

KHULA NEWS

THROUGH LOVE AND EDUCATION WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



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Economic cost of abuse of social grants and malnutrition of children

The last (2016) South African Demographic and Health Survey says 27% of South African children under five years old are short for their age or *stunted* due to chronic malnutrition. But a lack of height does not compare to these children's stunted brain growth which negatively impacts their education and employment opportunities. The World Bank estimates that childhood stunting reduces an individual's lifetime earnings by more than 10%.

According to the DG Murray Trust, eradicating stunting would mean a million more South African children would thrive each year—and increase South Africa's GDP by approximately R80 billion.

But why, in a country that has such a comprehensive social grant system, does stunting persist? In the Western Cape alone almost 1 million households rely on Child Support Grants (CSGs). Country-wide, the figure reaches 12 million or the households of 63% of all children in South Africa. And therein lies the dilemma ...

The CSG is intended to provide for the basic needs of a South African child under 18 whose parents or primary caregivers cannot care for them sufficiently due to unemployment or poverty.

According to a report by Dr Stephen Devereux of the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex, UK; and the Institute for Social Development, University of the Western Cape), at least two reasons add to why social grants fail to significantly reduce malnutrition in

South Africa. The first is cash needs resulting in dilution among other individuals.

"Unemployment is rife and R380 per child receiving a grant, is often an entire family's only livelihood," agrees Hanlie van der Merwe, Khula Social Worker, Paarl branch. "Some primary caregivers use grant money to sustain a substance abuse. They will do whatever it takes to keep their children to secure their income from grant money, but then they don't care for those children. The kids go hungry and are often neglected, sometimes even abused."

The second reason Dr Devereux's report lists, is deductions made by service providers, sometimes illegally. The revised Regulations to the Social Assistance Act (May 2016) states that beneficiaries must give written permission to SASSA for all deductions from their social grants.

"But primary caregivers still give their SASSA debit cards to shark loans as security for payment," comments Hanlie. "Despite it being illegal, monitoring and implementing the letter of the law to protect children is almost impossible."

June Davids of the SASSA branch in Paarl says they receive less than 10 reports per month of abuse of grant money.

SASSA relies on the public or statutory and non-statutory service organisations to report abuse of CSGs and will then investigate and terminate a CSG if appropriate.

"The number of grants we see abused definitely outnumber SASSA's statistics," says Hanlie. "Community members don't report grant money abuse out of fear of retribution. However, Khula reports every case of grant abuse that comes to our attention. This issue needs to be monitored much closer to prevent our country's children from being robbed of opportunities at the expense of their parents' substance abuse."

Carien van Zyl, Khula Principal Social Worker, concludes: "The system will have to adjust; it is not working. We would like to see CSGs linked to children's school attendance. It will force parents to take responsibility for their children's education and children will at least receive a good meal at school every day as opposed to going hungry, without education and often also suffering abuse! It could be the first small step to take our country closer to breaking the cycle of inter-generational poverty and to building the prosperous economy that our children have the potential to do."

According to Unicef, children receiving the right nutrition during their first 1000 days of life:

- ◆ are 10 times more likely to overcome the most life-threatening child diseases
- ◆ complete 4.6 more grades at school
- ◆ go on to earn 21% more in wages as adults
- ◆ are more likely as adults to have healthier families

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Celebrating new offices in Stellenbosch

Khula Stellenbosch celebrated their new office in Idas Valley with family, friends, stakeholders and some donors. "We are so grateful to have a *home* where we can fulfil our mission to integrate primary



school children at risk of dropping out, back into the school system and look forward to serving the community," says Maria von Backström, Khula Stellenbosch Branch Manager.

Khula supports First 1000 Day campaign in Caregivers Programme



The Western Cape government began the First 1000 Days campaign in 2016 to raise awareness of the crucial first 1000 days of a child's life. The most important aspects are: health and nutrition, love and attention; and play

and stimulation. "We fully support the campaign and strive to develop these attributes in all the caregivers that our programme targets. A caregiver who recently accepted the Lord, created a beautiful work of art in appreciation of the programme. She used flowers from her mother's grave (her most precious possessions) and items that she collected from the garbage dump," says Marie-Louise Rautenbach, Primary Caregivers Programme Coordinator in Paarl.

Khula statistics update

At 30 November 2017 the Reintegration Programme actively engaged **937** children in 26 schools in 5 areas in and around Paarl and Stellenbosch.

Schools, on average, referred **25** children per month. 26 fieldworkers paid **594** home and school visits, on average, every month in the last quarter.

In Paarl and Stellenbosch **206** children from Grades R to 7 in 12 schools participated in In-school Programmes and the Primary Caregivers Programme supported **47** caregivers. Fieldworkers also mentored parents during home visits.

Shining star leaps ahead and receives Bokkie-trophy

Prize-giving ceremonies mark the end of the school year and recognise the effort of learners. Children at risk of dropping out of school rarely make it onto the stage despite their praise-worthy performance in the face of great challenges.

This year Khula presented every learner who participated in the In-school Programme, with a certificate at their school ceremonies. "The fact that they managed to remain in school is an achievement and some children showed remarkable progress," enthuses Alta Bester, In-school Programme Coordinator in Paarl.

Proud recipient of the Bokkie-trophy (middle) with Drakenstein Mayor, Conrad Poole (right) and an alumnus from the school (left).



A Grade 2 learner exceeded all expectations and won the first floating Khula Bokkie-trophy for the biggest academic leap. "She could not read or write but within three months, with the help of the In-school Explorer Programme's dedicated volunteers, she bridged the gap."

Khula thanks volunteers

The work of Khula greatly depends on the availability of volunteers. Throughout the year they work with the participants in the programmes and truly are the hands and feet of Jesus. To thank them for their work, Khula hosted a tea at Nuwerus Lodge.



Programme participants enjoy year-end celebrations

Women who participated in the Primary Caregivers Programme had a lovely outing to Gordon's Bay. For some, it is the only time in the year that they travel outside Paarl.



60 children from Paarl and Stellenbosch who participated in the In-school Programmes enjoyed a fun-filled day at a kiddie's recreation centre Graceland Venues and Waterslides in Paarl.