

The Child Support Grant and Rural Womens' Livelihoods
A case study of Umsinga

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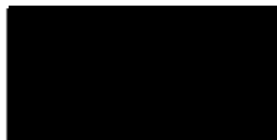
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Abstract

There is a body of literature that locates social protection at the centre of poverty reduction. Other discourses see social welfare as creating dependency. In the literature, that links social protection to poverty reduction, social grants are seen as a means of addressing poverty and vulnerability, as they provide safety nets for the poor. The South African Child Support Grant is a well-known example of this as it contributes significantly to household income in a majority of households, especially those whose substantial source of income is made up of social grants. The grant is targeted at children who live in poor households and was introduced in 1998. This study uses the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) as a framework for exploring whether and how the child support grant can facilitate access to a wide range of livelihood options and opportunities in rural extended family homesteads. The thesis explores a wide range of literature on social protection starting from the earlier debates on welfare to current works on social protection as part of development policy globally and in the South African context. It also explores the concept of agency and of households. The study was conducted in Msinga, in the province of KwaZulu-Natal using interviews and a focus group discussion with some of the women who receive the grant. In exploring the main research question, the study found that women spent most of the grant money on consumable goods, but also invest some of it on acquiring productive assets. It also found that the grant has generally had positive outcomes for the livelihoods of the women who participated in the study.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BEE	Black Economic Empowerment
CASE	Community Agency for Social Enquiry
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers
CSG	Child Support Grant
CDG	Care Dependency Grant
DFID	Department for International Development
DSD	Department of Social Development
FG	Foster Grant
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
OAP	Old Age Pension
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SALDRU	The South African Labour and Development Research Unit
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency
SMG	State Maintenance Grant
StatsSA	Statistics South Africa
SLA	Sustainable Livelihoods Approach
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund
UN	United Nations
US	United States (of America)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to the Research

Following the negative effects of the structural adjustment programmes and the failure of the markets to create jobs, social protection in the form of regular cash transfers to the poor gained popularity in the international development community from the beginning of the 1990s onwards (Merrien, 2013). Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations (UN) among others, started to give particular attention to social protection, thus developing concepts around it. Whether as a means to meet basic needs or to counter social risk or as a human right, cash transfers became part of a broader strategy for alleviating poverty in the developing countries. Many started implementing social protection programmes with cash transfers at the core of these programmes as an attempt to address poverty and vulnerability. The success of these programmes has been evident in the improvement of the lives of the poor and in the significant drop of the depth of poverty in these countries (Adato and Hoddinott, 2008; Barrientos and Hulme, 2009; Houtzager, 2008 and Merrien, 2013). In Latin America such programmes as Progresa in Mexico, Bolsa Familia in Brazil, Plan Familia in Argentina and others, are classic examples of conditional cash transfers (CCT) introduced as mechanisms for poverty reduction and as part of broader social protection policies.

In South Africa, a cash transfer in the form of old age social pension had already been part of the old government's welfare programme since the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Other kinds of cash transfers targeted at poor people were later established, with racial biases toward the white minority of the population. Minor welfare reforms, to address racial disparities, were introduced in the middle of the 1980s. However, a more equitable system of cash transfers which also targeted people with disabilities and children in poor households was implemented as part of the post 1994 democratic government's key strategies for addressing poverty.

One such cash transfer targeted at children in poor households is the child support grant (CSG). The CSG was introduced in 1998 and was a replacement of the state maintenance grant (SMG) which was not universally accessible and had been part of the old government's system. The SMG was introduced prior to the apartheid regime, and continued under apartheid (Guthrie, 2002).

Following the transition to democracy, an investigative process into an equitable social protection system for children by the government in 1995 led to the establishment of the Lund committee¹. The Committee embarked on a process of examining various policy options and eventually proposed the introduction of a cash transfer type of state grant for poor children which is the Child Support Grant (CSG).

It was envisaged that the CSG would reach a greater number of children, especially children in poor households. The grant was initially meant for younger children (i.e. 0 to 7 years of age) when it was first introduced (Lund, 2008); however, the age limit is now set at 18. During the 15 years of its existence the CSG has acted as a buffer, providing the means for many poor and marginalised people to meet their most basic needs. The grant amount is much smaller than the other social grants yet it has the largest number of beneficiaries: in 2007 the CSG recipients comprised 60% of recipients of all social grants. Of the recipients, 76.7% were black females of a working age, and 26.3% were females under 30 (Williams, 2007). The grant is specifically targeted at poor children and is therefore expected to have an impact on poverty. Studies on its impact show that it has contributed significantly to improving the lives of children in poor households and it contributes to household income (Delany et al, 2008), since in most households the grant is pooled with other income in the household (Patel et al, 2012). The main uses include food, education, clothing and other household items as well as health and transportation (DSD, SASSA and UNICEF, 2012). The grant is paid to primary care givers; recipients are in 96% of cases women (Patel and Hochfeld, 2011).

In this context, this study seeks to explore whether the Child Support Grant is spent only on consumption goods or whether it is also used to facilitate access to other livelihood opportunities such as employment, accumulation of assets (as defined in chapter 3) and whether this contributes to a more sustainable livelihood. This study is conducted in a rural area of Msinga (or Umsinga) in KwaZulu-Natal and focuses on young wives (makotis) in extended family homesteads who are receiving the CSG.

The term ‘makoti’ can translate to ‘wife’, however in rural homesteads it is used to refer to a woman who resides in her male partner’s rural family homestead whether married or not.

¹The Lund Committee for Child and Family Support (named after Professor Frances Lund <http://sds.ukzn.ac.za/?2,4,8,4,0>) was set up in 1996 to investigate a policy for the support of children and families

Although the term is used for both married and unmarried women, this study does make a distinction in the section that discusses findings. This distinction is important because it is assumed that women who are makotis are more vulnerable because their security of tenure and their livelihood is determined by that of their husband. When the woman is not married, their vulnerability is even greater than that of a married makoti. Cousins, in his work on land laws and tenure in Umsinga area, established that a makoti's livelihood and tenure security is derived from that of her husband (Cousins, 2011). In the case of incomplete marriage (as described in the findings chapter) a woman does not have any claim under customary practice over the husband's property or resources unless he allocates them to her (Budlender et al, 2011; Cousins, 2011). It is in this context that the study explores the role of the child support grant in these women's lives, their livelihoods as part of their family unit, the variety of livelihood opportunities they may have and the choices they make in relation to those opportunities.

1.2 The Objectives of this Research

The main objectives of the research are:

- To examine how the Child Support Grant is used by young makotis in Umsinga.
- To explore the perceptions of these women about what the Child Support Grant enables them to do and what the impact is on their children and families.
- To explore whether and how the Child Support Grant strengthens the asset base and livelihoods of the women and their families.

1.3 The Research Questions

The main questions that the research is trying to answer are: To what extent does the Child Support Grant enable women to exploit a range of livelihood options? Does this reduce their vulnerability and make their livelihoods sustainable? The subsidiary questions are:

- What are the different uses of the Child Support Grant by women in Umsinga?
- What contribution does the Child Support Grant have in sustaining livelihoods?
- Does the Child Support Grant promote livelihood security for women in Umsinga?
- Does the Child Support Grant improve the status of rural women in extended family households?

In exploring these questions, the dissertation argues that the recipients of the child support grant, while they spend the grant on consumable goods, they also spend some of the money on productive assets, such as livestock. Most of the grant money is used by the recipients, who participated in this study, on food and other household items that are necessary for running of the household. Some of the money is then saved and invested in acquiring productive assets such as goats and dwellings. This means that the grant enables its recipients to accumulate assets which are significant in strengthening livelihoods and reducing vulnerability.

1.4 Background of the study site –Msinga area

The Msinga local municipal area has a youthful population with about 51 percent of the population in the age group of 15- 64 years old and 44% under the age of 15 years old (Municipal fact sheet, 2011 Census). Msinga has large families and as in most rural areas there are more women than men found. Over 66% of households are female-headed (Municipal fact sheet, 2011 Census). Among those 20 years old and older, over 40% are reported as having no formal schooling, and only 20% have completed matric or higher education (Municipal fact sheet, 2011 Census). This has led to high levels of illiteracy in the area. There are 172 schools serving 61,605 learners in Msinga (Msinga IDP, 2011/2012). Approximately 50% of the economically active population – persons aged 15-64 years old available for work – are unemployed. The rate of unemployment is even higher among youth (persons ages 15-34 years old) reaching 58% (Municipal fact sheet, 2011 Census). StatsSA data from 2007 reported that about 71% of Msinga's economically active population has no monthly income, and about a quarter (24% percent) of households earn less than R1600 per month.

The study was conducted in Ncunjane, a small village, which is part of Mchunu tribal area. The area had previously been a labour tenant farm which after the Restitution of Land Rights Act² was transferred to the ownership of the former labour tenants.

The area is lightly settled with more land available for multiple uses including, cropping and livestock production. It is abundant with natural resources which are used for firewood and thatching in the community.

²The Restitution of Land Rights Act (no.22 of 1994) was passed by the national assembly. Its aim was aimed at providing restitution to people who had lost land as a result of racially discriminatory laws of the past.

Table 1: Relevant statistics for Msinga (source Statistics South Africa, 2011 Census)

Total Population: 177577			
Young people (0-14 yrs.)	43,7%	Working Age (15-64 yrs.)	50,8%
Unemployment rate	49,5%	Youth unemployment rate	58,2%
Education			
No Schooling aged 20+	41,2%	Higher education aged 20+	3,2%
Total No. of Households:37724			
Female headed households	66,7%		
Housing owned/paying off	70,2%		
Flush toilet connected to sewerage	1,7%	Weekly refuse removal	1,3%
Piped water inside dwelling	3,7%	Electricity for lighting	25,1%

The Map below was taken from the 2011 Integrated Development Plan (IDP) which shows the level of poverty based on 4 categories as discussed in the IDP. These are:

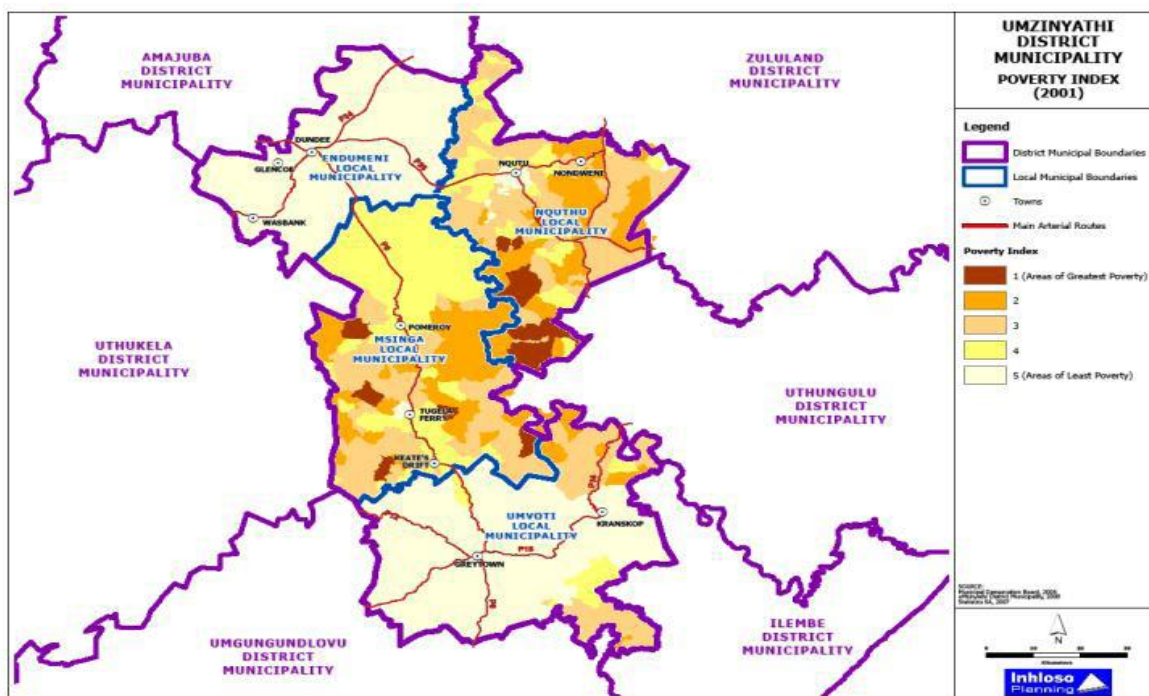
Category 1: Income – those who earn less than R400 per month

Category 2: Unemployment – the working age population who are unemployed

Category 3: Dependency ratio – the ratio of dependents to earners

Category 4: Education – those over 20 with no formal schooling

Figure 1



Source: Msinga Municipality IDP 2011/2012

1.5 Overview of the Chapters

This thesis comprises seven chapters, including the introduction chapter, which gives the background to the study and presents the research question that the study is trying to answer. It also gives an overview of the area where the study was carried out.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter explores a wide range of literature on social protection and cash transfers. It looks at the different debates on social protection and social policy from different perspectives globally, with a focus on cash transfers.

The first line of debate is promoted by the neo-liberals who argue that social welfare creates dependency and therefore should be discouraged. The second line is that which is informed by a social democratic agenda which sees social welfare as being necessary for de-commodification of people from the labour market. The chapter also provides the background to the South African case, describing the poverty scene and social policy as part of the broader poverty reduction strategy.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 3 presents the Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) as the conceptual framework used as an analytical framework in the research. It discusses the different elements of the approach and its application in vulnerability analysis. The SLA views assets as essential to livelihoods. The central argument in SLA is that, the use of assets and combination of livelihoods activities is key to achieving sustainable livelihoods.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this research, which was a qualitative study of 28 women, using in-depth interview and a focus group discussion. It explores the tools for the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter 5: Findings

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the research. It provides a description of the context and presents specific responses from the respondents that illustrate key findings from the research. The broad findings show that the child support grant contributes to household's incomes and enables investments on human capital and accumulation of productive assets.

Chapter 6: Discussion

The discussion of the findings is combined with the analysis and the application of the conceptual framework. The discussion shows how the accumulation of assets has contributed to livelihoods as household level. It also discusses the extent to which the grant has contributed to livelihoods in the context of the women who participated in the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This chapter summarises the key elements of the study based on the findings of the research and raises questions for further consideration. The chapter seeks to draw attention to the gaps in the discussion of social protection and social policy in the current debates.

1.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the background and the overview of the study. It has also presented the questions that the study is attempting to answer and its objectives. The chapter also provided a brief background of the study area including a summary of the key statistics of the area as presented in the Municipality's IDP. The following chapter is a review of the literature on social protection and social welfare, looking at the key debates in the field of social protection.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of social protection and social welfare, by first looking at the history and then moving on to the current debates. The field has evolved over the years and so has the terminology that describes it. While it was common to talk about ‘social welfare’ or just ‘welfare’ in the past, in the current development discourse ‘social policy’, and ‘social protection’ are the commonly used terms. The change in terminology signifies a shift in thinking and in the whole conception of what we used to be known as welfare. Hence, I separate the discussion into what I call the ‘old’ debate and the ‘new’ debate. The chapter discusses the different elements of social protection and cash transfers are discussed as part of the current debate.

The ‘old’ welfare debate is between those of a socio-democratic persuasion, who argue that social welfare provision by the state is essential for de-commodification of welfare services (the term was introduced by Esping-Andersen and means that peoples should be able to access welfare services independent of the markets) and those of a neo-classical/neoliberal influence, who argue against social welfare on the grounds that it creates dependency and that labour market participation is the only way for people to meet their needs.

The current social protection debate demonstrates both continuities and differences from the old debate, and this is evident in the way that social issues such as poverty and inequality have received more attention in the global economic and social policy discussions worldwide. Unlike in the old debate, now there appears to be a consensus on the need to prioritize issues of poverty and inequality and on social protection as one of the main strategies to address them. The points of general agreement globally are that 1) markets often fail, resulting in widespread poverty and unemployment; 2) cash is a convenient and least expensive way of getting support to poor people; 3) grants given to support the poor should not be so generous that they kill motivation for work and 4) attaching conditionalities is one way to ensure that these grants achieve specific predetermined outcomes. The chapter begins by providing a brief historical background of social welfare, and then moves straight into the discussion of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ debates on social protection, before providing an overview of the South African context.

2.2 The Old Debate on Social Welfare

Neoclassical thinking and Welfare

Social welfare provision in the English-speaking world is dated back to England at the beginning of the 17th century. The Elizabethan Poor Law marked the first step for government involvement in social needs of people. Poor Laws saw the emergence of a social welfare system in the form of parish level collection of taxes used to offer relief to the poor (Haarman, 2000). Neoclassical ideas (i.e. markets allocate efficiently) influenced the design of these poor relief programmes. Poor relief was therefore aimed only at those who were unable to work because of some kind of incapability or disability. Able bodied people were meant to work in the established workhouses to provide for their needs (Besley, Coate and Guinnane, 2001). During the industrial era the new poor laws were introduced, taking a more punitive approach in order to discourage the poor from claiming relief ‘instead of working’. These laws “intended the incarceration of the recipients aiming at preventing fraud as well as the coercion to seek an honest living” (Haarman, 2000: 28). Much of the industrial period and the subsequent rise of capitalism at the time, saw a move towards high reliance on wages and increased commodification of labour. The first forms of social insurance programmes were established at this time.

In Germany, for example, social insurance schemes that covered some categories of workers were established during the period of 1883 and 1889 (Midgely, 1997). This intensified the idea of the markets being the solution and discouraging dependency on poor relief. Different kinds of social security systems which adopted the same ideas were established in different parts of the world (Haarman, 2000). These programmes were not universal and punitive measures were put in place to discourage the “undeserving poor” to benefit from any of the programmes instead of working.

The Social Democratic Thinking: an ambition to decommodify

In the late 1800s the bouts of poverty saw the emergence of the social democratic thinking, which was moving the responsibility to meet people’s needs from the markets to the state. The social democrats called for provision of welfare services through the state apparatus instead of the market. They argued that this is necessary in order to decommodify labour power.

In the social democratic thinking, the state is seen as key in the protection of the welfare of citizens to counter the negative effects of the market. This is a process of de-commodification (Esping-Anderson, 1990).

The idea of depending on the markets to meet the basic needs is challenged on the basis that 'commodification of labour power limits social relationships and social obligations to just an exchange of labour for cash which ignores the social embeddedness of human relations (van Niekerk, 2007). The result is the removal of social rights, which means that when a person cannot sell their labour their survival is threatened (van Niekerk, 2007). Furthermore, the inequalities that exist in the market, particularly in the labour market between those who sell labour and those who buy it are problematic and they can only be eliminated through the attainment of social rights (van Niekerk, 2007). On the contrary, the neo-liberals argue that market participation is the only way to meet needs (which can also be seen as dependency on the market) and they further argue that this will ensure individual freedom (liberty). Individuals are encouraged to 'freely' participate in the labour market and not be 'dependent' on the state to meet their basic needs. This commodification of basic services denies individuals their social rights (van Niekerk, 2007). Social rights should not be limited only to the market participation but to citizenship, which is a social contract, applicable to all members, regardless of whether they are rich or poor. Work on the other hand is a private contract (van Niekerk 2007) and when a right to citizenship is made dependent on participation in the labour market, it is not individual freedom, but rather 'coerced freedom'.

Van Niekerk argues that when people's survival is dependent on their ability to sell labour to the market, rather than it being free choice, it becomes forced labour. The market should not be the only means for the people to meet their needs. The social democrats argue therefore for the provision of social services by the state including health and education. In this way people can maintain a livelihood outside of the market, rather than be fully 'dependent' on it. This is the only way that people can be completely 'free' to make their own choices and exercise agency over their own lives. Examples of decommodified welfare states are found in the Scandinavian countries. These have been achieved through secured full employment over time and economic growth. In a decommodified welfare state services are comprehensive and universal, and are governed by principles social rights, equality and redistribution.

The Welfare State

It was not until the 1930s during the Great Depression that universal programmes started being introduced in the United States (Fraser and Gordon, 1994) because of the devastating poor conditions at the time. The shift towards state provision became widely accepted, marked by the Beveridge Report in Britain (Silburn, 1995). This led to the emergence of the welfare state. According to Orloff (1996) welfare states are institutions of social provision – the set of social assistance and social insurance programs, universal citizenship entitlements, and public services. In order to create some kind of a buffer against lack of income and provision of social security, different states chose different responses ranging from social based to labour based policies (Seekings, 2008). This is the background that has influenced the conception of welfare programmes globally over the years. When the economy flourished in the period between 1945 and 1975, commonly referred to the “Golden Age” social expenditure was also at its peak (George and Page, 1995). However, when economies declined, a strong critique of the welfare state by the neo-liberals emerged. It is important to note, however, that provision of social welfare even from the beginning, has not been without problems. From the outset, there has been reluctance to promote social welfare for the fear of creating welfare dependency.

The Critique of the Social Democratic Thinking: Welfare Dependency

Welfare dependency is an ideological concept that comes up often in social welfare literature (Niskanen, 1996; Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Gentev, 1995); referring to subsisting off welfare instead of relying on employment. Fraser and Gordon (1994) describe it as a state of complete reliance on welfare provision to survive, and not being able to get out of it. The idea of welfare dependency is often used by those who seek to discredit welfare programmes, and discourage expansion of welfare services (Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Gentev, 1995; Smiley, 2001 and Potts, undated). It is a concept meant to invalidate the legitimacy of the ‘need’ for welfare and to discourage people from claiming the benefits. These are the ideas prevalent with the neo-classical thinking, which emerged strongly against the welfare state. This thinking is not new. Social welfare programmes were stigmatized from the time they were first instituted and questions around eligibility were at the core of this stigmatization. The distinctions between the deserving poor and the non-deserving poor shaped the very design of the initial welfare programmes.

The idea of welfare dependency became prominent in the United States (US) and was used to challenge a programme of relief called the Aid to Families with Dependent Children - AFDC (Fraser and Gordon, 1995). Through this programme, single mothers who were raising children on their own without support of a male provider or a job could claim welfare benefits. The programme benefited women who would have otherwise been destitute or trapped in 'bad' relationships. However, labelling of their plight as 'dependency' discredited them and not the conditions that created the problems they experienced. This argument appeared to have a gender bias as the beneficiaries were in this context, women (Fraser and Gordon, 1994).

It has to be noted however, that the ideological framework that underpins the concept of welfare dependency did not originate in the US. DiLollo (2006) argues that it comes from a history of marginalizing the poor and the destitute because 'people must earn a living' and not depend on welfare to live, such as was the case with the Poor Laws. Dependency is framed as 'shameful' although opportunities to 'come out' of dependency might not be equally accessible to all people.

Marshall makes a similar point, in referring to the period of the poor laws, that the poor who accepted relief had to "cross the road that separated the community of citizens from the outcast company of the destitute" (Marshall, 1950: 24) if they wanted to regain independence. In a sense Marshall argues that if people were living off welfare relief, they had in a sense given up their citizenship. Citizens work and earn a wage, while the outcasts are dependent. The framework that stressed the need for people to earn a living and not depend on welfare is however incoherent and incomplete in that, while the conditions (i.e. poverty) that lead to the need for welfare are seen to be legitimate, alternatives to addressing the conditions are not clearly proposed. The only available means (receiving welfare) in the absence of alternatives is seen as 'illegitimate' and therefore become the focus of the critique. It is also not clear how dependency is determined, and if poverty is not a choice, how is it that depending on welfare is? The argument is limited to a point that receiving state support to meet one's needs creates dependency, and dependency should be discouraged because it kills motivation or willingness to work. This passivity perpetuates poverty instead of addressing it (Potts, undated).

The underlying assumptions made here are that 1) the poor are responsible for their poverty; 2) they can access employment opportunities; 3) employment will give them enough income to meet their daily needs; 4) they have the skills that are required by the job market.

Ferguson (2015) challenges these at different levels. Firstly, he argues that the economy is failing to create enough jobs to be able to absorb the amount of labour available. The poor, since they do not own the means of production, only have their labour to sell in the market. The demand for labour has been dwindling and even more in the recent times and when there is no demand for labour, there are not many options available. Using an analogy based on a common saying 'give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime' he contends that teaching a man to fish does not help him when he is not allowed to fish anymore because there is not enough fish anyway. The idea of dependency therefore, he argues, is misguided. Secondly, he argues that wealth creation happens within a society which provides the enabling and favourable conditions for accumulation and the proceeds should therefore be accrued equitably to its members. Thirdly, he cautions that the current rates of unemployment are not going to permanently disappear, and thinking about creating massive employment opportunities in the near or distant future is an illusion. He proposes a new way of thinking about social policy, which is discussed later in this chapter.

2.3 Social Protection – the New Debate

So far, this review of the debates has addressed the developments almost exclusively in western contexts. Social protection was not, until only recently, considered to be a valid approach within the mainstream development discourse. The idea of social protection emerged at the end of the 1980s within the development community as a way of addressing the effects of the structural adjustment programmes (Adesina, 2010). Social protection is understood as “all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups” (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004: i).

Social protection became part of the Development Goals and a preferred instrument for poverty relief. Prior to this, social protection in the form of poor relief had been regarded as ‘wasteful’ expenditure or harmful to the economy as it kills motivation for work, and creates dependency on the state. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) started focusing on social insurance (Merrien, 2013) as a form of social protection for workers against loss of earnings as a result of retirement, or sudden inability to work.

Social protection incorporates a range of policies aimed at providing some kind of protection against devastating conditions that affect people's well-being. It is about essential health care and basic income security, which reduces poverty, inequality and ill health. This form of social protection was recognized and accepted as it provided income to the workers in times of special crises, who together with their employers contributed towards it in 'normal' earning times. Other institutions such as the World Bank originally did not approve of social protection except for limited safety nets for the 'deserving poor'. The shift occurred only in the 1990s, following the failure of the structural adjustment programmes and the global economic downturn and the visible impact of poverty coupled with the realization that the markets were not providing solutions.

Social protection moved to the top of the agenda for development policy as a strategy for poverty reduction – for the World Bank as a risk management strategy. The ILO promoted social protection for the developing countries – calling for the social protection floor (ILO, 2009). By this time social protection became an ideal policy for other organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the British Department for International Development (DFID). A series of international engagements on social protection took place (such as a conference in Livingstone in 2006 and a regional experts meeting in Africa in 2008). Some cash transfer programmes had already been implemented in developing countries such as in Brazil and Mexico. These had different objectives for different countries, but involved long-term transfer of cash to the poor. Although there is consensus on adopting social protection, and cash transfers in particular, there continues to be tensions about the objectives of such programmes. For the UN, social protection is about meeting basic needs of the poor, and within this framework, ILO sees it also as human rights issue and the World Bank sees it is a risk management strategy. The funding in the form of loans of the Brazilian Bolsa Familia by the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank in the range of just over 2 billion USD was by far the most visible declaration of support for cash transfers as a strategy for poverty alleviation (Merrien, 2013).

As a poverty reduction strategy, the new form of social protection in the global south, in the form of social grants or cash transfers, exhibits a linking of an economic growth agenda and social strategies which include the development of human capital and meeting basic needs. Cash transfers strengthen the ability of the poor to overcome barriers to escape poverty traps through investing in human capital productive asset accumulation (Barrientos and Hulme, 2009).

They are “intended to increase or smooth consumption of goods and services provided through the market system...” (Farrington and Slater 2006:1). Rather than creating dependency, they are seen as providing opportunities for the poor to get out of poverty. Access to regular cash transfers will give access for the poor to opportunities that they otherwise would not have access to because of cash constraints. When they get some kind of relief, they can then use the money to facilitate access to employment and invest in productive activities which would build some security against certain shocks (Potts, undated).

2.4 Social Protection and Livelihoods

Social protection in the form cash transfers can protect households against livelihood risk (IDS, 2006). It can “minimize the likelihood of downward livelihood trajectories and institute effective and sustainable social protection strategies...” (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007: 93). Social protection is about promoting livelihoods, while giving autonomy to the poor (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). To avoid destitution, the poor respond to pressures in different ways. Ellis (2007) argues that one of the ways is risk aversion, which means they do not engage in activities which carry a level of uncertainty (Ellis, 2007) even if it might have positive impacts on the livelihoods. They also tend to dispose of assets as a way of responding to livelihoods risks (shocks and stresses), leading to extreme vulnerability. Risks can be sudden external once-off occurrences, commonly described in the livelihoods framework as shocks, such as sudden death of a breadwinner. Alternatively, they can be foreseeable incidents which are part of a life cycle, understood as stresses, such as ageing. However, risks are part of livelihoods and all households are exposed to risks at one point or another. Some households are more susceptible to risks than others. The susceptibility to risk (the vulnerability) is determined by the capability to cope or withstand such risk(s). A cash transfer could potentially mitigate this risk, if it is invested towards livelihoods building and strengthening. Thus social protection can be seen as viable for livelihoods.

2.5 Cash Transfers as part of Social Welfare to Address Poverty

Much of the literature about cash transfers shows how cash transfers can be the means for addressing poverty. Some studies conducted on the impact of cash transfers (Adato and Hoddington, 2007; Rawlings, 2005; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009 and others) show how they have contributed to poverty reduction in households that receive them. Much of the impact is attributed to how people who receive cash transfers use them.

In most randomized studies in different countries (Aker, 2013; Dasso and Fernandez, 2013; Adato and Hoddington, 2007; Rawlings, 2005; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009 and others), research shows that a large proportion of the transfers is spent on food, thus contributing to the nutrition and well-being of the members of households, especially children. Other expenses include clothing, school fees, health and household expenses such as water and lights bills, and savings.

In a few cases, there is evidence that the money has also been used to start small enterprises, such as in India, and instances where people increased ownership of basic assets such as the increased number of chicken people own in the Kalomo Project in Zambia (Adesina, 2010). Some of the success stories about grants are recorded in other developing countries such as Brazil, Namibia and others. In Namibia, the Basic Income Grant was introduced in 2004 as a pilot project implemented by a coalition of churches, trade unions, NGOs and AIDS organizations. The pilot results have been documented, revealing a fall in the food poverty line from 76% to 37%, an increase in numbers of people finding a job or becoming self-employed, an increase in school attendance and participation and a decrease in underweight in children (Robeyns, 2009). Results include a recorded fall in crime rates and no recorded increase in alcohol abuse.

In Brazil guaranteed minimum income was adopted as a strategy for poverty eradication in 1991 and in 1995 the basic income grants were introduced in different parts of Brazil (Hall, 2008). These minimum grants were an opportunity to encourage school attendance among poor families, and a condition for the grant has been attendance at school. As a result of these income guarantee schemes, it is reported that school enrolment has increased; the level of economic activity locally has also increased as households can afford to participate in the economic opportunities and the rate of criminal activity has decreased (Suplicy, 2002).

Studies in Mozambique (Hanlon, 2004) also show the significant impact of cash transfers. In one instance cash transfers were given to demobilized soldiers and, when these transfers had ended, studies showed the impact they had on the lives of those who received them. Evidence showed that these cash transfers inspired a diversification of livelihood activities. The studies recorded that 86% of the soldiers got involved in agricultural activities, and some of the money was invested in schooling for the children (Hanlon, 2004). In another instance cash transfers were given to the victims of the floods in the year 2000.

While most of these grants were spend on household items, over 20% of the money was spent on farming activities such as purchasing seeds and livestock, which had significant impact on the livelihoods (Hanlon, 2004). This investment in productive assets, is in some instances, Ferguson argues, a strategy used to protect capital against claims that can be made by others who expect assistance from the person in possession of it. This is the way a lot of African societies have lived for centuries.

A person who has means is expected to share their resources with others, to whom s/he is 'obligated' to meet their needs as well. Ferguson (2015) has found in his work in parts of Southern Africa that buying assets such as livestock is a way for securing cash from such claims. These assets then become security since they can be converted to cash at a later stage when 'more pressing' needs later arise.

Critics of cash transfers raise questions about the legitimacy and effectiveness of cash transfers as a policy. Some see them as legitimizing the failure of the state to provide jobs for the poor (Barchiesi, 2006), others, although they applaud and support the idea of social protection, challenge the design of social protection programmes (see Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007; Adesina, 2010). The challenge is the way in which poverty and vulnerability, whether as a result of or a precondition of poverty, is conceptualized (Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux, 2007). For example, a specific group of individuals (such as women or persons with disabilities) is perceived to be 'vulnerable' and social protection programmes will be designed to assist them 'cope' in this context of risk – which, although imperative in the short term, does not address the structural hindrances that cause people to be more at 'risk' or vulnerable than others. Adesina (2010) challenges the way in which social protection, particularly cash transfer programmes, are seen to be having impact when, for example, people who receive them increase the size of their chicken flock. He questions whether using this measure of success means that if the 'visible' result of the increase of livestock had not occurred, the cash transfer would be seen as "unworthy of the effort to mitigate poverty" (Adesina, 2010:10).

In Zambia, for example, it was reported that the cash transfer resulted in an increase in school enrolment; he argues that there should be introspection about what had reversed the high school enrolment that was witnessed in Zambia after its independence. This, he argues, is the missing aspect of the debate of social protection programmes. He therefore argues that the social protection is more a 'social' arm of neo-liberalism and not a departure from it.

Rather than seeing the ‘risk’ (poverty and vulnerability) as something to be managed, it should be emanating from a specific context, which needs to be transformed. This is the idea of transformative social protection.

Mkandawire and Fine conceptualize social protection as merely a ‘clean up’ strategy of the problems that the economic policy has created (Mkandawire, 2001; Fine 2009). Mkandawire argues that social policy should be designed as a comprehensive policy of social development and one that works with economic policy, instead of separately from it. Fine argues that neo-liberalism economic policy formulation creates a “mess”, which places enormous expectations on social policy. However, since neo-liberalism has eroded the social institutions through which social policy could thrive, it is time to think about a new approach to social policy outside of neo-liberalism. When markets fail, he argues, social policy is constrained partly because it is overstretched and under-resourced. However instead of transforming the structural conditions which result in the social problems, the public sector becomes privatized and markets are proposed as providers of social needs, like housing, health care, pensions etc.

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007) advocate for a social protection package that goes beyond simple cash transfers but also incorporates redistribution of resources and comprehensive provision of social services. Ferguson (2015) makes a similar point and argues that distribution should be what informs social protection in the first place. Distribution, he proposes, does not have to be in the form of a ‘hand out’ but rather in the form of a share ownership. He argues that a share is a capitalist form of wealth sharing, and it is a well-established and functional system of capitalism. The same system should be adopted in social protection, where all members become share owners in the wealth. This is an argument that supports the idea that Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux raise, that what is needed is a complete transformation of the system which creates these vulnerabilities in the first place.

2.6 The South African Context

Poverty in South Africa

South Africa is a developing country with high levels of poverty and income inequality. Since the new democratic order poverty and inequality have increased (Makimo, 2004). When comparing South Africa to neighbouring African countries, Armstrong et al. (2008) found that although it is a middle-income country, South Africa's performance on social indicators was worse than that of some low-income countries. The historical distortions of colonialism and later apartheid are major factors contributing to the current situation.

However, even in the new democratic South Africa there is not much improvement in the lives of many South Africans who live in poverty. Research shows that inequality in the country has in fact worsened since the beginning of the 90s (Taylor, 2002). Poverty has been on the agenda for the South African government following its commitment to reducing poverty and as part of its commitment to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with the main goal being that of halving poverty by 2015 (Adelzadeh, 2007).

In South Africa, it is said that about half, or over 20 million, of the population are living in poverty. (Everret, 2005), and most of the poor are black people. This is evident when one considers the different indicators of poverty. For example, it is said that one in ten people in South Africa suffers from malnutrition and stunting, a condition that affects one in every four children (Taylor, 2002). The majority of poor people in South Africa live in rural areas and the poorest 20% get 1.6% of the country's total income (Ashman et al, 2011). Furthermore, studies have shown that poverty is more severe among women and children, with many female-headed households suffering from poverty and HIV and AIDS also adds a burden to the already poor households resulting in loss of household income and thus being exposed to shocks, the effects of which are difficult to reverse (Barrett, et al 2005).

The South African Welfare System

The beginnings of the South African welfare system were in the 1930s of the Union of South Africa, with the state taking over social welfare as one of its functions (Seekings, 2000). Initially the welfare system was fragmented and fraught with racial discrimination and inequitable distribution of welfare services and state assistance. The introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1928 marked the beginning of state intervention into social and economic life of its citizens.

When it was first introduced, the Old Age pension was only meant for white South Africans, but was later extended to other racial groups. In the beginning the pensions for white people were four times higher than those of other race groups, but this changed steadily with increases for non-white South Africans at the beginning of the 90s. In 1992 the Social Assistance Act provided steps towards the de-radicalisation of pensions which was eventually achieved in 1993 (Lam et al, 2006.)

When the new democratic government came to power in 1994, one of the priorities was to transform the social welfare system. The apartheid government anticipated the change that was coming, and started de-racialising the grants in the mid-1980s. The Government published a White Paper on social welfare, in which welfare is defined as an 'integrated and comprehensive system of social services' (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997). In an attempt to align with the objectives Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which was part of the democratic government strategies to redress the injustices of the past, the White Paper proposed a 'new form' of social welfare which is 'developmental social welfare'. The main thrust of the developmental social welfare in South Africa was the development of human capacity and thus increasing self-reliance, as spelt out in the White Paper of 1997.

Although not clearly defined in the White Paper, developmental welfare is geared towards welfare expenditure that will create investments, thus contributing to the economy. One of the ways it proposes to do that is by investing resources in human capital development. In theory, social development and economic development are re-enforcing one another. The policy intended that there be a synchronization of institutional arrangements between economic and social policies and these would be people-centred for a sustained development to happen.

The macro-economic policy should also be people-centred, where a strong emphasis will then be on promoting human well-being and thus enhanced human capacity.

It was intended that social programmes would move away from unproductive expenditure and instead encourage economic participation in their design so as to create an enabling environment for such. There is an emphasis on subsidized savings and for integration into broader programmes, measures that require a strong government intervention to achieve a redistributive social expenditure (Midgley and Tang, 2001).

For developmental social welfare to achieve desired outcomes, it needs five elements. The first of these is the building of human capital and linking this process to the demands of the labour market. The second consists of investments in employment and self-employment by creating an environment where this is possible and providing incentives. The third consists of investments in social capital formation and thus promoting community integration, as communities can then organize around productive economic activities. The fourth is the removal of barriers to economic participation especially as opportunities for economic participation are largely concentrated in urban settings. These should be made accessible and local innovations which are not part of the mainstream economy should also be given credibility. The fifth consists of investments in cost effective social programmes which are efficient and well managed to achieve results (adapted from Midgley and Tang, 2001).

Developmental Social Welfare needs to be considered in the context of neoliberal thinking at the time, which the country's economic policy was geared towards. The shift in the country's economic policy towards neo-liberalism meant that there were going to be trade-offs between social welfare and economic development. The neoliberal argument on social welfare provision is that social welfare requires high taxation, which will scare off investors and result in slower economic growth. The emergence of developmental social welfare thinking generally was to counter this neoliberal argument, which views welfare expenditure as wasteful and having negative impacts on the economy (Midgley and Tang, 2001). The White Paper preamble states that "South Africans are called to participate in the development of an equitable, people-centred, democratic, and appropriate welfare system." (White Paper for Social Welfare, 1997: unpaginated). The focus is on building human capacity to enable people to use the resources they have access to for their benefit to achieve a level of self-reliance. Whether the developmental welfare goal has been achieved is another question which this thesis does not address. The language of dependency on welfare grants tends to dominate discourse in South African politics in recent years - at one of its conferences the ANC made arguments about seeking ways to 'exit' people from welfare (Potts, undated) by creating opportunities for people.

Seekings (2008) argues that the cabinet ministers in the new South Africa “bemoan both the financial costs of ‘handouts’ and the social and economic costs in terms of the ensuing ‘culture of dependency and entitlement’” (Seekings, 2008: 29). Despite these sentiments, the South African social protection system is one of the more comprehensive in the region.

The social security system has two components, which are social insurance and social assistance. The social insurance system is a contributory system and provides bridging income for employees, which include some benefits such as medical, maternity, short term income at loss of employment and so forth. The social insurance scheme is administered by the government through the Department of Labour in the form of an unemployment insurance fund (UIF). Social assistance is a state funded system which is means-tested, non-contributory and is financed entirely through taxes and administered by the government through the Department of Social Development (DSD). Social assistance is given in the form of social grants which are paid monthly to eligible recipients. Social grants play a significant role in household income, especially in a country such as South Africa where inequality and poverty is rampant. While poverty is very high, the rate of unemployment is also increasing, reaching an alarming 40% according to 2012 statistics (Stats SA). This is one of the major challenges facing the South African government today as many people are finding it difficult to find work and therefore “hopes of gaining wealth through the world of work have declined” (Bahre, 2011: 380). There are several attempts by the government to address these problems. The main focus currently has been on redistribution through such policies as Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), affirmative action, expansion of social security (grants) and development projects. Among these strategies, social grants reach more people than any of the other programmes.

The number of people receiving social grants is higher than the number of people paying income tax (Bahre, 2011) which is indicative of the high rates of poverty and unemployment in the country. A quarter of all households receive social grants, which is estimated at 3.2% of the GDP in 2011. There are three main types of social grants in South Africa and these are the Old Age Pension (OAP), grants for people with disabilities and grants targeted at children. The grants targeted at children include the Foster Grant (FG), the Care Dependency Grant (CDG) and the Child Support Grant (CSG). The Foster Grant is paid to people who are caring for a child who is not their own and have been registered through a court process to be foster parents of that child (Liebbrandt et al, 2010).

The Care Dependency Grant is given to the carer(s) of a child with profound physical and/ or mental impairment, who need ongoing care; it is awarded up to the age of 18 years (Hagen-Zancker et al, 2011), when it can be replaced by the Disability Grant. The CSG is intended for poor children and is paid to the primary care giver of the child and the means test is set at a monthly household income of between R2400 and below (Liebbrandt et al, 2010).

There are also examples in South Africa of how cash transfers are used to facilitate access to better livelihoods. For example, studies conducted on the Old Age Pension show how this income is used to pay for costs of searching for employment for the working age members of households (Mashigo, 2007; Posel, Fairburn and Lund 2006). The CSG is also a well-known example of this as it contributes significantly to household income in most households, especially those whose substantial source of income is social grants. The South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) reported that in 2008 child grants made up a substantial percentage of household income after wages (SALDRU 2010). At least more than 50% of the grant recipients do not have other source of income (Delany, et al, 2008). Recent studies on the impact of the grant show its positive impact on the lives of children by improving food supply in households and nutrition levels (Lund, 2008; Patel, 2011; Guthrie, 2002 and others). Nutritional benefits translate to improved cognitive development in children. Other studies investigate the gendered impact of the grant and similar social interventions (Patel, et al, 2012; Patel, 2011; Goldblatt, 2006; Sabates-Wheeler and Kabeer, 2003; Posel and Rogan 2010).

Women are often the primary caregivers of children and household managers, and therefore are often eligible for CSG, foster grant or any other child related grants or for pensioners. CSG recipients are by and large either the main decision makers or are part of the decision making of how the money is spent. One study showed that 52% make decisions about the use of the grant while another 22% make decisions in consultation with a family member (Delany et.al, 2008). This way the child support grant provides a window opportunity to be a springboard for women to break out of gender discrimination in households and in sustaining livelihoods. There has been a lot of speculation that women (more specifically younger women) have children to access the grant which has been disproved by different studies into the access of the grant (Goldblatt, 2006).

Conclusion

This literature review has mapped the context of social welfare and the early contestations between the neoclassical thinking and the social democratic thinking that influenced welfare policy in the 1800s. The new debate presented in the review shows a significant shift in thinking about welfare and the emergence of social protection as a new widely accepted concept and a strategy for poverty eradication. The South African social protection system has been largely influenced by the global evolution in social policy.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to present the conceptual approach within which this study is framed, which the sustainable livelihoods approach, commonly known as SLA. The chapter will provide an overview of SLA, with some background into its origins which borrows from multiple disciplines, including those in both the natural and social sciences. In the broader field of development studies and practice the different approaches that have emerged – such as the systems and environmental approaches, participatory development approaches, household economics and gender economics have all shaped what has emerged as the concept of sustainable livelihoods (Scoones, 1998). The Earth Summit held in 1992 is usually cited as the point of birth of the SLA, at which point the Agenda 21 became the primary goal – to ensuring creation of sustainable livelihood for all (Morse, McNamara and Acholo, 2009). However as is discussed in this chapter, SLA did not just emerge in 1992, it developed as a concept out of a history of thinking and research into poverty and all other aspects associated with it. This chapter first presents an overview of the SLA, and then discusses its origins and development as a concept and the different aspects of it. The chapter will also provide a rationale for using the SLA as a framework for this study.

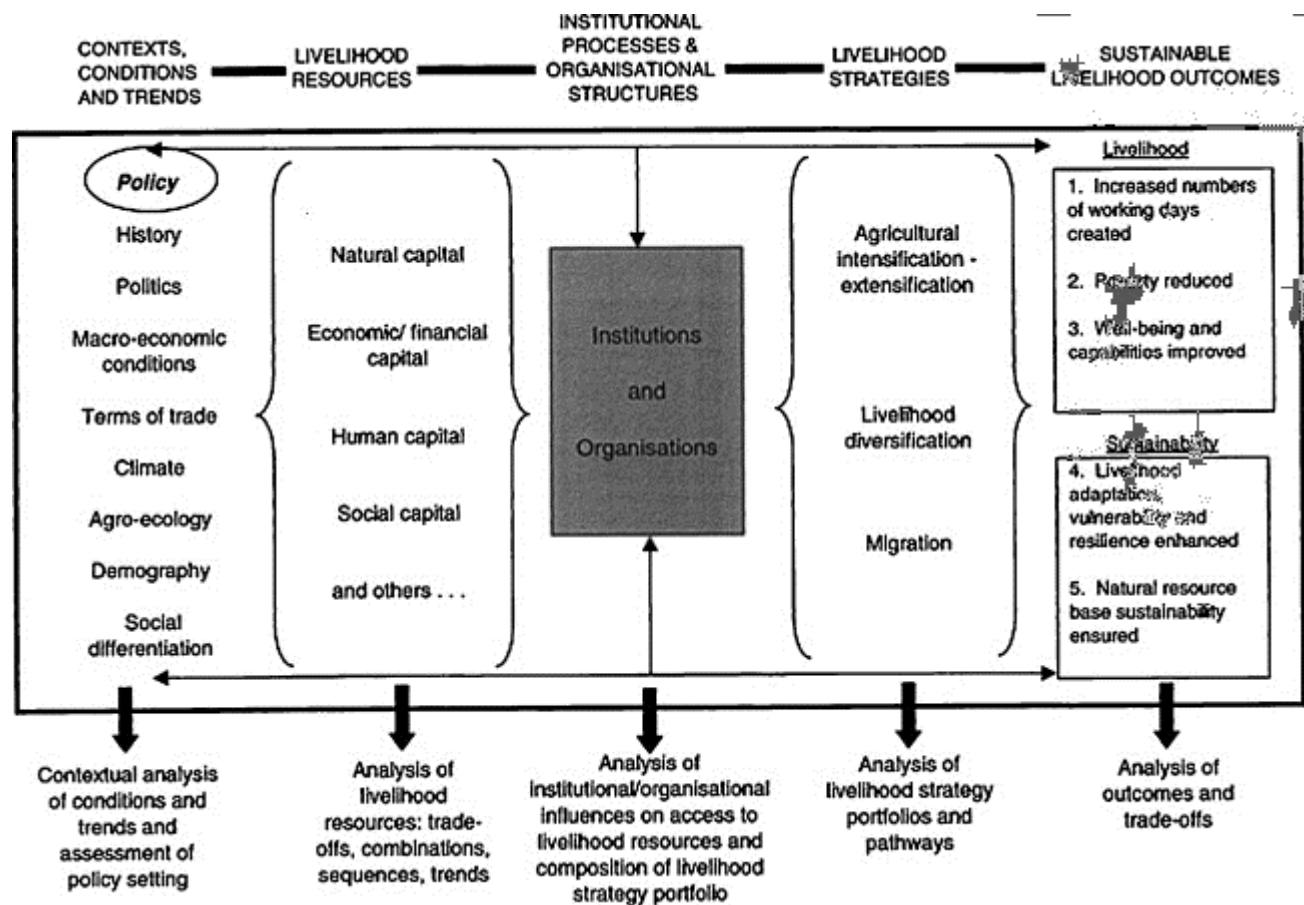
3.2 The Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA)

The sustainable livelihoods (Sustainable Livelihoods) thinking developed in the 1990s and it became the basis for delivering aid to developing countries. Many donor agencies sought ways to address poverty that would be effective and Sustainable Livelihoods became an analytical tool that could be used to determine how poverty eradication projects would be implemented (Carney, 2002). The Sustainable Livelihoods concept itself was initially developed by the Brundtland Commission on Environment and Development and was later extended by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, making sustainable livelihood an ultimate goal for poverty eradication interventions (Krantz, 2001). From 1993 the SLA became a fundamental development framework that different development agencies used either for analysis, or for structuring programmes for delivering aid to developing countries.

The SLA is founded on the premise that the poor understand their poverty (Chambers, 1995) and can be able to do something about it, provided that the conditions are created for them to do that. The SLA has three aspects, and these are 1) the assets (tangible and intangible) that are critical to sustaining a livelihood and 2) the activities and strategies that people combine in using the assets to achieve 3) livelihood outcomes. The environment within which this process of making a living occurs is subject to shocks and stresses (the vulnerability context that livelihoods are exposed to) as well as institutional processes and structures (institutions and policies). Assets are described as including physical (tangible) assets that people own (e.g. livestock) or have access to (e.g. natural forests) and non-physical (intangible) ones which people can make demands on or requests from (e.g. relatives).

Within the framework poor people are operating in the context of vulnerability (vulnerability is discussed at length in the section below on poverty and vulnerability), within which they have access to certain assets with poverty-reducing factors. These assets gain meaning through the interaction of livelihood strategies with the social and institutional environment which also influences livelihood outcomes (Scoones, 1998).

Figure 2



Source: Scoones (1998)

Sustainable livelihoods can be achieved through a combination of assets, used through a wide variety of strategies to achieve specific results which include: income well-being; improved food security; and more sustainable use of natural resources (Krantz, 2001). In 1991 Chambers and Conway provided a definition of the concept of the SLA. They saw livelihood as incorporating capabilities, assets and activities which are combined to make a living (Chambers and Conway, 1991). According to them, “A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway, 1991:6). Chambers and Conway also define capability, equity and sustainability as part of a sustainable livelihood. Capability is viewed as the ability to manage shocks and stresses, to identify and exploit livelihood opportunities; equity is used to define the context of inequality where possession of assets and capabilities is concerned; sustainability refers to a long-term effect.

All three are both means and ends to livelihoods. A household can build livelihood security through ownership of land, livestock, access to other resources and opportunities necessary for a livelihood. For example, in the context of this study, different factors present a vulnerability context including but not limited to; unfavourable weather conditions resulting in low yields in crop production; diminished livestock through theft or environmental factors; other factors such as misfortunes resulting in increased livestock, sacrificial ceremonies or scarce water resources.

These and other factors render many livelihoods vulnerable. The SLA places more emphasis on human assets and argues that if these are strengthened it reduces vulnerability. People use or combine different resources and strategies to achieve a livelihood and how they combine strategies and use resources determine impacts on the sustainability of their livelihoods.

3.3 Origins and the Theory behind SLA

The appearance of SLA in the 1990s can be seen within a much longer evolution of history of development practice since the Second World War, Morse et.al (2009), argue that SLA borrows a lot from the systems based kind of approaches which developed in the 60s and grew in popularity around the 70s and 80s. Initially these developed as research tools, but later also became known as practical concepts for development work. These kinds of approaches already started to look at recipients of development, for example farmers as active participants in the process. Many such methods, such as Farmer Systems Research, Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal focused on rural contexts and had a common objective of involving the study groups or development participants, in the process (Morse et al, 2009).

Most of this work was influenced largely by the field of economics which had not been opened to fluid concepts such as SLA (Morse, et al 2009). These started to change in the 1970s, with the village studies, which although led largely by economists, started providing some alternatives to understanding rural economic systems. Following the rural systems analysis work, was the work of farming systems, which Morse et, al. (2009) argue, SLA draws much from. Scoones argues that these studies, even though not labelled as such, were livelihoods studies. This implies that in essence, what became livelihoods approach actually emanated from rural economics systems in the field of economics. These were followed by what Morse and McNamara call the environment and development phase which emerged shortly afterwards and came with the concept of sustainability, hence the emergence of the sustainable livelihoods approach.

Other approaches which had a much more global focus such as Integrated Rural Development (IRD), Morse et al (2009) argues, also have conceptual similarities with the SLA. Of all approaches, the most comparable to SLA is the concept of human development (Morse et al, 2009) upon which the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)'s Human Development Index is based. This concept was influenced by capability approach which, many argue, provided the basis for the development of the SLA (Morse et al, 2009; De Haan, 2012; Krantz, 2001 and others).

3.4 The Capability Approach

The capability approach was developed by Amartya Sen and the SLA draws a lot from his work. In the capability approach the argument is that to reduce poverty an achieved human development goal, human capability must be strengthened. There are two elements to achieving this goal. These are, firstly, to improve human functioning, which are what people value and do; and secondly, the human freedoms to pursue the different functioning's (Alkire, 2002). For people to be able to achieve this, they need to have access to some resources so they can develop the capabilities. For this reason, one cannot analyse a poverty context simply based on an increase or a decrease in income per capita (Alkire, 2002). However, one would have to consider what freedoms people have to pursue what functions and of what value these are to them. People should be able to make their own choices based on the things they value. This Sen described as agency in people. Sen described agency as a self-directed action which leads to a desired goal, which would be human development. If human development is a goal to be achieved, then it is easier to see how the SLA can provide a framework for that.

3.5 Agency of people – a definition

Agency can be defined as the capacity to act (Ahearn, 2000). Typically, agency is contrasted with social structure. Thus Cole (2015:) defines social structure as follows: "Structure refers to the complex and interconnected set of social forces, relationships, institutions, and elements of social structure that work together to shape the thought, behaviour, experiences, choices, and overall life courses of people", where she defines agency in these terms: "Agency refers to the thoughts and actions taken by people that express their individual power" (Cole 2015). The approach taken here is to see agency as a concept defined in linguistic anthropology and grounded in practice theory.

Agency is confined within a structure (a context within which agency is exercised), and the structure influences the forms, the processes and the outcomes of agency (Page and Mercer, 2012). In other words, on the one hand, an individual's capability to act in a way is determined by the context in which s/he finds her/himself in. On the other hand, the context or structure also influences the action. The structure is constructed and reconstructed and ultimately transformed by human agency (Page and Mercer, 2012).

In an expanded definition, as presented by Ahearn, agency “refers to the socio culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2000:112). It requires some kind of “intention” and “expectation of reward” (Ahearn 2000: 114). The intention is what motivates the action, and motivation can take different forms. Boonyabandia et al (2012), argue that sometimes it is driven by a need. When people face poverty, the motivation to change their circumstances instigates an agency in people to act. In this context, motivation is inspired by a need, where people recognize not their inability but their capacity to transform their environment. Agency is not the same as free will, Ahearn agrees, which is not necessarily governed by intention, neither is it the same as resistance, although some forms of agency can be motivated by this goal. Ortner (2006) argues that although motivation and intention are important components of agency, one should not be caught up in this, since agency is a process, and even though it points to some purposive end, this (end) might not be fully envisioned at the onset. In this thesis, the definition of agency which is proposed by Cole (2015) sees agency as involving the thought process and actions that display individual capabilities and power is adopted. The structural environment as described by Page and Mercer (2012), within which people exercise their agency is for the purposes of this thesis characterized by receipt of welfare benefits. In this context agency is a counter concept to dependency. The argument is that instead of social welfare creating dependency, it can create agency.

3.6 SLA and the Vulnerability Context

As discussed above, livelihoods are influenced by the context or the environment within which they operate. On the one end of this context there are assets and on the other end are the shocks and stresses, referred to under SLA as the vulnerability context. There are two ways to describe the concept of vulnerability; some argue that there is no consensus on what the concept means (Gallopín, 2006). Vulnerability has to do with exposure to (shocks and stresses and the ability to cope with or withstand the shocks and stresses). Vulnerability can be distinguished from poverty in that poverty describes a current condition in relation to a defined base line while vulnerability describes the possibility of a future condition.

Another way of looking at vulnerability is that it is made of components which include exposure to certain disturbances or external stresses, and sensitivity to those disturbances and the capacity to adapt. The image of sliding down a slope and being unable to prevent the motion downwards (Ellis, 2007) presents a picture of vulnerability. It is a gradual downward fall that becomes self-perpetuating as available livelihood options become more and more narrow and limited. Ellis (2007) uses this image of vulnerability to describe people in Southern Africa who are already desperately poor, are affected by the widespread prevalence of various diseases (including HIV and TB) and inadequate governance – hence they are on the slope. Over and above this, they may then be sensitive to the effects of general economic decline and the risks of food shortages, environmental disasters, etc. that escalate their slide down the slope. Vulnerability is not a state of being; however, it describes the susceptibility of a household, a community or a system to shocks and stresses. Some of these shocks and stresses affect the whole system while others may affect one component of a system. The study explores what the CSG contributes in this vulnerability context.

3.7 Assets in SLA

The emphasis on SLA is sustainability of livelihoods, a process which depends on a number of factors including assets (referred to in the approach as capital), and the context within which these livelihoods are based, the combination of strategies to create a livelihood. Assets or capitals are a key in the sustainability of livelihoods (Krantz, 2001).

Assets in the SLA framework include: natural capital (land, natural resources, agricultural potential); social capital (social networks, family structures); physical capital (property, tractors, implements etc.); financial capital (income, savings, livestock); and human capital (education, skills, labour capacity) (Scoones, 1998). All assets are important in a livelihood; however, the degree of importance of any of the assets differs from each household. Therefore, different households try to accumulate whichever assets they deem necessary for their livelihood to be sustainable. The language and the way the SLA presents the assets as capital and their combination resonates much with the field of economics, as opposed to the systems approach.

Morse et al (2009) present the classical economics model to illustrate this point, which shows how fundamental capital is to production. They argue that “money has to be turned into physical inputs before production can occur: money → payment for capital → production → outputs → revenue” (Morse et al, 2009: 29). Although not all capital in the SLA is ‘tangible’, it is fundamental to a livelihood, which in the SLA is an outcome of a combination of assets (capitals), and strategies (production) and livelihood outcomes (revenue). In this study the idea of assets is explored to understand, what assets make up a livelihood in this context, what assets people own or have access to and how they use these to make a living and how the CSG relates to these.

3.8 The Concept of Resilience in SLA

Resilience thinking is mostly associated with socio-ecological studies and therefore the concept is widely used when studying environmental shifts and transformations. In literature resilience is defined as „a system’s ability to remain in a distinct state and to persist by responding adequately to changes internal or external to the system” (Berardi et al, 2011: 115). This is what is called the system’s adaptive capacity. In SLA, the concept of resilience is relevant because it combines the interaction of social, economic and environmental conditions. SLA can be described as a socio-environment system where people interact with their environment (context and natural environment) to achieve specific objectives. The environment within which this system operates is unpredictable (Berkes, 2007) as there are potential threats to the system in the form of shocks and stresses, such as, for example, a drought. The ability of a system to withstand shocks is what is referred to as resilience. Resilience is how much a system can absorb change or a disturbance and still maintains its stability (Gallopín, 2006).

When looking at resilience, it is important to note that it also includes assessing sensitivity of a system to disturbances and the reaction to a disturbance. Sensitivity may open a system to threats, meaning that it will be open to a disturbance. However, the exposure will also allow the system to change and adapt and in a way, this could provide a system with opportunity to build its resilience. Gallopin (2006) argues that resilience is not the other end of vulnerability because vulnerability refers to transformations that may go beyond a single domain; he offers robustness as a possible opposite of vulnerability.

There are many ways through which resilience can be built, including targeted interventions by development projects and agencies and by rural households' own initiatives. One of the ways through which rural households can improve resilience is through diversifying their livelihood options. When these options are diversified, capabilities of the household to sustain their livelihoods are also improved (Ellis, 2007). In a study of fishing communities in Cambodia for example it was evident how diversity of livelihoods resulted in improved livelihoods outcomes for households (Marschke and Berkes, 2006).

3.9 Critique of the sustainable livelihoods approach

The sustainable livelihoods approach as a tool and framework for analysis has been used by major development agencies in projects. However, at a conceptual level the approach has been brought under scrutiny for different reasons. Firstly, the approach has a local bias (DeHaan, 2012) and does not analyse the global forces that influence and to a larger extent shape the local context. Even at local national level, the approach tends to focus on household as a unit of analysis (Morse and McNamara, 2013) and is context specific. This makes it impossible to make generalisations and to draw conclusion that may cover a wider spectrum. Secondly, which is linked to the first point, is that because it so context specific, it does not allow for comparative research and thirdly, it fails to tackle the issue of power implicitly in its construction (DeHaan, 2012). Although the approach describes the context within which livelihoods operate, it does not adequately answer the question of how these structures are to be transformed (Morse and McNamara, 2013).

It has an individual or household focus and does not look at how the intra and inter household interactions around assets, markets, policies and other factors influence decisions around livelihood choices and options and how these can be challenged or changed.

DeHaan, argues that because it places enormous responsibility on the individual instead on a collective, it downplays the structural constraints.

3.10 The Landscape of Households and Livelihoods

Households are seen as constant systems shaped through familial bonds that transform in expected ways (Neves and du Toit, 2008). They are characterized by having people who reside together in space and time, who share resources (income in particular), and who collaborate in productive activities. Households are traditionally understood as units of production and reproduction – where decisions are made collectively (Ellis, 2007).

Neves and du Toit, in their study of rural households in the Eastern Cape concluded that households are “not just formed around mutuality, they are consolidated around resources” (Neves and du Toit, 2008:3). These resources, they argue, are derived from a large part of livelihoods and act as buffer against current and future shocks. Gluckman (1950) describes this as a house-property complex, a process of regulating property ownership and inheritance in a patrilineal system in a household. A household holds property allocated to it, with the control resting with the family head, typically a male head. Although Gluckman wrote in the era of dominant patriarchy, some of his observations at the time are still relevant to this day.

Rural households draw on a variety of sources to sustain them including land, labour (including migrant labour), and a variety of resources at their disposal. Households mobilize resources they have access to to create a livelihood. Rural households manage risk through diversifying their livelihoods. Livestock is regarded as a valuable resource, with the household head having power over distribution and allocation of these in a centralized system of headship (Gluckman, 1950). In a decentralized system allocation to sub-units is for the use of extended family resources which is not only the function of the male head. Understanding the demographics of a household helps in understanding the interaction between different aspects of livelihood, use and management of resources and assets.

3.11 Rationale for using SLA in the study

There are links that can be drawn between different poverty reduction interventions, such as those more focused on cash and increasing resources and those focused on strengthening the social, ecological and economic resources.

The gap in development thinking in general has always been the separation of the social and economic aspects of development, while in practice these interact and influence each other in complex ways that either enhance livelihoods or exacerbate vulnerability. SLA as a framework still remains a practical framework which has come close to bringing these closer to each other than any other approach. Having been used differently by development organizations, SLA remains a useful framework for studying the complex phenomenon in livelihoods and their relations as it recognises that livelihoods do not occur in a vacuum but are influenced by the context within which they operate. The context can be an enabling or a disabling one.

Devereux (2002) makes a distinction between what he calls livelihood promotion and livelihood protection when he looks at the relationship between social welfare (social safety nets) and livelihoods. He argues that this is a theoretical distinction rather than a practical one. He argues that early economists such as Adam Smith and Turgot among others were of the view that minimum income guarantees are necessary for overall economic development. They argued in different ways that when people are too poor, they cannot engage in any productive activity, which has negative effects for the overall economy (Devereux, 2002). Different interventions towards poverty alleviation often seek to promote livelihoods, but these tend to do both as it is rather the strategies of the recipients of the support or relief that determine whether they use the resource for protection or promotion of a livelihood. He argues that social security programmes could contribute asset accumulation thus promoting livelihoods.

In this study the sustainable livelihoods approach is applied for exactly the same reasons, in an attempt to map the interaction with other strategies and resources at household level of the CSG and how this interaction produces different outcomes. It is not a linear relationship but a complex one, and the complexity of this relationship is that it challenges the assumption that welfare (in this case child support grant) produces dependency.

Households, their livelihoods options, strategies and resources and the interaction between these provide a context which the grant enters. The use of the SL approach helps to focus on people – in this case the women who are participants of the study – and the households they are plugged in, the livelihoods strategies, options and resources they combine to achieve specific outcomes. It also enables the understanding of the complexity of this relationship. The grant could provide an enabling environment and create agency in people receiving to transform their environment to a more favourable one. Therefore, a concept of agency becomes relevant in the discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the sustainable livelihoods approach. It has shown how it has been influenced by different approaches from which it is based. The capability approach is however one most significant approach which SLA draws from. Two related concepts, which are agency and households that are linked to SLA and capability approaches have also been discussed. The discussion also presented a critique of the sustainable livelihoods approach, while also a rationale for using SLA in the study has also was also presented.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This is a qualitative study which employs a case study method. It is guided by a constructivist research paradigm, as it is more exploratory in nature. The constructivist approach is premised on the idea that knowledge is not absolute, but relative to the context and the interpretation of that context by individuals.

Constructivists believe that people give meaning to their environment and therefore construct knowledge (Baxter and Jack, 2008). The methodology is more relevant to the objectives of the study as it seeks to explore the role of the child support grant in the context of livelihoods. The study explores this context and maps out the child support grant within the complexity of the study required a methodology that, whilst being an empirical enquiry, would also allow flexibility in sampling and gathering of information.

Yin defines a case study as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1984: 23). The data collection therefore depended on interaction with the participants. The study participants told stories from their own experiences. The researcher became a facilitator of knowledge gathering and analysis. The study participants remain in their environment while the researcher gathers information.

Primary Data

Semi – Structured Interviews

The main source of data for the study are 28 semi-structured interviews that were conducted in August and September 2013. An interview guide was used to direct the data collection process. The guide was developed in English, and then translated into Zulu. The interviews were conducted in Zulu, as this was the language of the respondents. There were 65 questions in the guide which were divided into four sections. The first section was about the respondents, including residence, age, marital status and household structure.

The second section was about the livelihoods of the households, including employment and other livelihood options, for both the household and the respondents. The third section focused on the CSG, which was mainly about people’s perceptions about what it is for, what it enables, and what it is used for and its impact.

The last section focused on assets, and the respondents described for themselves what they considered assets and how these assets had been accumulated. A total of 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted with women in Umsinga in the village of Ncunjane. A semi-structured interview guide was used throughout the interviews to ensure standardization.

Focus Group Discussion

A focus group discussion was also conducted using a guide which was developed after 15 interviews had been completed as the researcher was then able to identify common themes emanating from the interviews. Focus groups are a very useful way of deepening knowledge about themes that emanate from the interviews. In qualitative research focus groups can be conducted independent of interviews, as they are also a tool for gathering information.

Focus groups are particularly useful in exploring issues with a group of people who share similar characteristics as they sometimes provide variety in opinions which might not come out in interviews. In the study the original plan was to conduct two focus group discussions with women, who were interviewed. However only one focus group discussion was conducted due to constraints related to the availability of participants to meet in a group.

The purpose of the focus group discussions was to further explore the key ideas that emerged from the interviews and to deepen the understanding of these. The focus group also served as a form of triangulation. 15 women attended the focus group discussion. The discussion focused more on the child support grant, what it enables and what impact it has on the lives of the women and their livelihoods. The researcher would ask a question, such as, what does the child support grant enable and would let the respondents discuss what their thoughts are about the grant and what it enables. The researcher would then write down the points emanating from the discussion and ask questions of clarity as the respondents described their context. The focus group discussion lasted two hours. The focus group discussion was very open and engaging. The women who participated found it easier to talk about the issues that were discussed.

4.2 Sampling method

A non-probability sampling method was used in the study with purposive sampling as the key strategy. This way it was possible to identify and select study participants in the stipulated area. This enabled the researcher to identify specific individuals who were targeted for this study. In the field the snowballing method was also used during the study to identify other participants. The primary focus was to identify women, who are ‘makotis’ (i.e. are living within a homestead of their male partner or husband) of ages 20 to 40, who have children who are eligible to receive the grant and are receiving it. This group was selected because it is believed, as shown by work of Cousins (2012) to be the most vulnerable group within an extended family rural context. Cousins (2012) found that the ‘makoti’ living in her husband’s homestead, derives her tenure security and livelihood from her husband.

4.3 Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed prior to the research which was reviewed by the supervisors and the reviewers. The researcher first tested the questions in the interview guide with 2 respondents prior to conducting the research. The interview guide was then reviewed, considering the results of the ‘test interviews’ and was modified accordingly (final version of the interview guide appendix 1). The researcher conducted all the interviews in Zulu, which is the mother tongue of the respondents and then transcribed all the data in English. Each interview lasted between an hour and a half to two hours.

The original plan was to audio record all the interviews; however, most respondents were uncomfortable with this method and therefore it was not used. The researcher took notes throughout all the interviews, and made use of different methods such as providing feedback and paraphrasing to ensure the reliability of data collected. The researcher transcribed all interviews and the focus group discussion and kept the original transcripts for checking gaps and errors.

4.4 Content Analysis

Since this is a case study the analysis method used was the content analysis. After data was transcribed, data was grouped together in clusters representing different aspects of the case. An excel document was created where data was entered under the different sections according to the interview guide. The process of analysis involved explanation building, using stories of the participants where relevant and analysing units of information within the broader case study. The units of information are classified under four categories, which are household formation and positioning of women; the child support grant, enabling and agency; livelihoods security and assets and vulnerability, dependency and resilience.

4.5 Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted in a community called 'Ncunjane' and the findings of the research are only limited to the study area. The findings are not meant to be used to generalize or draw conclusions about the uses of the CSG in South Africa or in communities with similar demographics. It is intended as a contribution to other studies that have been conducted about the CSG in the country. It is hoped that the findings of this study will inspire further investigations about the use of CSG in households in other parts of the country to establish trends and possibly inform policy development in the future.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology and discussed the limitations of the study. A case study methodology was used in the study as an overall approach and questionnaire guide was used to conduct interviews and a focus group discussion. This chapter also provided a detailed discussion of how the tools were used in collecting data and some of the challenges experienced in this process.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

The findings were generated from 28 interviews with women who participated in the study. They also include data collected from a focus group discussion with some of the women who were interviewed as well as others who are recipients of the child support grant but who had not participated in the interviews.

5.2 Overview of participants

Table 2: details of interviewed participants in the study

Interview number	Date of the interviewee	Name of the interviewee	Age of the interviewee	Number of children	Level of education
1	26-08-13	Munza	25	2	n/a
2	26-08-13	Zani	29	3	n/a
3	02-09-13	Buphi	38	1	none
4	02-09-13	Ntodwa	30	3	none
5	02-09-13	Ngaphi	32	5	none
6	03-09-13	Dinni	40	3	none
7	03-09-13	Funni	31	2	none
8	03-09-13	Khoni	50	8	none
9	03-09-13	Mombi	33	3	none
10	04-09-13	Ntomthe	40	7	none
11	04-09-13	Shiyile	29	4	n/a
12	04-09-13	Zenle	40	4 (one over 18)	n/a
13	05-09-13	Nohle	37	8 (one over 18)	n/a
14	05-09-13	Thole	25	3	Grade 6
15	05-09-13	Chithi	31	2	n/a
16	06-09-13	Phiwe	25	2	Grade 5
17	06-09-13	Mahle	45	4	Grade 4
18	06-09-13	Zenhle	37	7	Grade 2
19	07-09-13	Smale	23	1	Grade 10
20	07-09-13	Bon X	23	2	Grade 7
21	07-09-13	Sini	26	2	Grade 6
22	08-09-13	Nyesle	40	5	none
23	11-09-13	Thale	40	5	none
24	11-09-13	Zenna	32	5	Grade 3
25	11-09-13	Welle	40	4	none
26	12-09-13	Bo M	40	6	none
27	12-09-13	Buswe	42	6	none
28	13-09-13	Gwin	40	3	none

The 28 study participants interviewed live in 23 households. All interviewees were women of ages between 20 and 45 years, except for one woman who was 50 years old. All the women live as makotis in their male partner's homestead. The term is used to refer to a woman who has moved out of her father's homestead to live in the homestead of her male partner with whom she might already have children. The term, when loosely translated, means 'bride', although she might not necessarily be married as defined under the civic or customary marriage law.

The process of moving of a woman to a man's homestead is called ukugana, which is understood as one of the initial steps in the process of marriage, which in some cases may never be completed. The man, into whose homestead the woman moves, is referred to as umyeni –loosely translated as husband. The women interviewed also referred to the man in whose homestead they are living as 'my husband'.

In a previous study conducted in the area on customary laws and practices around land and livelihoods in 2008 and 2009 by a local NGO in collaboration with the Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), women in the same community articulated the process and the stages involved in the process of marriage as described below. Marriage according to the normative ideal in Zulu custom is when:

A man courts a young woman (itshitshi); and she will become iqhikiza as she enters into a relationship with the young man; when the couple is ready to marry the lobolo negotiations begin, and she becomes inkehli; a total of 11 cattle are set as the lobolo fee; with the first payment of 5-6 cattle which are paid at the beginning, while the remaining can be paid over many years; different ceremonies, which include slaughtering of livestock for ancestors and exchange of gifts between families are completed; the woman becomes makoti and as a young wife she gets allocated a site and a field or works in her mother-in-law's fields (Umsinga Case Project, 2010)

However, this may have been the norm 30 years ago, but is less common nowadays. Instead, most marriages follow the incomplete marriage (ganile) processes as follows:

A young woman falls pregnant and 'damages' (inhlawulo) are paid; the couple may have moved in together (i.e. a woman has moved into the man's homestead) or the woman may still be at her father's home; the separation of iqhikiza from umakoti is unclear;

some goats are slaughtered as cleansing of the woman's homestead and two or three cattle are paid (one cow per child); it is understood that the cattle are part of ilobolo payment (Umsinga Case Project, 2010).

This form of incomplete marriage is now referred to as ukugana (from -gana, to ask for marriage, originally also the name of the first ceremony to be performed in the marriage process) - a woman is understood as ganile and is umakoti at the man's homestead. An extreme version of the incomplete marriage or gana process is the unmarried woman who lives with a man at his family's homestead:

With no cattle having been paid; the woman has low status in the homestead as she cannot inherit property on behalf of her eldest son; and cannot call upon her father or brothers for protection; and has to be buried at her father's homestead; if the man asks for land for his family he has to pay a fine at the Tribal Court.

(Umsinga Case project, 2010)

In this current study, there were only two women who were 'fully married' according to the description above, and the rest of the participants fall under the 'incomplete marriage' category. Women in the study identified themselves as not married but ganile as described above in the 'incomplete marriage' category. Although women said that being ganile is recognized in the community, some women felt that it is not the same as being fully married because it does not give one a sense of security in the new homestead.

It is not the same as being married, you are not registered anywhere, what can you claim if you don't have a paper... (Interview with Ngaphi, 2 September 2013)

I feel that there is not much difference to when you are fully married, but it is better to be fully married because when something happens you will be at the mercy of the family... (Interview with Nohle, 5 September 2013).

The woman was referring to the inheritance that if you are not fully married a makoti is at the mercy of the family to decide what she can inherit in the case of the death of the male partner. In the study the term husband is used to refer to the male partner with whom or in whose homestead the woman lives. The 'husband' may have more than one makoti and all makotis could be living in the same homestead, separated by different dwellings (huts).

5.3 Household Structure and Size

The actual organization of the homestead is such that a male head gets allocated a plot by the traditional court to build a home with his makoti(s) and children. As the family grows, the man, under whose name the homestead is registered, allocates plots to his son(s) to build their dwellings with their makoti(s) and children and this is how the homestead grows. Residential plots are big and range in size depending on the family size, the number of livestock and arable fields the man wants to keep. Each residential plot is big enough to allow for other family members (sons when they grow up) to build their own dwellings. Others choose to move out of the father's homestead and request an allocation of a 'new' residential plot from the tribal court – through the sub-chief 'induna'. In some homesteads there are other relatives, for example uncles and aunts of the husband and children of the relatives that live in the same homestead. The size of the homestead ranges from 5 to 30 people. The homestead has different units within it, which constitute different households. The number of households within a homestead is roughly identified by the different cooking huts. For example, one cooking hut could belong to the mother in law and others to the different makotis within the homestead. The newer makotis (i.e. they have recently moved into the homestead – although recently could also mean five years) usually share a cooking hut with the mother in law.

The cooking huts often share food (i.e. the mother in law or father in law can buy a 50kg sack of maize meal which they share with those who cook in the same hut), but not with those who have their own cooking huts. These are seen to be 'independent' from the main homestead, even though they still live in the same homestead. In the study, five women share a cooking hut with their in-laws and said that they are 'dependent' on the in-laws and therefore share food that the in-laws buy.

Twenty-three of the women live in the extended family homestead with their husbands while the other five have moved out of the extended homestead. One of the five is a widow who lives with her children in the 'new' homestead and another is separated and was allocated her own individual plot by her father in law to build her own dwelling with her children. All the people who have 'moved out' keep relations with the extended family homestead for ancestral kinship and ceremonies. For example, the widowed woman owns goats which she keeps in the family kraal in the extended homestead because she believes that they will be better looked after there. Some members of the household do not reside in the homestead, but live as migrant labour in Johannesburg (mostly men), or at neighbouring farms (mostly women). The people that live in Johannesburg are not always employed, which was found to be the case in five out of nine households, who have people living in Johannesburg.

5.4 Household Livelihoods

Sources of livelihoods include cropping, livestock production, farm employment (although this is dwindling), some remittances from migrant workers, and social grants. Crop production is constrained by a number of different factors, including erratic rainfall and limited access to water sources in the area, livestock access to the fields and consuming the food produced, which often mean that there is nothing to harvest. Most households report that they have not reaped much from cropping activities and therefore the rate of cropping is declining.

The common crops include sorghum and maize, which are mostly grown in large plots and are situated some distance away from the homestead. Beans, pumpkin and 'imifino' are also common crops but are often grown on home plots, although they can also be grown in the larger fields. All households own or have access to fields to grow crops, with the exception of two households which have broken out of the extended homesteads. The women in these homesteads said that they shared their mother in law's fields when they lived in the extended family homestead but since they have moved out they do not have access to fields. Livestock was also a common source of livelihoods in households. The types of livestock include cattle, goats and chicken.

Livestock ownership varies across households, with cattle mostly owned by the father in law although in one case the sons also owned some cattle. Goats are owned by different people in the homestead, including the father in law, his wife/wives, his sons, makotis and children. Chicken are mostly owned by the women and the children in the household.

People accumulate livestock through different means. Cattle are often inherited or received as lobolo payment. Goats are usually bought but can also be inherited and in some cases are received as gifts from other family members or relatives. Chicken are also bought or received as gifts from other family members or relatives. All livestock have multiple uses to support livelihoods.

Table 3: Livestock and different uses

Livestock Type	Different Uses		
Cattle	Ceremonies	Milking	Lobolo
Chicken	Ceremonies	Food	Sell for cash
Goats	Ceremonies	Selling for cash	Payment (for damages) (e.g. pregnancy)

Source: from interviews

5.5 Participants' Livelihoods

It was important for the study to establish the nature of livelihoods of the women interviewed in relation to the homestead and household they live in, to determine the contribution made by the child support grants to these livelihoods. The participant's livelihoods are characterised by a combination of activities, including cropping, livestock production, selling handcraft work, firewood, and thatch, thatching other people's huts, some remittances and the child support grant, which was the main income for 21 women. Four examples of these are illustrated by the stories of Bon X, Thole, Dinni and Ntomthe. Bon X lives in the Mchunu homestead but a couple of years ago she and her 'husband' were allocated land to build a house by the father in law, and they therefore live independently from the extended homestead. She does not have access to arable land. She has six children.

She is not working and neither is her husband. She fetches firewood and sells it, which depends on requests from people and therefore the income she gets from this is not consistent. She is part of a savings club (stockvel) where a group saves money together every month to buy food at the end of the year. She gets the child support grant, which is her only consistent monthly income. Her husband has a few goats and she has chickens.

She uses chickens for food but sometimes sells them when she needs cash. Similarly, Thale who also lives with her husband and five children at her husband's homestead is also not working and neither is her husband.

She has access to arable land that was allocated to her by her mother in law where she grows imifino (including green vegetables and pumpkins) for home consumption, which is the main source of relish isishebo. She is also part of a savings club (stockvel). She gets the child support grant, which is her only income. She keeps chicken and goats. She often uses chicken for food but sometimes sells them for cash when she has a need. She also sells goats when she has a greater need for cash, but she says that she keeps goats as 'security' for future and also for ancestral ceremonies.

Dinni's story illustrates a much more diversified livelihood. She lives with her husband and three children at her husband's homestead. Her husband is unemployed. She does a variety of activities for cash. She builds houses (rondavels) for people and thatches them. She gets two or three such jobs in a year. At the time of the interview, which took place in August 2013, she had done one such job already. She charges R1500 for a rondavel structure and R1200 for thatching. In addition, she fetches firewood and sells it to people. She charges R300 for truck load, which the person who buys firewood would hire separately. She gets 1-2 such jobs in a year at the beginning of winter. She keeps chicken and sells them, and she also owns goats, which she keeps for ancestral ceremonies, but said she would sell if she needs extra cash. She grows imifino in her home garden for home consumption. She has access to larger fields where she grows maize and pumpkin. She also receives a child support grant for each of her three children.

Ntomthe's story is a different one as she lives on remittances from her husband who works in Johannesburg at a factory, and on the grant income for her seven children. She owns a few goats and her husband has about five cattle. She explained that she cannot do anything else as she is sick and not fit physically, although she used to grow crops. The stories show that the livelihoods of the women depend on different sources. Land (for cropping and livestock production) plays a significant role in supporting livelihoods, and so do the natural resources which are a source of firewood, grass/ thatch, water, stones (which are used for building) for all women. This also shows the importance of natural capital in livelihoods as discussed in SLA. All the women receive the child support grant. Some also receive remittances, and some other income (which is discussed below in the section on employment).

Women often grow maize, pumpkin and sorghum if they have access to arable land – four women have access to large arable land. Most women grow vegetables as relish (in most cases imifino) which is grown on homestead plots. Arable land to grow food is allocated to the makoti by the mother in law who would also have come to own them in the same way. Not all women interviewed have access to arable fields. In some cases, this is because they have moved out of the extended homestead and are now living on their own with their husband.

In other cases, there were no more fields available to allocate. Livestock, mainly chicken and goats, is owned by 20 women, although the formal ownership is somewhat unclear. When asked whether they owned livestock, often women would answer yes, but some explain that they keep livestock for their children, if the specific animal was ‘bought for the child’. In all cases where women ‘own’ livestock in this way, they said they could take decisions regarding livestock that they owned for their children. They also said they would take decisions about livestock in consultation with the ‘head’ of the household because this was ‘respectful’.

5.6 Employment in the context of livelihood

In addition to these livelihoods, in eight out of 23 homesteads there were one or two people employed. Most of these people have temporary employment in Johannesburg and others work on a neighbouring farm. The participants did not have much information about the jobs – particularly in case of members of the homestead other than the husband of the participant.

The employment status of the other members of the extended homestead does not affect the livelihood of the participant in any way. The women interviewed who reported about working members of the homestead did not have any information regarding how much income the member of the homestead earns or what the person does with the income, except that they use it for their own needs. This is also an indication that income is not pooled together in an extended family homestead in this context. The people in the extended homestead who are employed decide how, when and with whom they spend their income. The point that was made clear even during the focus group discussion is that any person receiving income from any source is not obliged or expected to share the information about the income or to consult with anyone about their income. One woman reported that her 22-year-old daughter who lives with her, and works on a neighbouring farm, does not disclose to her how much she earns nor is she expected to and she spends her income on her needs, although she sometimes gives the mother some money (Interview 12, 04 September 2014).

Women's Employment

Twenty-four out of 28 women interviewed are not employed in any formal or informal job. Of those who are employed, two work on the Public Works road maintenance project called Zibambeke, one works on a craft project on a neighbouring farm and one is self employed as a vendor. Other women, although not employed, engage in other income generating activities: one woman makes grass mats and sells them; two women chop firewood to sell to people who need it. This depends on the demand as people would place an order first. A bakkie load of firewood is sold for R300, and the person would pay for the transporting cost separately. One woman (Dinni – case above) makes an income from a combination of activities including selling firewood, building houses (rondavels) – and selling thatch grass from neighbouring farms or in the Dundee area (which is approximately 100km away). This appeared to be a common livelihood or income generating activity in the area, as groups of women travel to other farms and stay with relatives in order to harvest thatch – some women fetch thatch to use it themselves.

Husbands' Employment

Of all women interviewed two do not have husbands anymore - one is a widow and the other is separated. Out of 26 who do have husbands, only five have husbands who are working. One husband is a taxi driver in Johannesburg; three work in factories also in Johannesburg and one is in between piece jobs. Four women reported that their husbands are not working although they live in Johannesburg in hostels with friends and relatives to look for work and to be closer in the event that a job becomes available. Sometimes if they get work, they only make enough money to support their living costs in Johannesburg. Some women said they believe the husbands stay in Johannesburg because they are embarrassed to stay at home and do nothing and “eat from the children's money” (Interview with Buphi, 2 September 2012) referring to the child support grant – when the husbands should be the ones providing. They also explained how difficult it is now for men to find work in Johannesburg.

In summary, for these women the main source of income is the child support grant. In five cases where the ‘husband’ was employed they send remittances. Land-based livelihoods are the main source of livelihoods after income for those who have some form of income. Livestock play a significant part in supporting livelihoods, other sources of livelihoods such as growing maize and vegetables are not as popular anymore as they are regarded as unreliable. Most households own arable fields; however, not many use them anymore.

5.7 Children and the Cost of Raising Children

When women were asked about the costs of raising children, none able to quantify the costs into estimated amounts, however they responded by explaining the different needs of children that cost money. The different expenses associated with raising children include food, clothing, health care and school related costs. „Food is a basic need and children need to eat every day and therefore food expenditure tends to be the main cost,” one woman explained (Interview with Khoni, 3 September 2013). Health care costs were often explained as costs for transport to go the clinic or hospital, as they do not have to pay consultation fees at the clinic and at the hospital. Only two women said that the health costs also included doctors’ fees. The school related costs vary for each of the women and although they do not have to pay school fees at the school, they identified all costs they regarded as school related. The main cost is transport as there are no schools in the village and children have to travel on foot for maybe an hour, to schools in the neighbouring villages, which is seen as unsafe for small children.

There are also costs related to school trips for sport and other learning excursions. Three quarters of the sample (21 out of 28) do not get any contribution from the father of the children to meet these costs, because the fathers have no income. A few of these said that they used to get financial contributions from the father of the children when they were still employed. The remaining five that get some contribution from the father of the children get between R400 to R1000 per month; however, this is not consistent as it depends on the income of the father, except for two women who get consistent contributions from those fathers of the children who have stable income.

5.8 Social Grants in the study area

Social grants are the main source of income for most of the households who were visited, with the child support grant being the main source of income for 21 of the women interviewed. The child support grant is followed by the Old Age Pension (OAP) as the main source of income for the extended homestead where people who are eligible for the OAP were found. However, for the women who were interviewed, the child support grant was the main source of income. The women interviewed also said that the social grants are the “source of life for many households because of the lack of employment and there is so much poverty” (Interview with Ntodwa, 2 September 2013).

All women who have children, who are eligible for child support grant, receive the grant. There was no case of a person who could not access the grant, although some women who have received the grant for many years say that it took longer to receive it when they first applied for it. The waiting period between the time of application and the time the first pay was received was not specified. However, women said that after this waiting period they got a larger amount which they assume incorporated all the months between the time of application and the receipt of the grant. Women who have started receiving the grant in the last five years did not experience any delays.

5.9 Child Support Grant

Perceptions of what the grant is for

The grant is viewed and understood generally by all women interviewed as a grant for children. All women interviewed answered that the grant is for supporting children, or mothers to meet the needs of their children. Most women explained it this way:

It is to support the needs of the children, although it ends up feeding all of us...
(Interview with Chithi, 5 September 2013)

It was meant for parents to support their children so they can go to school, eat and be clothed... (Interview with Ngaphi, 2 September 2013)

All interviewed women also believed that the grant should only be spent on the needs of children and see any other expenditure outside of this as abuse of the grant.

...it is the children's money, if you use it for other things then it is the same as stealing...
(Interview with Phiwe, 6 September 2013)

Many women say that it is mothers of the children who are eligible to receive the grant and often it is the mothers who actually receive it. Some women said other people who care for the child also receive it and it is often grandmothers. In this study, all women recipients of the grant are biological mothers of the children and live with them.

How much grant income is received?

The amount of the grant received differs depending on how many children the woman has. Some women receive the grant for 1 child while others for 5 children – the table below shows the different amount categories that were found in this study.

Table 4: categories of grant amounts in the study

Grant amount	No. of women receiving the amount	No of years received – range
R290	6	1 – 5 years
R580	5	2 – 10 years
R870	6	8 – 10 years
R1100 – R1500	7	10 - 12 years
R2000 – R2700	4	10 - 15 years – became 2000 in the last 4 years

How long does the grant money last?

It was difficult for women to answer this question. The most common answer to this question was that it does not last at all. “It does not last, it is not much, you go to the pay point and you already see things that are finished at home and you buy, by the time you get home there is nothing left...” (Interview with Smale, 7 September 2013)

When probing, women would then think for a minute and some were able to answer the question although the responses were not sufficiently consistent to base generalisations on. However, women who receive an amount of around R600 and less answered that the money lasts only a day or two.

Those women who receive amounts higher than R600 stated that it would last from one week to three weeks. Most women said that how long the money lasts depend on the needs for each month.

It often lasts two weeks, but sometimes you keep something aside for emergencies but this is difficult because children need to eat everyday... (Interview with Nyesle, 8 September 2013)

Although overall the money does not last a full month, some women said that sometimes they would buy food in bulk so that they do not run out of the staple foods before they receive the next grant amount.

What are the main uses of the grant?

During the interviews, we tried to estimate how the grant was spent – and found this to be difficult for women to explain even when using simple items to allocate portions. Women explained that expenditure is largely driven by the current needs at the point the money is received. Although the large portion of the grant is spent on food, there are other items that might demand more money during different times of the year. For example, at the beginning of the school year, school related expenses are high, which might mean that there is not enough money for food. During the Christmas season, food costs are higher than any other time and therefore more money gets spent on food. There are sometimes expenses related to ceremonies (ancestral obligations) for children when they are required. However, all women agreed that the large portion of the grant goes to food.

The different uses of the grant can be grouped into four categories, which are food, household non-food items, education and transport. Food always includes a bag of 50kg maize meal – (in cases where the woman does not share the cooking hut with the in-laws) and oil and sometimes meat. Where women do not grow their own vegetables or imifino, they also buy these which they sometimes buy from neighbours who grow them to sell.

The women reported an almost identical basket of goods for the non-food items, which the grant income is spent on, however, the quantity – of what portion of the grant goes to various items was difficult to estimate. The non-food items include soap (for bathing and for doing laundry), candles, matches and cosmetics.

Clothing is also one of the items that money is spent on, but this is only once or twice a year in some cases. Some women have also used the money to buy furniture items for the household, cement or other building material to build or repair the hut(s).

The education-related expenses include uniforms for the child, which is bought once a year. Some money is spent on school events, such as sports events, excursions and others. Some women said that they also give their children pocket money, when there is still money available after all the basic things have been bought. Transport costs include taxi fares for going to receive the grant, to get to the clinic or hospital and for children going to school.

There was an attempt in the community to lobby for building of a satellite school in the area and a compromise was reached to have a satellite branch of the primary school. However, there was no funding from the government for this, therefore the community put up a mud house which later collapsed after a few years of being used. Subsequently a cement structure was built. During the focus group discussion, the women said that the main primary school does not provide proper support to the satellite. The quality of the teachers who teach at the satellite branch has often been brought under question. As a result, many parents have chosen to spend money on transport, which a local resident who owns a bakkie provides.

Some women also participate in savings clubs (stokvels) and some money is put into a savings pot which is often used to buy food at the end of the year – although some women said they also save money in stokvels for contingencies. Since it was difficult to identify exactly what expenditure is met by the grant, all this expenditure is supported by the total income a woman is able to secure.

What does the grant enable?

The question of what the grant enables when translated into Zulu asks “what are people able to do since they have the grant or what have people been able to achieve through the grant?” Without any further prompts the responses varied. The stories of Ntodwa and Zenle illustrate the variations. Ntodwa is 30 years old and lives with her ‘husband’ at the man’s homestead with 28 other people living in the same homestead. She does not share a kitchen with the mother-in-law or any of the other makotis in the homestead. She is not working and neither is her ‘husband’. Apart from growing imifino for home consumption she receives the grant for her three children.

She gets a total of R870 per month, since her last child was born, and prior to that she received R560 when she only had two children. She says that the grant money has enabled her to buy building material so she could build her own dwelling hut, which she now owns. She also says that it has enabled her to own chicken and a goat, which she would never had been able to own had she had not had consistent income every month. Zenle is 40 years old and has four children. She was separated from her 'husband' and the in-laws allocated land for her to build her own house. She receives the grant for two children as the other two children are older.

She says that the grant has enabled her to be able to live independently with her children and able to raise her children on her own. She says she would otherwise have been stranded if she had not had any means of making a living. She is not fit to work as she has an illness she was not in a position to disclose. She says when she runs out of something at home she can get loans from the neighbours and know that she can repay them. Most women said that the grant enables life (impilo) as many fathers of the children who receive the grant are not working. Even in cases where some of the fathers of the children have worked before, they find it very difficult to find work now and therefore remain unemployed.

It feeds families since our husbands are not working anymore it is really difficult, the grant sustains life, the women can keep the family going when she receives the grant (Interview with Thole, 5 September 2013).

People build houses (hut/ rondavel dwellings) which they would never have been able to do if they didn't have anything since the men are not working and there is no work anymore... (Interview Mahle, 6 September 2013).

I haven't done anything that you can see but I've seen people doing big things, a lot of people now own goats because of this grant so they can have a future because if you don't have anything then you have no future (Interview Zenhle, 6 September 2013).

Therefore, one of the main responses is that the grant, because it is regular and reliable, supports livelihoods and builds some form of future security. The grant has enabled people to sustain families, build houses (huts so they have a shelter), keep livestock (which increases security), have insurance against hard times and get loans. Of these women, 22 have accumulated goats and chicken using the child support, while 16 of these women only have the child support grant as their main or only source of income.

Women say that they would not have been able to accumulate livestock if they had not received the grant. Receipt of the grant enabled them to take risks and invest in what they understand to be a sustainable future for their children and their livelihoods. The grant has also enabled women to diversify their portfolio of assets. Women say that previously they would own chickens if they had the means but now more and more women own goats, although they also say that they keep them for their children. They say that it is a form of security since their livelihoods do not depend on the extended household livelihoods.

5.10 Asset Accumulation

The grant has enabled women to accumulate some productive assets such as goats and chicken which are regarded as significant assets in their livelihoods. Out of 28 women interviewed, 22 have been able to buy goats and chicken using the grant money. How these assets have been accumulated differs for each of the women. To illustrate the differences, the stories of four of the women are presented. Buphi is 38 years old and has lived at her 'husband's' homestead for 16 years now. Her husband is a migrant in Johannesburg and gets short term piece jobs at different firms. Sometimes he is without a job but continues to stay in Johannesburg. She works at a bead project in a neighbouring farm, and although she does not have consistent income from this work, she does get some income of approximately R400 every two or sometimes 3 months. She cooks at her mother in law's kitchen and her in-laws buy the sack of maize and relish and she also contributes towards buying food monthly. When she first registered for the grant she had to wait for 2 to 3 months before the money was paid. When she finally got the first grant payment it was R400 and she gave it to her father in law and asked him to buy a goat for her. The goat was part of the herd of her father in law's goats and as a result was able to produce off-spring. She now has a herd of ten goats and many chickens.

Another case is Ngaphi, whose husband also works in Johannesburg, and gives her remittance of about R400 a month. She also used the grant money to buy a goat. She said that she was able to save R100 every month until she was able to buy a goat. Buphi and Ngaphi have been able to invest the grant to buy goats as they had additional income support. Firstly, their husbands give them remittances when they have work. Buphi also shares a cooking hut with her mother in law, which means that she shares food with her in-laws. Her work on a bead project also enables her to earn other additional income, and although not stable, she is still able to divert her grant income to other 'needs' as she sees necessary.

Ngaphi was able to save a little of the grant money every month until she was able to buy a goat. Ntothe is a slightly different case and represents the stories of the women who have been able to buy goats even when they have no additional income outside the grant income. Ntothe is 40 years old and lives in her husband's homestead with her seven children.

Her husband is not working. When she decided she wanted to start buying livestock with the grant money, she just sacrificed all the income in one month and bought a goat. She says that it was the most difficult month because there was not enough food for the children in that month. Now she says she does not regret her decision because her goat has produced offspring and she says she has more than five goats and some chickens. Shiyile's is a similar story, as her husband is not working. She has four children. She says she used to save R100 monthly from the grant income until she could buy a goat. She now has three goats. She also used to buy chickens from the neighbours and now has many.

Many women who have bought goats and increased their livestock assets say that they have used the grant money to do that. There are a few who say that they had to wait for a couple of months from the time they applied for the grant to when they received the first payment. When the first payment came, it was a substantial amount, enabling them to buy a goat and food. Others say that they saved little amounts from the grant money every month until they were able to buy a goat. One woman said that she started buying chickens and when she had many chickens she sold a few to buy a goat. As already noted, some women have been able to build their own huts at the homesteads where they now live. Women say that owning assets gives them a sense of security, especially since most of them are not 'fully married'. The assets that women have accumulated include dwellings (huts), livestock, fields (arable land) to grow food. Not all women have accumulated assets using the grant money; only 22 of the 28 reported to have bought goats and chicken using the grant money. Among these, there are four who also say that they have been able to repair or build a hut. Women own the goats and chickens that they have accumulated, although some were saying that they keep them for their children, but said they make decisions about them. Women who own goats particularly say that this gives them a sense of security since they now have something.

5.11 Who makes the decisions?

All the women interviewed said that they make all the decisions about how they spend the grant income. They often make decisions based on the needs of the children and the household.

Women who share the cooking hut with the in-laws also said, although they are expected to contribute towards food, they still decide what they contribute because it depends what they can afford to buy.

I decide what needs to be bought and I buy what is needed in my house, and what the children need, no one tells me anything... (Interview with Funni, 3 September 2013)

I decide on everything, when the children need things they ask me, so I must see how much money is available and then I can plan what needs to be done... (Interview with Phiwe, 6 September 2013)

It (the grant) has made us worthwhile (isisenze abantu) – which loosely translated means ‘it has made us people’ – but often used to when a person recognizes or appreciates something s/he has made them valuable), now we can do things that we were not able to do, what you can decide if you have nothing... (Interview Zenhle, 6 September 2013)

When it comes to livestock that women own, there is no standard answer, it depends on each woman. Traditionally chickens have always been regarded as women’s animals, and therefore women can make most decisions about chickens in the homestead. Cattle and goats have been traditionally regarded as belonging to men, and therefore men made decisions about these. Since more and more women have come to own goats as well, decision-making is changing. Most women have not had a need to use the goats yet, but say that they would be able to make decisions about them. They would, however discuss this with the husband and or the father in law because it is respectful. Women who have used their goats said that they consulted with their husband or the fathers-in-law if the husband was in Johannesburg. They said that they consult because it is respectful to do that but this does not mean that the husband or the father in law would have the right to refuse.

One woman said that when she wanted to sell her goat because she needed the money for something, her father-in-law advised against selling a goat at the time and suggested that she sell it a few months later (which was going to be December) as she would get a good price since goats are in demand. She said that she would always consult before selling goats because “the older people know better” as she explained.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented the main findings of the study. The main findings present information about the households, how they are organised and the nature of their livelihoods. It also presents information on the child support grant, its uses and the impact it has on the livelihoods of the women who participated in the study. The findings will be discussed in the following discussion chapter in an attempt to answer the study questions.

Chapter 6: Discussion

Some of the findings of this study are consistent with findings of similar studies as they relate to cash transfers in general and to the child support grant in South Africa, and the contribution towards poverty reduction. However, there are also findings which are particular to this study and which add new knowledge to the debate.

6.1 Household formation and positioning of women

Although the household was not the unit of analysis in this study, it formed a base through which interaction around livelihoods and the child support grant in particular occur. In the literature (for example, in Neves and du Toit (2008); Ellis (2007) households are characterized by people residing together in space and time, sharing resources (income in particular), and collaboration in productive activities. These characteristics, although they applied in early formations of households, do not hold true in many households today. Neves and du Toit, in their study of rural households in the Eastern Cape concluded that households are “not just formed around mutuality, they are consolidated around resources” (Neves and du Toit, 2008:3). These resources, they argue, are derived in large measure from livelihoods and act as a buffer against current and future shocks. In this study the homestead is a larger household which comprises sub-households. There is clear kinship and sharing between the extended homestead and the sub-households, of space (residential plots) and resources (arable land, kraal, and other natural resources); however, this does not include income. This diverges from the findings of similar studies, in South Africa, such as Delany et al (2008) and Guthrie (2002), which have found that income is often pooled together towards household needs. The divergence can be explained in two ways.

The first one is that most studies that have found that income is pooled together has referred to the Old Age Pension, as the older members of the household assume responsibility for the younger, unemployed members of households. Secondly, the organization of the homestead into sub-households means that each sub-household is a unit of its own, and therefore has to share resources only with the members of the sub-household. In another context, such as in a typical township household, the household is one unit and all members share the same house. In this context, it might be easier and more logical for the income to be pooled together.

Collaboration in productive activities occurs only with members of the sub-household, which in the case most of the women interviewed happened between the woman, her husband (if he is not in Johannesburg) and her children. It was only in the case of the younger makotis who share a cooking hut with the in-laws that some collaboration takes place beyond the sub-household, in activities such as fetching of water or firewood and cropping. The makoti who is not sharing a cooking hut with the in-laws takes responsibility for her sub-household in terms of productive activities.

There are two different dimensions that can be observed in this. Firstly, the assumption that a household is a homogenous unit with single interests is incorrect. The sub-households 'monopolize' and even accumulate certain resources as an alternative to pooling and sharing. Secondly, different social grants have particular roles in these familial processes. For an example the OAP, located in the elder member of the house, is more likely to be distributed across the entire homestead (or at least among the members of the homestead who share the same cooking hut), whereas the child support grant and the things it purchases, are more likely to consolidate the sub-households as semi-autonomous units. This means that the household and the distribution of consumption and of productive resources is more complex than literature often assumes.

6.2 The Child Support Grant, Enabling and Agency

Consistent with findings of other studies on the child support grant, such as Hunter and Adato (2007), Leibbrandt, et al (2009) and CASE (2008), the study found that all the grant recipients interviewed are biological mothers of the children they are receiving the grant for and they are also the primary care-givers of the children. This also shows that the grant enables mothers to care for their children, since there is not work close enough for them to be able to work and provide care to the children. These are environments in which domestic labour is in short supply and therefore there are not many options around child care. There are often assumptions made about unused labour in rural households, which often do not factor in the high dependency ratio of adults to children and the resources available to care for children and the elderly. Women engage in a multitude of activities to support livelihoods and therefore labour in these households is not abundant. The impact of the child support grant in the households and in addressing poverty has been shown in a number of studies.

Firstly, the grant has shown to be contributing significantly to household income. The South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) reported that in 2008 child grants made up a substantial percentage of household income after wages (SALDRU 2010). In a study on the impact of child support grant commissioned by the Department of Social Development (DSD), the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the United Nations Children's Fund, it was reported that 51% of people who receive the grant do not have any other form of income and that the grant made up almost 40% of total household income, while it contributed about 67% of personal income (Delany, et al 2008).

In this study the grant is the main source of income for many women (and their sub-households) that were part of the study and where there was other income the grant still contributed significantly to household income. In the past the area had been a source of male labour for the mining industry in Johannesburg. However, since the decline in employment in the industry, many unskilled people, mainly men, are not able to find work in this sector anymore. This is the case in this community, where remittances were once the main source of income, but now the child support grant has taken over. The sub-household structure has continued to thrive even with the rise in unemployment. Although the grant is not similar in its targeting to other types of cash transfers in other parts of the developing world, such as the Bolsa Familia in Brazil or Progressa in Mexico, it presents a similar dimension in that the cash transfer is a strategic form of social protection, having an impact at household level and a direct impact on poverty. The grant is very small, with the minimum amount received at household level ranging from R280 to just over R2000, but has exceeded general expectations in meeting the basic needs of households, depending on the number of children in the household who receive the grant.

The study found, along with other studies, that the grant money is spent on consumable items such as food, clothing and other household items, with food being the main expenditure item. The study has also found that the grant is also spent on productive assets such as the purchase of goats and chicken, and building dwellings. Other studies, such as DSD, SASSA and UNICEF (2012), have reported on the expenditure of the grant on consumable items. These studies found that about 79% of the grant is spent on food, which is then followed by child education, in the form of school fees and school uniforms (Patel, 2011). Expenditure on food has a positive impact on household food security and nutrition. Early childhood nutrition has been found to be boosted as the availability of food in households, increases.

Scientific evidence reveals that good nutrition during childhood will lead to better development in children as they progress to adulthood, which is said to contribute to higher productivity and higher wages later in life (Delany et al, 2008). Access to food is also expanded for children from poor households as grant beneficiaries also access free food at school nutrition programmes. These nutritional benefits translate to improved cognitive development in children (Delany et al, 2008). Expenditure on school related activities indicates an investment in human capital. For example, all women with school going children indicated that they spend ‘substantial’ amounts on school related activities, including school uniforms, sport activities, excursions, pocket money and a percentage of the grant amount on transport.

The literature on cash transfers with studies from other countries show improvement in school attendance of children whose families receive a cash transfer – instead of pulling children out of school. In this study, another dimension of human capital investment is seen. The women felt that the quality of education offered at the local satellite school, which is within a walking distance, is relatively poor than of the main school, located a few kilometres away from the area. Based on this assessment, they chose to send children to the main school which is a distance away. They spent a portion of the already over stretched grant on school transport. Although this point was not thoroughly explored during the interactions with the women, it seem to suggest that the grant has enabled them to make choices about their children’s education by investing on what they consider as better education for their children.

The expenditure of the grant income not only on consumption goods but also on productive assets indicates a departure from the idea that “social assistance payments have purely consumption effects with no bearing on productive activity...” (Farrington and Slater, 2006:500). The literature on cash transfers show that they are not ‘wasteful’ expenditure as some have argued, but they facilitate access to productive assets, as is the case in this study. Expenditure that is typically seen as consumption, such as food and transport, may also be incurred in the pursuit of human capital, for example in sending children to school.

Women in the study make their own decisions and become agents for their own livelihoods. The household dynamic and unemployment (including that of their husbands) prescribe that, if they are not taking decisive action to improve their livelihoods by seeking and exploring opportunities to broaden the livelihood options, they are not going to survive. In the absence of the CSG, opportunities and even capacity to explore the opportunities might be constrained.

The CSG has enabled them to invest in what they perceive to be future security which, Barrientos and Hulme (2009) argue, increases agency and strengthens capabilities.

6.3 Livelihoods Security and Assets

The social structure of the households in the study is adapting in response to at least two major changes: firstly, the form of customary marriage is changing and rates of completed marriages are in decline (Hunter, 2010; secondly, unemployment is rising, and in particular, male migrant unemployment has risen over the past two decades. In this context, CSG received mainly by mothers of children, are providing critical support to complex livelihoods that include survivalist enterprises, some agricultural cropping and livestock production, natural resource harvesting and part-time piece-meal wage work (often through government public works programmes). Furthermore, in some cases, mothers in receipt of child support grants are using them to invest in productive agricultural assets (such as goats and chickens) that create the basis of (limited) accumulation and thereby increase the resilience and robustness of rural homestead livelihoods.

The combination of changes (and declines) in marriage, together with a transfer in consumption capacity and productive asset accumulation to women through child grants, may thus be creating new challenges to the patrilineal nature of rural society and to women's social position within such a structure. This is evidenced in women defining new arenas for independent decision-making that could undermine the traditional authority of Zulu men, in particular, the husband and head of house. This supports similar findings by Cousins et al (2006).

6.4 Vulnerability and Resilience

One of the most important aspects in a sustainable livelihoods framework is the variety of assets that people have and their ability (capability) to use these assets to make a living. A livelihood is said to be sustainable when it can cope and recover from shocks and stresses. The more diverse a livelihood is, the more it can cope and adapt.

All the different assets play a significant role in sustaining a livelihood. The more assets are strengthened, the stronger a livelihood will be. The livelihoods of the households in the study are put together through a combination of activities, which depend on a variety of assets. These households are still directly dependent on natural resources and this reliance is very high. Households use arable land to grow imifino (spinach) and maize which is a major source of their staple diet.

Nearly all households use thatch and fuel wood, and the natural grasslands and forests are the main sources of these. Some of the women in the study harvest wood and thatch to sell it to the neighbours, thus generating income for their households. The social relations, which can be identified in the study as the relationship with the extended homestead and with neighbours, is also particularly important in these livelihoods. The extended family makes some resources available to the sub-household, such as allocating land, and sharing a kraal which is crucial for livestock security and multiplication.

It also becomes a point of reference for issues of cultural significance, such as connecting the sub-households to the ancestors, and offering support during times of distress. Neighbours are also another form of social capital, which contribute to the livelihood. Some women mentioned that they can borrow from neighbours, and get support during events and during tragic times, which is also component of livelihoods. Livestock also play a significant role in the livelihoods of the women in the study, and many have managed to accumulate goats and chicken over the years. The child support grant provides the financial capital which is also re-invested in the accumulation of other assets (livestock, dwellings), thus increasing a sense of security and strengthening livelihoods. The grant is also invested in human capital, through expenditure on education and health related expenses.

The diverse nature of livelihood activities and the use of the different assets at their disposal, mean that these livelihoods become less vulnerable. The capacity to combine assets and activities to make a living and be able to adapt in the context of a threat and not cross the level below which a livelihood would be at high risk, is crucial. Although not specified for this study the ability of the women to engage in different livelihood activities while accumulating assets means that there is an opportunity to escape the most severe poverty traps, and remain above a 'high risk' level in the long term. This is only possible if they continue to accumulate assets and broaden their asset base.

Asset accumulation and diversification are important for the resilience of a household's livelihoods and in mitigating vulnerability. The child support grant, instead of being seen as creating dependency, can be seen as contributing both to building the resilience of these livelihoods and, in some cases, to enabling the accumulation of productive resources, that potentially create trajectories out of poverty.

It is important to note that the study does not make a claim that the households under investigation are now resilient as a result of the child support grant; however, it creates an opportunity to build resilience.

The livelihoods outcomes of the households will be determined by how they use the grant, the decisions they make, and their capacity to act. Hodges et al argues that “the impact of cash transfers (CTs) on poverty depends on how poor people use the money” (Hodges et al, 2013: 6). Resilience building is a process. Livelihoods become more resilient when the strategies and activities are diversified to achieve sustainability in the medium to long term. The grant provides women with a greater range of choices that enable them to diversify their livelihood strategies, thus enabling poor people to take certain risks which they otherwise would not have taken.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the findings of the study, with specific reference to the study questions. It presented a detailed discussion of the main findings and highlighted some of the points made by the study participants during the interviews and the focus group discussion. This chapter showed that some of the findings are consistent with findings of other studies about the impact of the child support grant. It also showed what impact the grant has on livelihoods, and particularly rural livelihoods of women.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this study, it has become clear that social protection has increasingly become an important aspect of poverty intervention programmes in developing countries in the last ten years. It is broadly accepted as one of the main strategies, one that contributes towards economic and social development. Initially social protection was conceived as a strategy to manage risk (i.e. social risk as a result of poverty and deprivation) by meeting the basic needs of the poor, however recently it has become more established in development theory. Here the shift from meeting basic needs to a much broader intervention that encompasses, in addition to meeting basic needs, outcomes ranging from short to longer term investments to capital human development, to development of assets and providing pathways out of poverty. How the women in this study use the child support grant to facilitate the accumulation of productive assets shows just how significant contribution towards poverty alleviation cash transfers can have. Like other cash transfers, the child support grant also contributes to strengthening the livelihoods of the poor through asset accumulation. Instead of it being seen as creating dependency, it can be seen as contributing to building the resilience of these livelihoods. The poor do not want to be 'dependent', which is why they seek ways to strengthen their livelihoods. Hodges et al (2013) argues that poor people, given a choice, would choose rather to earn income from work rather than from grants.

It is important to note however; the study does not conclude that all livelihoods that were the subject of investigation are now resilient nor that the CSG on its own creates resilience. However, the CSG is seen as creating the opportunity for individuals (in how they use the grant, the decisions they make, their capacity to use the grant productively) to enable resilience of livelihoods in the medium to long term. Resilience building is a process that takes time and resources to achieve. Livelihoods become more resilient when the strategies and activities are diversified to achieve sustainability. The CSG enables people to make choices and diversify strategies, acting like insurance. Although the study only focused on a very small and specific group (i.e. young wives, 'makotis' in extended family, traditional rural homesteads) this also helped to show that even in a context of perceived general social vulnerability the poor are able to make decisions and choices that could result in independence rather than dependence as some of the literature has suggested.

Furthermore, in South Africa, as is the case on other parts of the world, the argument that social grants create disincentives for people to seek employment and that it kills motivation for people to come out of poverty by creating dependency on the state, is misguided. Firstly, there are complex issues and many other factors that can result in these outcomes outside of social grants. Secondly studies that have been conducted to show causal relationship between social grants and labour market participation have at best been inconclusive (Williams, 2007). Williams argues that the findings of these studies, even though inconclusive, provide opposing evidence. The arguments for wage employment as opposed to social grants further carry assumptions about work, family life and gender. Women, as in the case of this study, assume reproductive and nurturing functions which can be characterized as unpaid work in a context of very high unemployment.

On the one hand, some studies on the impact of the OAP on labour participation found that the rate of labour participation drops with the receipt of OAP. While on the other hand, other studies found that OAP is used to facilitate job searches, although these results were different in cases of the gender of the recipient of the OAP. There is not much work showing the impact of the CSG on labour market participation, and although this study does not offer insights into this issue, it shows how the use of the CSG by its recipients facilitate livelihood expansion and diversification, in addition to already known impacts of improved nutrition, child education and so forth.

When looking at labour market participation in the context of social grants, it is indicated that there are differences in the unemployment rates for women and men in South Africa, which reflects the global trend. While for men the unemployment rate in 2014 was at 23%, it was at 27% for women (StatsSA Publication 4th quarter of 2014), which is an indication of the gendered nature of poverty. Most if not all women interviewed are and have not been in any formal employment and have a low level of education (the majority have no education). Some women have worked and only three still work at neighbouring farms and in local projects, the Zibambele road maintenance project. All the women interviewed are the primary care-givers of the children for whom they receive the grant.

There are no employment opportunities in the area and the neighbouring farm work available is some kilometres distance away, indicating that the women would have to leave their homes and become migrant labour.

The only other opportunities are those related to short term projects, such as building of a school, in which mostly men are employed. The Zibambele road maintenance, which is the only other real option for these women, also absorbs only a small fraction, and since there are already women working on this project in the area, there are no more new opportunities unless somebody dies or leaves the area. The gendered division of care predicts that these women are not able to enter the labour market even if there were opportunities.

Openness of the developing economies means that they are more susceptible to shifts in global markets, which therefore necessitate the emphasis on up scaling social protection. However, questions remain about the sustained impact of social grants in the face of the unpredictable crude market changes nationally and globally. If the economic goals and the strategies that govern them that have created the current poverty and inequality conditions had been reversed, would not the rewards in social protection cash transfers be greater? The costs of not implementing social protection programmes and practical measures to address poverty are huge – as research has shown (Morduch 1998 and Dercon 2005). It could exacerbate both transient and chronic poverty.

Social grants therefore provide opportunities for developing coping strategies (SLA – the ability to cope with shocks and stresses is key to the sustainability of a livelihood) instead of harmful responses that could have long term effects on their livelihoods and those of their children – for example removing children from school so they can work, changing diets and thus compromising health and physical well-being – leading to a poverty trap out of which it becomes harder to transition. Although the study shows the capacity of the CSG to be spent not only on consumption goods but also on productive assets, thus building resilience, the idea of transformative social security indicates that there are still gaps in the South African social protection system.

The poverty problem cannot simply be addressed by localized, and individualized interventions, without transforming the structure of the economy at local, national and ultimately at a global level. The exposure to shifts in prices in the markets, and the low economic incentives derived from localized productive efforts of the poor as a result of market imbalances, and the low income traps (Williams et al, 2012) that most poor people find themselves in, are all conditions that need intervention if poverty alleviation efforts are to have durable impacts.

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide: The Child Support Grant and rural women's livelihoods

Name of interviewer: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Duration of Interview: _____

Questions:

Section 1: Personal Information

1. What is your name?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your marital status?
4. How long have you been married?
5. Where do you live?
6. How long have you lived here?
7. How many people live in this home?
8. How are they related to you?
9. Do you have children?
10. If so, how many children do you have?
11. What do you think are the costs of raising children?
12. What contribution does the father of the children put in meeting these costs?
13. Do you have other people who are dependent on you?
14. If so, what is your relationship to these people?

Section 2: Livelihoods

1. Are you employed? (If answer is yes, then question 2 – 4)
2. If so, where do you work?
3. How long have you worked there?
4. Do you get income from your work?
5. If so, how often do you get paid?
6. How much income do you get? (Optional)
7. What are the sources of income of this household?
8. What is your main source of income? What other sources of income do you have?
9. How often do you receive this income? (specify for each source in case of more than 1 source)
10. For how long have you received this income?
11. What other income generating activities do you engage in order to support yourself and your dependents?
12. What other activities do you do in order to support yourself and your dependents?

Section 3: Child Support Grant

1. In your opinion, what is the Child Support Grant for?
2. Who gets the CSG?
3. When can a person get a CSG?
4. What, in your opinion, does the CSG enable people who receive it to do?
5. Do you receive the CSG?
6. For how long have you been receiving the grant?
7. For how many children do you receive the CSG?
8. What is the total monthly amount of the CSG do you receive?
9. How long does the grant money last after you receive it?
10. What costs of raising children does the CSG money cover?
11. Who makes decisions about what to spend the CSG money on?
12. How do you decide what to spend the CSG money on?
13. How do you spend the CSG money? (spend it as it comes or pool it with other income or save it)
14. What do you mainly use the grant money for?
15. What other things do you use the grant for?
16. In the time that you have received the grant, what have you been able to do with the money?
17. How has this, in your opinion, improved your life?
18. How has this, in your opinion, improved your children's lives?
19. What would you do if the CSG would be stopped?

Section 4: Other resources and assets

1. What resources and /or assets does this household have?
2. Who do these belong to?
3. How did the household accumulate these assets?
4. What resources and or assets do you have?
5. How have these been accumulated?
6. Who makes decisions about the use of these resources or assets?
7. What are they used for?
8. Who benefits (or is going to benefit) from these assets/ resources?
9. How do they benefit?