

# Social cash transfers, generational relations and youth poverty trajectories in rural Lesotho and Malawi

## Research highlight 3 (Lesotho): The influence of cash transfers

Preliminary findings from an ESRC-DFID-funded research project April 2017



Interviews with cash transfer recipients and members of their households revealed a range of ways in which young adults experience cash transfers:

### As direct recipients of child grants in respect of their own children

- \* In the absence of employment or assets, child grants are a key source of income for some young parents, albeit they are viewed as too small and too infrequent.
- \* Child grants sustain poor households enabling them to buy food and clothes for their children.
- \* Known as 'seoa holimo' ('money falling from the sky'), they are also stigmatised. The young recipients are deemed capable of working for themselves and thus undeserving of unearned income.

### As members of households that benefit from pensions and child grants

- \* Pensions may be reshaping family relationships, enabling elderly people to exist with a degree of independence from their descendants.
- \* Pensioners tend to see their pension as their own money, but do contribute to household budgets and are particularly inclined to support grandchildren.
- \* Parents express a sense of responsibility to spend child grants on their children but also use them to feed the wider family.
- \* While elderly people are considered (increasingly) autonomous, children are viewed as part of a nuclear household without an independent identity or entitlement.

### As members of a community in which others receive pensions and child grants

- \* Young people engage in piece work for elderly people in particular, for instance doing laundry, collecting firewood and brewing beer.
- \* Pensions and child grants are implicated in lending arrangements across the community, which at times leads to debt-related problems or conflicts.



### CASE STUDY: MATHABO'S CHILD GRANT

Mathabo dropped out of school in 2008 to get married. She lives in the village with her husband and two children. They have very few assets, only one cow and no fields. Survival has been through undertaking a variety of income generation activities including growing and selling vegetables, doing laundry for others, selling snacks and cigarettes and brewing beer. Mathabo receives the child grant for her children. She is happy to receive the child grant as it gives her surety for loans when she has to borrow money or goods, and can be used to buy food for the children and whole family. Mathabo mentions that the children have therefore become a livelihood asset, due to the benefits of receiving the child grant. However, there are concerns regarding the money. Mathabo does not really know where it comes from and thinks that if the money is paid by a donor and not the government, it could stop anytime at the whim of the donor. Aside from this fear, Mathabo mentions that there are tensions and jealousy created as not everyone in the village receives the grant. As she states: *"even their words damn. They really make it hard for us"*. Lack of clarity around the criteria for selecting households for the child grant is creating this stigma. As Molebohang, another participant, states: *"some have been left out yet we are still the same, living the same life"*.



### CASE STUDY: SECHABA'S NKHONO'S PENSION



Sechaba's grandmother is 91 and receives a pension. During the household profiling the nkhone's household was said to remain independent, although Sechaba's father claimed he was head to both his own and his mother's household, as he now made decisions for her. Subsequently, it emerged that both households eat from the same pot, and use the grandmother's kitchen. The nkhone insisted her pension was her own money. She wanted to use it to pay for another granddaughter's education, but said that she also bought groceries for the two connected households. Her family were positive about the nkhone's ability to exercise some independence. However, she sent her brother-in-law to collect the pension instead of any of the resident household members. Sechaba's father felt she didn't trust him with her money and acknowledged it caused tensions. Sechaba suggested that his father might spend the money on alcohol. Sechaba's mother complained that nkhone saw contributions to her household as loans, failing to acknowledge that she was herself eating with them and using the groceries.

*Pseudonyms are used and photographs are illustrative only: they do not portray the individuals profiled*

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