2002 to 7.4 percent in 2003. This was the lowest figure for a decade.

There are major variations in the amount provided by donor states to education in general, and basic education in particular. While 35.7 percent of New Zealand's total aid is allocated to education, education's share of aid from the USA is 2.8 percent. While bilateral aid to basic education almost trebled between 1998 and 2003, it still

accounted for less than two percent of total bilateral aid.

Adult literacy programmes typically receive only one percent of national education budgets, signaling a very low level of commitment. Donors and governments must work to increase this share in order to achieve the Dakar literacy goal and ensure literacy educators receive professional training and competitive salaries.

UNESCO regrets that:

- Sixty percent of bilateral commitments to education are still allocated to post-secondary education.
- Basic education's share of total education aid only averages 28.3 percent.
- Disproportionate volumes of bilateral aid go to middle-income countries with relatively high primary enrolments.
- Literacy is not high on the agenda of most international agencies: few produce data on amounts spent on literacy programmes.
- The Fast Track Initiative – an important example of donors working together – has not yet achieved significant additional resources for EFA.

There are still difficulties in tracking how much education aid is promised and actually provided. It seems likely that in 2010 the annual total of basic education aid will be around US\$3.3 billion. This is still far short of the US\$7 billion a year estimated as necessary to achieve universal primary

education (UPE) and gender parity alone – without accounting for the additional costs of much-needed adult literacy and early childhood education.

UNESCO calls on the international community to:

- double aid to basic education, even above the levels implied by G8 pledges made at Gleneagles in July 2005
- prioritise support for countries on the bottom of UNESCO's Education Development Index, especially to assist governments unable to meet key recurrent costs – salaries, textbooks, learning material and day-to-day administrative expenses
- promote more equitable budget allocations to basic education and finance the recruitment and professional development of the new teachers without whom EFA cannot be achieved
- combine technical assistance funds and share learning.

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Special gift: social transfers for health and education

Can social transfers – cash or vouchers targeting the poorest – reduce poverty and accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals? A paper from the UK Department for International Development reviews the impact of this demand-side policy option on access to health and education services for extremely poor people.

Policies that promote poor people's access to services are critical to making the best use of increased resources. Lack of demand for services can be a major constraint to expanding effective education and health programmes in low income countries. Social transfers are regular and predictable grants, in cash or services, given to vulnerable households or individuals to ensure a minimum level of well-being. Can social transfers boost demand for services and reduce barriers to access by targeting subsidies directly to specific groups?

The paper reviews evidence on a range of conditional and unconditional cash transfers (social pensions, child grants, family grants, scholarships/bursaries, stipends), vouchers and entitlement cards. It finds that social transfers:

- can make education and health investment more effective and equitable by extending the impact and reach of services and through better nutrition
- act as incentives to increase poor people's

demand for services and improve their education and health outcomes, even if they are given unconditionally

- are most effective when complementing efforts to strengthen and extend the provision of health and education services
- require effective targeting of vulnerable groups for maximum impact.

The report finds that different forms of social transfer suit different situations:

- conditional transfers – if using services has high 'opportunity costs', such as lost income, or when there is discrimination against certain groups
- vouchers – when the main cost involved is paying for the service and other expenses and opportunity costs are low and when they are targeted to easily-defined groups
- unconditional cash transfers – when vulnerable people are able to make informed choices about health and education.

Policymakers considering the use of social transfers should take into account policy objectives, political feasibility, administrative and institutional capacity, governance issues and affordability. They will also need to decide on the form and targeting of transfers. The paper recommends that they should also:

- avoid imposing conditions that exclude the very groups that need most help

- minimise the inclusion of better-off people in the scheme
- guarantee long-term, predictable financing
- work to improve service quality
- address other barriers to access, such as discrimination by providers and lack of facilities or information
- complement social transfers with other strategies, such as removal of user fees or fee waivers and exemptions
- integrate social transfers into country-led poverty reduction plans.

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