

# Conditioning the grant?

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## The quest for more 'value' from the South African Child Support Grant

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# Children at the centre of poverty alleviation

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- Children, defined as under-18, represent nearly 40% of the population in SA.
- Children are disproportionately poor, mainly because of their physical location in large households and poor areas.
- Children have instrumental value as future leaders / workers / parents → need to break intergenerational cycles of poverty.
- Children have intrinsic value and childhood is transient → an urgency to address unique vulnerabilities.
- Children have strong (specific) constitutional and international rights.

# The disproportionate poverty of children

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Poverty and inequality are racial, gendered, generational & spatial

Unit of analysis influences the picture.

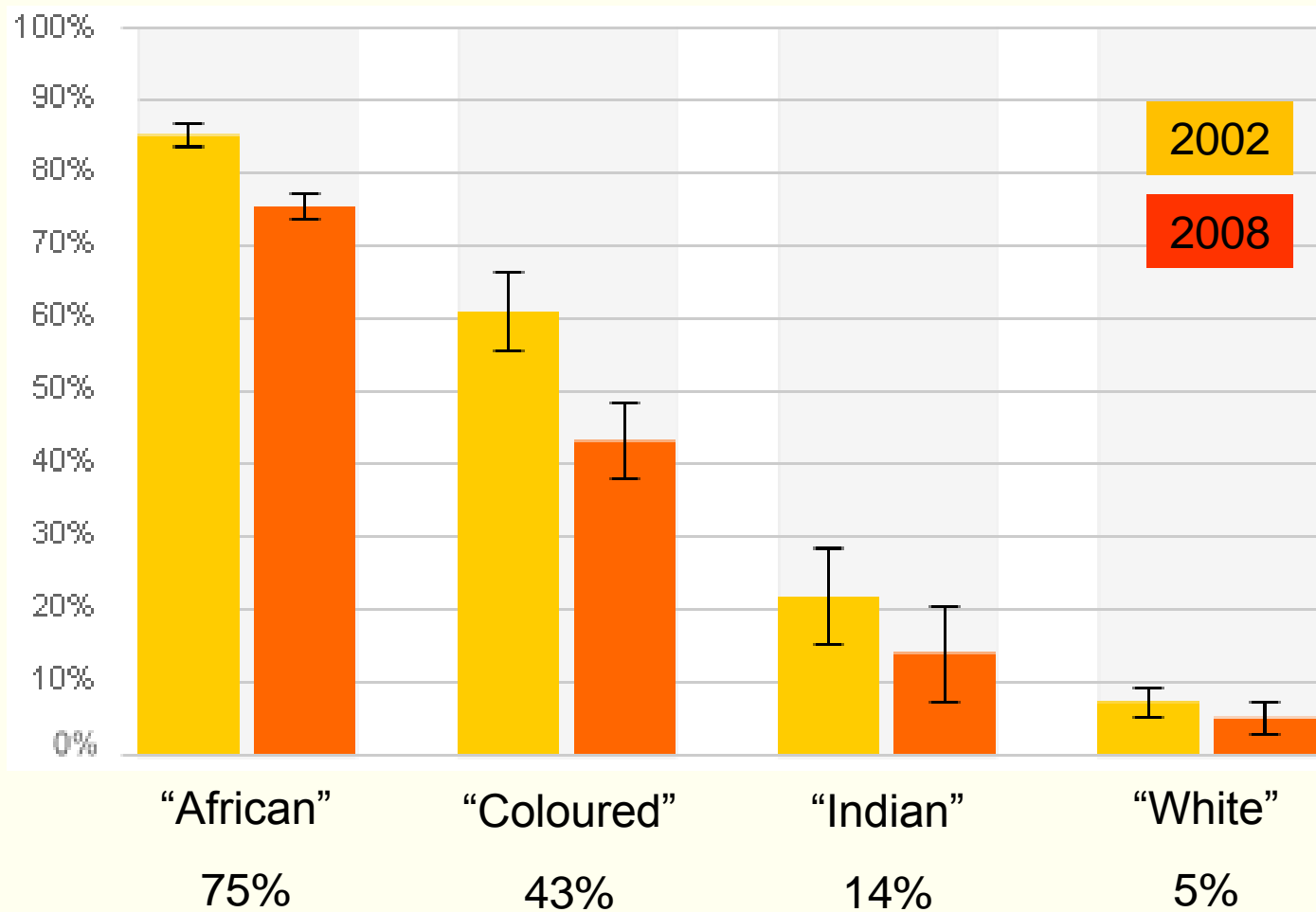
## Access to basic sanitation:

- **Official stats:** 71% of households have basic sanitation (Mid-term review 2007)
- **Child-centred:** 55% of children in HHs with basic sanitation (Children Count – GHS 2007)

## Unemployment:

- **Official stats:** 25% of adults unemployed (Mid-term review - 2007)
- **Child-centred:** 40% of children live in HHs with NO employed adult (Children Count – GHS 2007)

# Racial inequality



*Proportion of children in households with income below the 40<sup>th</sup> percentile*

*(Source: General Household Survey 2008 – Children Count analysis)*

# A strong child rights framework

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Sources:

- South African Constitution (supreme law)
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child [CRC] (ratified)
- African Charter on the Rights & Welfare of the Child (ratified)
- International Covenant on Civil & Political rights (ratified)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (signed)

A rights approach guides the agenda of social transformation.

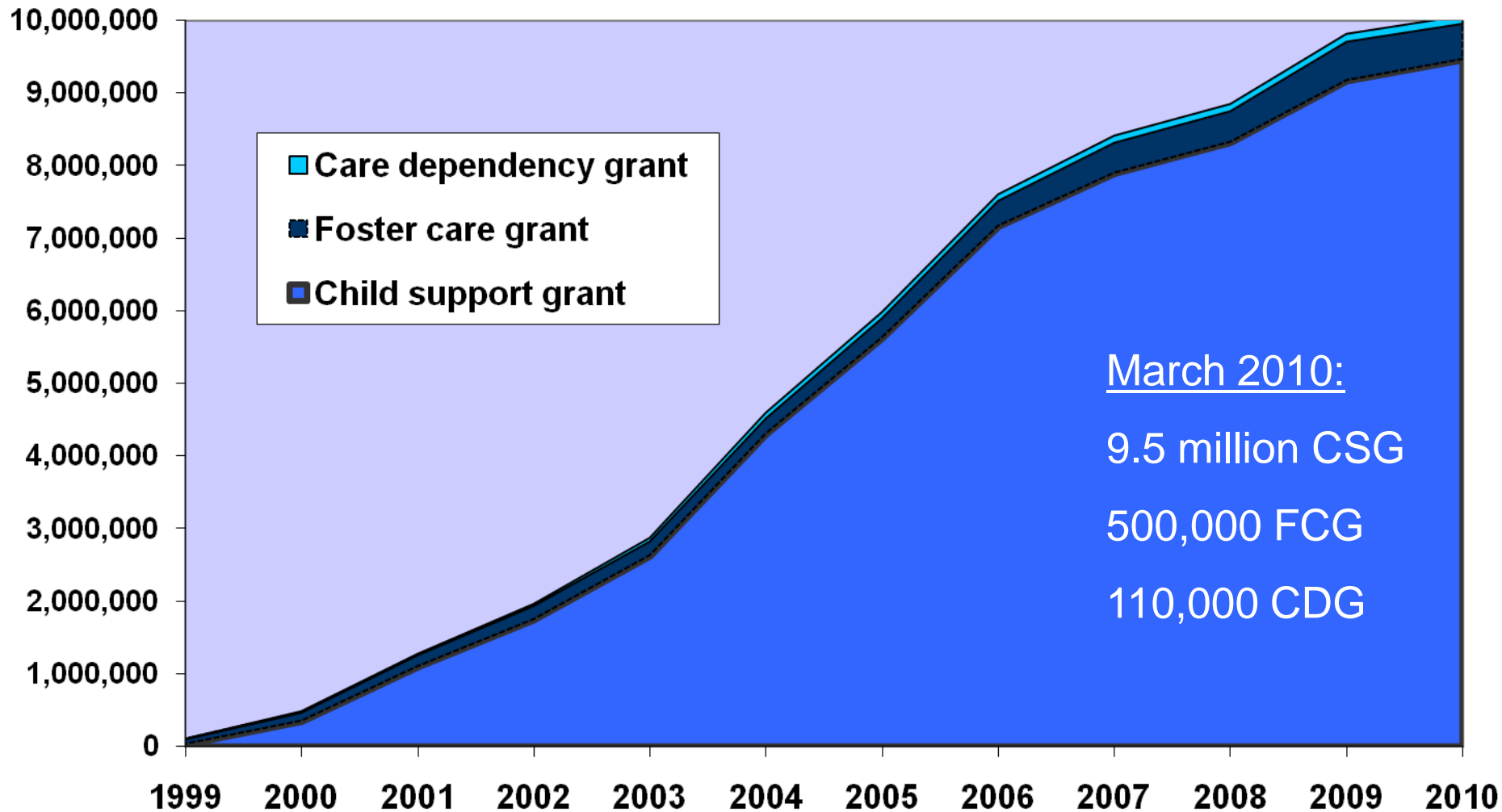
UNCRC and ACRWC set out the concurrent responsibilities of parents and the state:

In the context of high unemployment and widespread poverty, the state's duty to provide material assistance must be realised.

This is happening through a range of policies and programmes – including social assistance.

# Social security for children

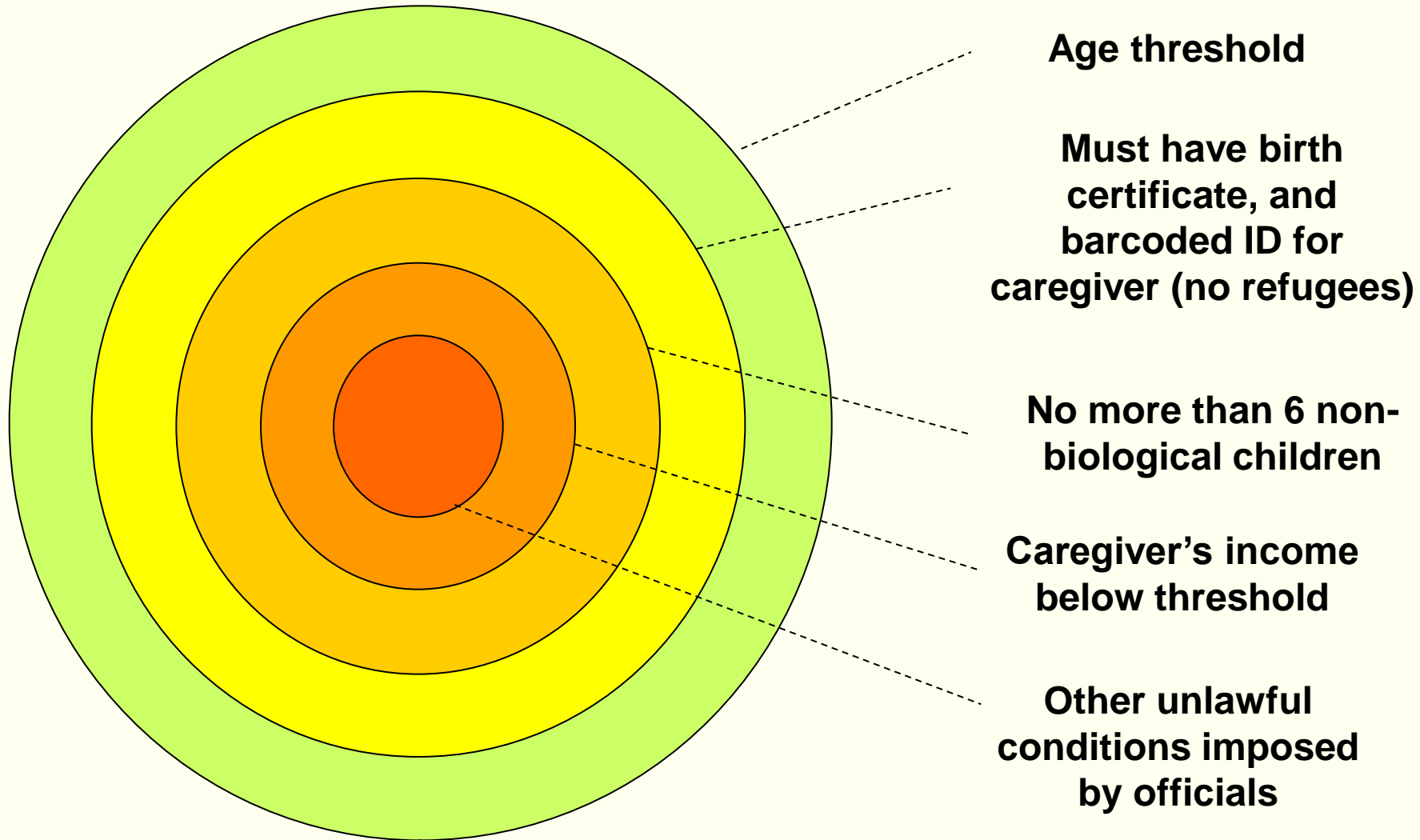
NUMBER OF CHILD GRANT BENFICIARIES, BY YEAR



Source: SOCPEN data

# Targeting the CSG: administrative conditions

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# Introducing behavioural conditions in the CSG

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1998 – Inception (replacing State Maintenance Grant)

- Several conditionalities, including participation in “development programmes” and proof that the children were immunised.
- The requirement in respect of development programmes was soon dropped after it became obvious that such programmes did not exist in many areas.
- The immunisation requirement was dropped out of recognition that it discriminated against children who were already disadvantaged in terms of access to health services. (Leatt & Budlender 2006)



# Another attempt at conditions

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2004 – Draft regulations to Social Assistance Act of 2002  
(conditions not included in final wording).

*“A primary caregiver who is in receipt of a CSG must comply with the following criteria...”*

- The child must have accommodation, be fed and clothed*
- The child must receive immunisation and other health services*
- The child, if of school-going age, must attend school regularly*
- The grant must be used for the benefit of the child*

‘Normative injunctions’  
– not specified /  
measurable

Behavioural  
conditions

# To condition or not to condition?

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- 2008 - SA government commissioned a study on the feasibility and appropriateness of attaching behavioural conditions to a social support grant for older children (15-17 years)
- Review includes available documentation on cash transfers in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Nicaragua, Argentina, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, El Salvador, Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica, Turkey.
- Contextual similarities between Brazil and South Africa include high levels of inequality, racially-linked socio-economic conditions, and large numbers of single female caregivers.

# Cash transfers in SA v CCTs elsewhere

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- Social assistance in SA is directed to individuals, rather than as family / household grants or part of a package.
- Targeting of SA cash transfers is broad / simple as opposed to more complex / layered / geographic targeting used in many other countries. Targeting in other countries sometimes involves municipalities / local institutions, while SA targeting mechanism is simpler.
- Similar impacts in SA to elsewhere – despite absence of conditions. Little evidence that the condition causes the outcome, as opposed to the cash.

*“The vast bulk of the literature on impact reflects the impact of the grants as a whole, rather than particular aspects of the grants such as the conditions.”* [Budlender 2008]

# Conditions in the context of age extension

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## 2009 – conditions in draft regulations

- The issue of conditionality raised again in the context of preparations to extend the age threshold of the CSG (from 15 to 17).
- New draft regulations provided for the extension of the CSG to children up to the age of 18. They also introduced a behavioural condition requiring proof of the child's enrolment and attendance in school every six months.
- If not enrolled in school or attended school irregularly, the CSG would be suspended and the caregiver would need to submit reasons explaining the child's absence from school.
- If accepted as "reasonable", then the CSG would be re-instated, but with no provision for back-pay for the 'lost' months when the CSG was suspended.

# Arguments against the education condition

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- School attendance is high: 96% for all school-age children, and higher for children under 15 (compulsory schooling phase).
- No sign of gender discrimination in attendance; drop-out slightly higher for boys, who are more likely to regard schooling as 'useless'.
- Problems of institutional access: 21% of primary school-age children and 33% of high school-age children live 'far' from nearest school.
- Widely acknowledged problems in quality of education – school resources, absent teachers, etc. (i.e. 'supply-side' problems)
- CSG already has desired affect, narrowing the 'non-attendance' gap. Money is spent on fees, transport, uniform...
- Places additional burden on applicants, and on govt officials
- Not possible to monitor and enforce
- Undermines constitutional rights

# Settling on 'soft' conditions

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## 2010 – final regulations

- Following submissions from researchers and children's rights groups and civil society organisations, the conditions were 'softened' – they remain in the regulations, but no sanctions are specified.
- Essentially we are left with a set of conditions which are unenforceable and place an impossible (and nonsensical) burden on public institutions.
- Risk that 'soft' conditions will be meaningless and/or enforced punitively by social security officials.

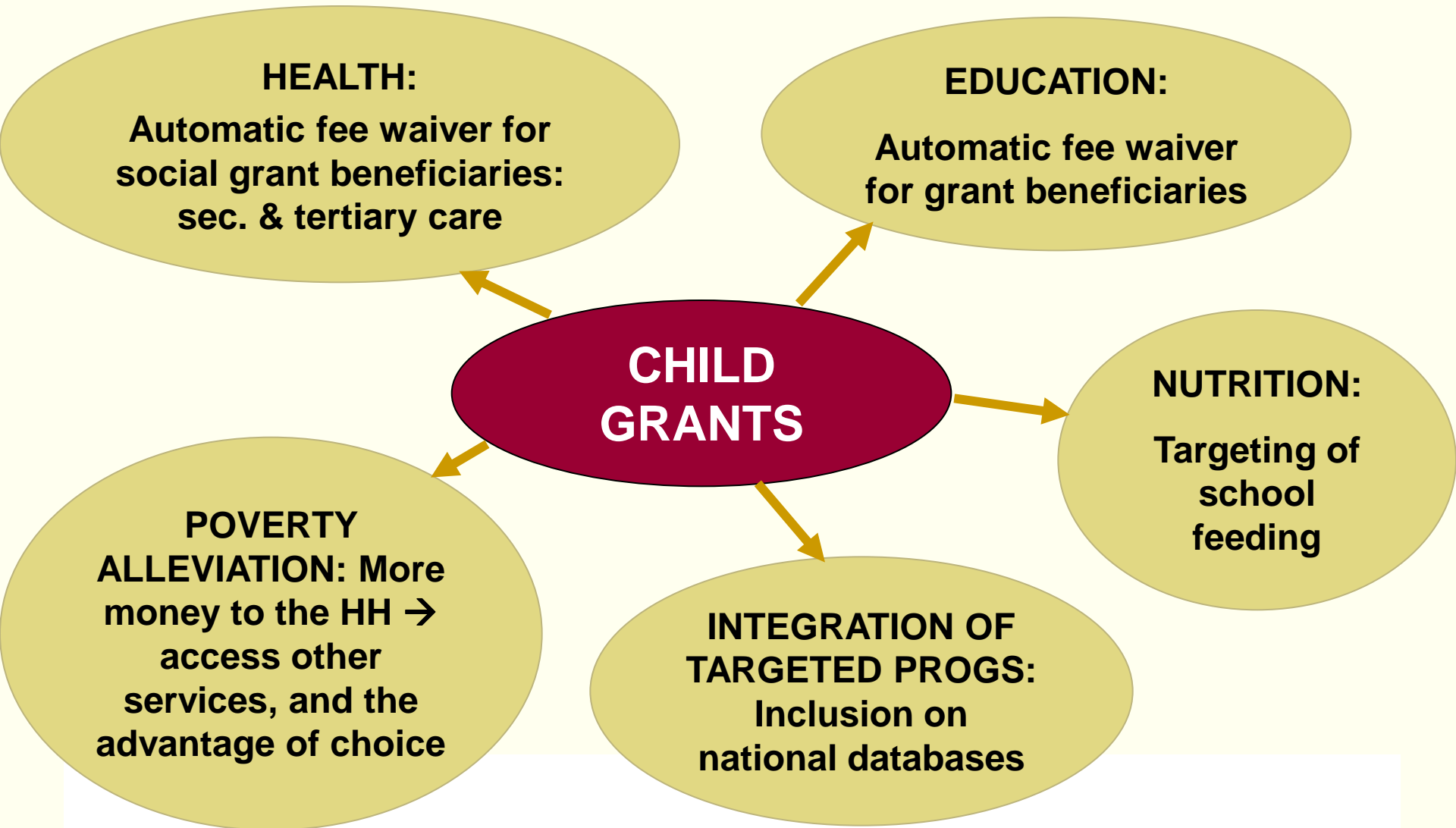
# Towards an integrated approach

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- Multiple and linked inclusions (and exclusions) already exist
- Social security as central → implications for poverty alleviation programmes in provincial and local spheres
- Multiple inclusion does not mean cross-subsidisation
- Multiple inclusion increase the importance of accurate (and inclusive) targeting

# Multiple inclusions: social security as central

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# Effects of multiple inclusions

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- Multiple inclusions reduce burden on the poor and cost to the state
- Benefits are compounded / cumulative
- Essential to get the targeting right – risk of multiple **exclusion**
- Errors of inclusion preferable to errors of exclusion? (political / economic v. developmental / rights perspectives)

# 'Anti-poverty' strategy: two aims

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Some inherent contradictions for targeted benefits to children?

## **“Poverty alleviation” (short-term):**

- Children conceptualised as a marginal/vulnerable group (response emphasizes ‘safety nets’: social grants, nutrition support, etc)  
→ YET, desire to “reduce reliance on state” – concerns about dependency.

## **“Poverty eradication / reduction” (long-term):**

- Children conceptualised as pivotal in poverty reduction (response emphasizes education and early childhood education to break cycles of poverty.)
- A sense that investments in children can happen outside the context of the family *“The status of their families should not determine their destiny.”*  
→ YET, educational outcomes are determined by context.

# A 'social investment' perspective

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- Learning as “the pillar of the economies and societies of the future” → focus on human capital investment (starting from pre-school)
  - More emphasis on assuring the future than ameliorating current conditions → social spending to break inter-generational poverty cycles
  - Investments in individuals have future benefits for broader society → focus on children (Jane Jensen 2010)
- Having two aims can lead to contradictions in targeting (eg. Handa & Benjamin 2006 )

# A 'social investment' perspective

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- The Department of Social Development is “seeking to align its planning with the new planning framework led by The Presidency, in moving away from an output based approach to focusing on achieving set outcomes relevant to social development. The outcome based approach will allow the assessment of the appropriateness of the actual outputs, improve the measurement of the impact and real change brought about by social development policies, legislation and programmes.” (Social Development Chapter in Treasury: Estimates of National Expenditure 2010)

# Questions

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- To what extent can (should) complex or long-term ‘outcomes’ be predetermined, specified, or required?
- To what extent do the interrelated considerations of ‘impact’ and ‘measurement’ dictate the model (possibly leading to prescriptive behaviour requirements)?
- A social investment perspective assumes that there will be ripple effects in the long term. In the meantime, how do we reconcile this with the rights framework?
- Where multiple inclusions are built into the targeting of programmes, there is a compounding aspect to poverty alleviation – with one programme being a gateway to other benefits in the “basket of goods”. How do we build on this?