

Concept Note
Thematic Solution Session on Universal Child Benefits
GSSD 2022

The role of South-South and triangular cooperation in strengthening social protection systems and access to child allowances especially in the context of COVID-19 recovery

Event organisers

Institutions: Governments of Thailand, Brazil, and South Africa in collaboration with UNICEF

Organiser's logo (s): *to collect*

UNICEF focal points: *Khwanploy Cheechang (Thailand), Sarah Shahyar (Thailand), Liliana Chopitea (Brazil), Russell Wildeman (South Africa), Martha Santos (NYHQ)*

Communications focal point if applicable: *TBC*

Schedule information

Date: 13th September 2022 (*tentative – TBC*)

Time & Time Zone: 15.30-17.00 (BKK Time)

Duration: 90 min

Tentative agenda:

- 00:05 **Opening Remarks by TICA Deputy DDG**
- 00:05 ***Overview: Social Protection Challenges and Opportunities Post COVID-19 (UNICEF Thailand Representative)***
- 00:15 **Presentation by Thailand Ministry of Social Development and Human Security on Child Support Grant (DG of Department of Children and Youth)**
- 00:15 **Presentation by South Africa Ministry of Social Development on Child Support Grant (Director of Social Policy of Department of Social Development)**
- 00:15 **Presentation by Brazil Ministry of Citizenship (Special Secretariat for Social Development)**
- 00:15 **Presentation by Brazilian Ambassador and Vice-Director of The Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC) on South-South Cooperation**
- 00:10 **Q&A Session**
- 00:10 **Declaration of Intent and Closing Remarks**

The Global South-South Development Expo (GSSD) is an annual event organized by the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC) to showcase evidence-based successful development solutions and initiatives, in collaboration with United Nations agencies and all other partners.

The 2022 GSSD Expo, the 11th Expo and the first one to be hosted in Asia and Pacific region, will take place in Thailand on 12-14 September 2022. It seeks to:

- To facilitate discussion on how South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC) can best support COVID-19 recovery efforts, particularly in addressing extreme poverty, food insecurity, vaccination inequality, and other global challenges.
- To identify, showcase, and facilitate the creation and strengthening of specific multi-stakeholder SSTC initiatives that have the potential to contribute significantly towards a speedy recovery.
- To review and discuss development policies and capacity-building efforts, identifying impediments and remedial measures to be introduced through SSTC methodologies at the national, regional and global levels.

Social Protection and Child Benefits

More than two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have left devastating impact on economies, livelihoods of people and social services most notably health, education and social protection. Those marginalized and vulnerable were worst affected.

Even before the pandemic, children were twice as likely to live in poverty as adults, and a staggering 385 million children, or one in five, are struggling to survive on less than US\$1.90 a day. Poverty is about more than income, and over 660 million children are estimated to be living in multidimensionally poor households, again with poverty rates consistently higher than adults. Social protection is crucial in protecting and empowering children in poverty. Nevertheless, millions of children globally are not covered by social protection at all, with only one out of three receiving some form of child or family benefit.¹

While challenges remain, important advancements are being made. Efforts to tackle child poverty and address the policy imbalance in social protection over the last two decades have included the adoption of cash transfers across low- and middle-income countries as central elements of their poverty reduction and social protection strategies. Elsewhere, established child benefits, including Universal Child benefits (UCBs), are a cornerstone of national welfare systems. Child benefits are one of the most widely used social protection programmes for children and provide direct financial relief for families in the form of cash or tax transfers and have been proven to drive down poverty rates and help children flourish.

Out of 180 countries for which information is available, 108 (60%) have some type of child or family benefit anchored in national legislation.² These trends have been accompanied by a growing body of evidence on the effectiveness of social protection in promoting children's and wider social outcomes. Recent cash transfer reviews underscore how – if appropriately designed and as part of wider social policy – they can significantly impact both children's intermediate outcomes, such as expenditure on

¹ ODI/UNICEF (2020) Universal child benefits: policy issues and options.

² ILO and UNICEF (2019) Towards universal social protection for children: achieving SDG 1.3.

children's goods, school attendance and access to healthcare, and final outcomes, such as cognitive development and health.³

Brazil, South Africa and Thailand are three governments that successfully implemented comprehensive social protection programmes:

Brazil

The country has over the last decades advanced on numerous fronts with its human rights agenda, including on the specific rights of children and adolescents. In line with its Federal Constitution, Brazil developed a robust inter-federative social protection system that seek to overcome social exclusion, inequality and poverty and contribute to the guarantee of rights. The system is intersectoral in its design and includes a wide range of programmes, including the renowned national cash transfer programme *Auxílio Brasil* (former *Bolsa Família*), benefiting mainly vulnerable families with children. All these programmes are part of Brazil's national Unified Social Assistance System (*Sistema Único de Assistência Social – SUAS*) and executed within the scope of a decentralized management model through cooperation among the three levels of the Brazilian administration (Federal, State and Municipal) and with shared responsibilities.

Another key component of Social Protection in Brazil is the Unified Registry for Social Programmes of the Federal Government – *CadÚnico*. This registry consists in a coordinated set of procedures, mechanisms, and capacities for registering and updating socio-economic information about families in poverty. It contains the database on families earning less than half the Brazilian minimum wage per capita (BRL 606 / USD 128 aprox.). The purpose of the Unified Registry is to ensure that socio-economic data about the poor⁴ and extremely poor⁵ families are collected and fine-tuned by the municipalities so that the identification of poverty pockets and territorial challenges can be used to inform planning, implementation, and monitoring of public policies. It also enables support for the integration and coordination of social programmes, aiming at the development of family capacities. Furthermore, through regular data collection on multiple dimensions of poverty and life conditions of the poor, it has been possible to better measure vulnerability, enabling improved targeting of families eligible for social assistance follow-up.

The many services that SUAS offers are organized and provided according to different levels of complexity through the operationalization of two essential public facilities at municipal level, namely the Social Assistance Reference Centre (CRAS) and the Specialized Social Assistance Reference Centre (CREAS). While CRAS is the main gateway to SUAS, responsible for the organization and delivery of social protection services for vulnerable or communities at risk, CREAS offers specialized and continued services to families and individuals at risk or who have had their rights violated (this includes physical, psychological, sexual violence, human trafficking, and legal socio-educational open rehabilitation regime). Apart from the services organized by CRAS and CREAS, and building on the intersectoral build-up of SUAS, both entities also serve as important entry points to other essential services and sectors, including health, education, and the judiciary, all of which form part of the Brazilian Child Protection System.

South Africa

The Child Support Grant (CSG) is arguably the best targeted child grant in the world. Our latest estimates indicate that eighty-three per cent of children who are eligible to receive the grant are receiving the grant. The CSG has been linked to positive social and developmental outcomes, especially if the child receives the grant from a young age. Presently, there are roughly 13 million recipients of

³ Cooper and Stewart, 2013; Bastagli et al., 2016, in ODI/UNICEF 2020.

⁴ Income per capita below R\$ 210/month (approx. USD 44/month).

⁵ Income per capita below R\$ 105/month (approx. USD 22/month).

the grant (more than 60% of all children). Concerted efforts are now being made to reach the seventeen per cent of children who are eligible but who have not yet accessed the child grant. More than one-third of South African households receive at least one child grant per family. Of particular relevance is the fact that rural and poorer provinces are well served by the child grant, thus adding to the overall equity achievements of the grant. Further work with the Government of South Africa is also being done to improve the integration of child grant beneficiaries into a complementary set of social services. This approach-known as cash plus in the social protection community--aims to improve the overall effectiveness of the child grant.

Thailand

Thailand's Child Support Grant provides a minimum level of social protection for children under 6 years of age. Since its landmark adoption in 2015, the scheme has undergone two expansions both in the coverage and value of the transfer. The scheme currently reaches 2.3 million children under 6, which accounts for nearly half of all children in this age group. Independent evaluation describes early impacts of the Child Support Grant after one year of its implementation, including reported improvements in feeding practices and access to essential healthcare. The Government of Thailand is committed to and has been working to further improve various aspects of the programme design including enhancing linkages with other schemes and services, the Grant's management information system as well as its coverage. In November 2020, the National Child and Youth Committee approved a proposal to universalize the Child Support Grant – an important step forward that is yet to be endorsed by the Cabinet. On the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, the Child Support Grant scheme was successfully utilized for emergency transfers to families through a temporary top-up, reaching an estimated 8 million households.

The Role of South-South and Triangular Cooperation

South-South and triangular cooperation (SSTC), mentioned in SDG 17 as one of the partnership modalities for delivering the 2030 Agenda, plays an important role in increasing timely access to relevant solutions, experiences, and technical assistance from the Global South; sharing knowledge, know-how and technology; and strengthening cooperation among countries. Through SSTC, developing countries are turning to neighbouring and partner countries for more sustained collaboration through mutual learning and bilateral cooperation. At the 20th meeting of the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation held in June 2021 and the United Nations Day for South-South Cooperation held in September 2021, countries called for greater sharing of good practices, knowledge and technical expertise through SSTC for all areas of the 2030 Agenda including food security and nutrition. They invited UN agencies to continue to support and promote SSTC, in complement to other partnership modalities.

This thematic solution forum intends to bring together practitioners and experts from governments, development agencies and other institutions from different regions of the global South to discuss successful social protection and child benefits programmes and explore the role of SSTC in enabling global exchange of knowledge and experiences and facilitating adaptation of solutions to other countries.

Objectives of the Thematic Solution Event:

- To share experiences from three countries that have successfully implemented comprehensive social protection programmes that benefit children and their families and explore ways that SSTC could provide a platform for stakeholders to identify challenges and opportunities.
- Promote country-to-country learning on actions, experiences, lessons learnt and good practices on social protection and child benefits schemes in the context of COVID-19.

- Discuss how governments, development agencies, international organizations and other stakeholders can build partnerships, transfer solutions and increase access to technical cooperation and resources through SSTC.
- To understand how to harness the complementary power of social sector programmes that enhance the overall value and effectiveness of social grants for children.

Concrete outcomes expected from the session

- Successful cash transfer and other programmes in the context of comprehensive national social protection shared and discussed among Governments and partner stakeholders, so as to increase awareness and knowledge of existing inclusive social protection models.
- Commitments of Government and partner stakeholders to join efforts through South-South Cooperation to promote inclusive social protection for children, especially the most vulnerable, with possible ways forward identified, including different models of engagement.
- Strengthened multi-stakeholder partnerships on Trilateral South-South Cooperation for social protection.

Participants

Please include name, position, institution, and email address of each.

***Speakers** (including presenters/discussants): TBC

Opening and closing remarks: TICA: Deputy DG, UNICEF

Opening remarks: Mr. Cheevindh Nathalang, Deputy Director-General, TICA

Presentations:

Thailand: Ms Jatuporn Rojanaparnich, Director General of the Department of Children and Youth, MSDHS

South Africa: Mr Khethani Hlongwa, Director of Social Policy of Department of Social Development - Ministry of Social Development

Brazil: Ambassador Ms. Maria Luiza Lopes da Silva, Deputy Director, The Brazilian Cooperation Agency

Ms. Teresa Amélia Arruda Barroso (General Coordinator of Public Facilities, Ministry of Citizenship)

UNICEF: Kyungsun Kim, UNICEF Thailand Representative; Andrés Franco, Deputy Director, Publication Partnership Division, NYHQ

Moderator: TBC

Additional materials

publications, articles etc.:

****Social media accounts of organisers and speakers when available.**