



Social security for lone mothers: some policy considerations

Colloquium 6th June 2014

Professor Michael Noble



Policy implications: outline

- Dignity as a foundational value
- Valuing the caregiver role
- Improve CSG administration
- Expand social security in-line with constitution and regional commitments, alongside jobs and childcare options

Dignity

- Foundational value in South Africa's Constitution
- Important to lone mothers (focus groups) and population in general (SASAS)
- Poverty was described by lone mothers as eroding of their dignity. It impacted negatively on their sense of self-esteem, worthiness, autonomy, and self-respect.
- Many of the methods of surviving poverty were also described by focus group participants as being detrimental to their sense of dignity.
- Paid work seen as the main route to protecting dignity
- Social security plays a complex role in terms of dignity, both in protecting dignity and eroding it

Unpaid care

- Prominence of the caregiver role for the interviewees – cited as the main reason why their dignity should be protected.
- Detrimental impact on caregivers' dignity of being unable to provide for children's needs.
- Care work as a contribution to society

Child Support Grant (1)

- Reduce queues
- Educate officials about respectful conduct
- Commissioner of oaths on site instead of police
- Continue to raise awareness about the eligibility criteria for CSG (including proof of eligibility)
- Make application process less burdensome
- Remove the means-test

Child Support Grant (2)

- Create spaces for debate about the adequacy of the CSG rather than always having to prioritise defending its existence
- But more broadly (in relation to child poverty):
 - Child poverty cannot be eliminated if the needs of the family in which they live are not also taken into account
 - The care that children receive cannot be expected to be of high quality if the caregiver cannot meet her own material needs.

Expanding social security (1)

“Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.”

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

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Expanding social security (2)

“Member States shall create an enabling environment so that every worker in the Region shall have a right to adequate social protection and shall, regardless of status and the type of employment, enjoy adequate social security benefits. Persons who have been unable to either enter or re-enter the labour market and have no means of subsistence shall be entitled to receive sufficient resources and social assistance.”

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Expanding social security (3)

27. Health care, food, water and social security.—(1) Everyone has the right to have access to—

- (a) health care services, including reproductive health care;
- (b) sufficient food and water; and
- (c) social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance.

(2) The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights.

(3) No one may be refused emergency medical treatment.

Expanding social security (4)

- Strong support for social security for low income lone mothers in the focus groups (would reduce poverty, improve ability to meet children's and own needs, and reduce dependence on dignity-eroding methods of survival):
 - *“It would be good because we would be able to spend the child's grant on them and not on our needs, that will ‘bring back our dignity’.* (Alice, FG21)
 - *“It would help immensely. Mothers prostitute themselves not because they want to but because they have no other way. People look for jobs for ages, in the mean time their children are suffering, one realizes that as a prostitute within a week I can get this much and do that and that for my family. Even though the reason is good, people their dignity is eroded, there is no self respect. The community loses respect for you too once they find out, so such a grant would be a lot of help, it would get us out of many troubles, basically.”* (Qumrha, FG14)

Expanding social security (5)

Social attitudes about state support for unemployed single mothers (SASAS 2007)

Q: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Agree		Disagree		Neither nor	
	All	SM	All	SM	All	SM
There should be a grant for unemployed single mothers to meet their basic needs (in addition to the Child Support Grant)	77.4	85.0	13.1	9.4	8.9	5.2

Expanding social security (6)

Strengths and weaknesses of step-by-step versus direct approach to achieving comprehensive social security, alongside job creation and provision of quality childcare options