



Department of Social Development

Press Briefing by Minister Zola Skweyiya

FACT SHEET : EXTENSION OF THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

Government has approved the extension of the means-tested child support grant beyond the age of six, to poor children up to their 14th birthday. It is estimated that in terms of the current means test, which would also apply to the extension, another 3,2 million children will over time qualify for this grant.

Currently (children 0-6) about 3,6 million children qualify for the child support grant, with nearly 2,5 million children having been registered for the benefit. This means that somewhat more than one million children aged 0 to 6 must still be registered.

While Government is most aware of the severe poverty and vulnerability afflicting large numbers of children, and therefore the urgency to roll out the extension of the grant as rapidly as possible, an orderly and phased roll-out is necessary:

- No administrative system can overnight accommodate an expansion by such large numbers. While it is Government's intention to roll out as fast as possible, the expansion will have to be progressive, in line with the Constitutional commitment to progressive realisation of socio-economic rights.
- Administrative capacity in the welfare system is limited and has been pushed to the extreme by the enrolment of 2,5 children over the past 5 years. In addition, weaknesses in the system of grant administration and payment have received widespread publicity in recent times. Government will therefore at the same time be implementing a grant delivery improvement programme as well as extending the child support grant. Expansion of grant access has to take cognisance of these administrative realities and challenges. If not, the promise of extension will remain for many an idle dream.
- Constitutional Court rulings have made it clear that Government needs to take into account the urgent needs of the most vulnerable. This implies a targeted, and in this instance, phased approach to the extension of access to Government services (grants) to ensure equitable extension.

For the reasons above, and because it is the only practical, sustainable and fair way of extending the grant, Government has decided to phase the extension of the child support grant over the next three years:

- From 1 April 2003, children aged 7 and 8 years will become eligible for the grant
- From 1 April 2004, children aged 9 and 10 years will be become eligible
- From 1 April 2005; children aged 11, 12 and 13 will become eligible. .

In the medium term expenditure framework Government makes provision for R1,1 billion in 2003/04, R3,4 billion in 2004/05 and R6,4 billion in 2005/06 to fund extension. In addition to the actual cost of the grant, funding is also made available for administrative expenditure related to registration and payment.

1. This funding will flow to provinces, which will implement the extension, in the form of a conditional grant. This will ensure transparent funding of this new national mandate on provinces.
2. An implementation team has been established to finalise legislative changes, administrative arrangements and support to provinces in the extension of the grant. Amended regulations will be published by 1 April 2003.
3. The growth in the numbers of grant beneficiaries to approximately 5,5 million by February 2003, including the addition of 2,5 million child support grant beneficiaries since 1998, bears testimony to the significant expansion of the social safety net over the last five years. It shows the significant success of Social Development Departments and their partners - faith-based organisations, non-governmental organizations, business, labour, and the Department of Home Affairs – in implementing an important Government policy. To successfully extend the child support grant will again require cooperation from all stakeholders. We call on all stakeholders and civil society to join us in making a reality of this promise of enhanced support to our children in order to build a prosperous future, free from poverty.

Should you require any more information from the Department feel free to call us at
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