

THE LESOTHO CHILD GRANTS PROGRAMME



Pilot phase

All you need to know
about the scheme



Investing in children

In the face of growing vulnerability and poverty of Basotho children, the Government of Lesotho has initiated a Child Grants Programme, which will be piloted in selected areas by April 2009. The initiative will strive to improve the wellbeing of children who are vulnerable, including children who have been orphaned or otherwise affected by HIV and AIDS and who live in families marked by poverty, food insecurity, malnutrition and lack of access to essential services.

The HIV epidemic has devastated the productive adult population in Lesotho. The country has the third highest HIV prevalence rate in the world, estimated at 23.2% of people between the age of 15 and 49. There are now more than 180,000 orphaned children, of which 55% have lost one or both parents to AIDS-related diseases. More than half of Lesotho's population (58.8%) lives below the poverty line. Children who grow up without parental support and in very poor households risk dropping out of school, going hungry, becoming sick more often and being abused and exploited.

The Child Grants Programme is part of a larger package of child services that the Government believes will make a real difference to the lives of its youngest citizens. Today's children represent the future of Lesotho and are key to breaking the cycle of poverty. Without investments in their survival, development and protection, progress in the country cannot be achieved.

What is a child grant?

A child grant is the regular payment of money by Government or NGOs to individuals or households, with the aim of decreasing chronic or shock-induced poverty. These are known as social transfers, which not only tackle income poverty but address broader development issues such as education, health, nutrition, shelter, and asset accumulation.



What is the objective of the Lesotho Child Grants Programme?

The programme aims to supplement the income of poor households caring for orphaned and vulnerable children, including child-headed households, with a cash grant that will be disbursed quarterly. The money is to be used in the interest of children, for example, to increase children's school enrolment and attendance, improve their living conditions, ensure that they have access to healthcare and nutritious food and that they are protected from abuse and exploitation.

Where will the Child Grants Programme be initiated?

The scheme will first be piloted in three communities: Matelile (Mafeteng district), Semonkong (Maseru district), and Lebakeng (Qacha's Nek district) in 2008/9. The programme was initiated in 2008. However, the first disbursement to eligible poor households will be made in the second quarter of 2009. These test sites have been selected as they represent different types of challenges related to access. The first pilot area is readily accessible to public services; the second is more challenging, while the third area is



remote and difficult to access. This is a project design decision, intended to test different models to suit the different conditions in the country.

What does the pilot hope to achieve?

One of the primary goals of the pilot phase is to develop and test effective systems for targeting, enrolment, payment to beneficiaries, monitoring, procurement and financial management, training of stakeholders and public awareness. Lessons learnt will guide the refinement of the Child Grants Programme in preparation for a phased roll out across the country starting from 2010.

How much is the child grant?

A flat grant of M360 will be paid out to beneficiary households every quarter.

How many children will be reached?

In the pilot phase, approximately 5,000 orphaned and vulnerable children, living in 1,250 poor households, will be reached by the Child Grants Programme. When the programme is rolled out to other districts, many more children are expected to benefit by the end of 2011.

What is the targeting mechanism for the programme?

Poverty status, using data from the Bureau of Statistics, will be used to identify household targeting indicators for the Child Grants Programme. A community targeting system will be developed and the targeting criteria will be used to guide the community as they identify poor and vulnerable households to participate in the pilot.



What will be done to ensure that the grant is not being misused or mismanaged?

A Community Appeals and Complaints Committee will be set up to address any concerns from applicants, beneficiaries or civil society regarding poor service, mismanagement, problems with receipt of benefits and decisions about eligibility.

What has been achieved to date?

To make sure that the Lesotho Child Grants Programme is a success and reaches the poorest and most vulnerable children, the proper mechanisms, staff and systems need to be in place before it can begin. Since the Department of Social Welfare, the implementing body, already has an enormous workload and faces staff shortages and capacity, especially in the districts, the groundwork in finding the right technical and administrative staff, as well as establishing monitoring systems, is taking time. Yet the trade-off is that once the investment is made, there will be a sustainable, efficient and effective way to provide the child grant and make sure it reaches the children most in need.



To date, a comprehensive operational manual has been developed and the drafting of detailed targeting guidelines is under way. Pilot districts have been identified and consulted. The next step is to train field staff, develop a social mobilisation strategy, inform communities of the details of the programme and lay the foundations for initiating community targeting.

Which partners are involved in the project?

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, through the Department of Social Welfare, is the overall coordinating and implementing partner. Also at central level, a Child Grants Technical Team, which provides technical expertise to the design and implementation planning of the grant, will report to the National Orphans and Vulnerable Children

Coordinating Committee (NOCC). NOCC is a multi-sectoral body responsible for the overall coordination of issues relating to orphans and vulnerable children in the country.

The Bureau of Statistics will provide data for the development of the targeting criteria. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning will ensure that the Child Grants Programme remains consistent with national development plans and is allocated sufficient resources. The Registry of Birth and Deaths will play a vital role in helping beneficiary children and household representatives get their birth certificates, one of the prerequisites for a grant application in the future.

At district and local levels, District Child Welfare Services, with support from village chieftains and voluntary community committees will be responsible for targeting, verifying eligible applicants, enrolment, attending to beneficiary queries, appeals and complaints, payments to beneficiaries and case management.



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Who is providing financial and technical assistance?

The Lesotho Child Grants Programme is a component of the European Commission Financing Agreement, which has been signed with the Government of Lesotho. UNICEF, through its cooperation agreement with the European Commission, is providing technical assistance for the country's Orphans and Vulnerable Children Programme, which also includes the Child Grants Programme.

How will the pilot be monitored and evaluated?

A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system will be created to track progress and safeguard the integrity of the cash grant system. A modern and efficient management information system will be set up to monitor programme performance in relation to established targets and objectives. M&E officers will be responsible for the day-to-day monitoring of the grant's operation. Community Appeals and Complaints Committees will deal with local problems of mismanagement, poor service and beneficiary concerns. Annual financial audits will be conducted and recourse to the legal system will be in place if mismanagement is detected.



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