

About REBA Case Study Briefs

What is RHVP?

The Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (RHVP) supports improvements in policy and programme approaches to hunger and vulnerability in southern Africa with particular emphasis on the role of social protection.

The Regional Evidence Building Agenda (REBA)

Evidence-building, together with capacity-building and policy change, is one of RHVP's three interlinked activities. The Regional Evidence Building Agenda (REBA) is a cohesive framework that has guided the Programme's cross-country evidence-related activities between April 2006 and September 2007. The REBA consists of individual case studies of 20 ongoing social transfer programmes together with thematic studies covering cross-cutting design and implementation issues. The studies were carried out by locally commissioned researchers, mostly working through national research and consultancy institutions, in the six southern African countries covered by RHVP (Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe). All the case studies involved close collaboration with the agencies – government departments and government-appointed bodies, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and communities – that were implementing the social protection schemes under review. The research was supported and guided by a core team of international mentors which included Stephen Devereux (IDS, Sussex), Frank Ellis (ODG, University of East Anglia) and Lionel Cliffe (University of Leeds) and was coordinated and managed by Philip White (ODG).

REBA Aims

The REBA aims to support RHVP's efforts to promote improved policy and programme approaches to social transfers as a means of addressing hunger and vulnerability. REBA findings are feeding into a range of policy, advocacy and research outputs and processes, including policy briefs, best practice guidelines, national and regional learning events for policymakers, practitioners and civil society, a film series and research publications. In addition, by working through a network of national consultants, the REBA aims to increase national capacity to carry out analytical research on hunger and vulnerability within the six countries.

REBA Case Study Briefs

This series of briefs was prepared by Frank Ellis on the basis of the 20 individual case studies undertaken under the REBA. Based on these findings and those of the accompanying thematic studies, a parallel series of thematic briefs that cut across the case studies is also in preparation. The full reports of each case study will be made available in early 2008.

School Bursaries for OVC, Swaziland

Overview

In February 2003, the King of Swaziland in his annual speech from the throne at the opening of parliament declared that all children, whether they were able to pay school fees or not, should be in school. This declaration signalled the adoption by the Swaziland government of policy proposals to provide grants to orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in order to enable them to attend school. Bursaries of E400 (US\$65)¹ per child at primary school and E1500 (US\$250) per child at secondary were introduced, and these were kept at the same level from 2003 to 2006. In 2007, the primary school grant was lowered to E250 (US\$40) per child following a decision by government to supply primary schools with books, stationery and equipment up to a value of roughly E150 (US\$25) per pupil.

Data suggests that primary school enrolment rose as a result of this initiative, from 208,652 in 2003 to 226,914 in 2006, a rise of 8.8 per cent. Nevertheless, the bursary scheme has not been free of stresses and strains. Since its inception there has been persistent concern about leakages in the distribution of funds, coupled with widespread allegations of 'elite capture', i.e. non-poor children receiving the grant rather than OVC. Moreover, schools have reported that the grant has meant that they have taken on additional pupils with no additional funding for teachers and equipment. The amount allocated to the bursary by the government has increased substantially since it started, from E16 million (US\$2.7m) in 2003 to a budgeted amount of E66 million (US\$10m) in 2007.

This is the second of four case studies examining social transfers to OVC in Swaziland. Such social transfers began in the early 2000s as a response to rapidly rising numbers of AIDS orphans as well as rising vulnerability in the population at large, due to a combination of adverse factors and trends. The four policies are neighbourhood care points, school bursaries, chiefs' fields and farm input support to child-headed households, and while these have separate origins in Swaziland government and institutional structures, as well as in partnerships with donors, they were brought together in 2006 in a single over-arching strategy called the National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children 2006-2010 (Swaziland, 2006).

1 The currency in Swaziland is called the Emalangi (E) and is pegged at parity to the South African rand. The exchange rate of the Emalangi averaged about E6.5 = US\$1 in 2006 and in mid-2007 was E7 = US\$1.

Organisation

Education in Swaziland has traditionally involved parents paying school fees, although the size of such fees has varied according to whether schools receive government funding or not under different categories, as well as budgetary arrangements of schools themselves that might involve funding by other bodies, including churches and trusts. Wide variations in fees have been the norm in the past. However, since the early 2000s, the government of Swaziland has been moving towards universal primary education as part of its efforts to comply with the education Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In Swaziland UPE is referred to as basic education for all (EFA).

Some insights into the funding of schools is provided by case study data on one infant and five primary schools in Manzini region in 2005. State funding to primary schools in that period was around E1,500 per pupil. In addition to this, individual primary schools charged parents a wide variety of different fees, under many different headings. The total of such fees varied between E282 and E805 per pupil. In this context, it can be seen that a flat rate bursary of E400 per OVC pupil would have had different effects in different schools.

For schools anyway charging less than E400 fees to parents, the size of the bursary may have been considered quite adequate. On the other hand, for a school normally charging more than E400, the bursary would have involved a gap that could either be absorbed (no doubt unwillingly) by the school or charged to the OVC (therefore excluding penniless OVC). This explains why many

schools placed a cap on OVC numbers, causing rationing of places. In addition, all schools were expected to take on additional pupils with no addition to their core grants, and this caused some head teachers to resist what they regarded as an imposition, bringing them into conflict with the government.

The OVC school bursaries are provided to schools against a list of OVC pupils that schools must have agreed beforehand with Regional Education Offices. Subject to the factors discussed above, this list should comprise all pupils or would-be pupils who fulfil the designated criteria for being regarded as an OVC (see targeting below). Drawing up the list is a consultative process, involving school committees, chiefs, and community motivators of various kinds.

Vulnerability

The overall picture of poverty and vulnerability in Swaziland is provided in a different case study in this series (see Case-Study No.6 on the Old Age Grant). For the purpose of these case studies on social transfers to OVC, the critical consideration is the rising trend in the number of AIDS orphans, together with increasing orphan and vulnerable children numbers from other causes. The National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children (NPA), prepared during 2005, estimated total OVC numbers at 132,000, of which 69,000 are orphans, 47,000 are children in highly vulnerable families, 15,900 are disabled children and 300 are street children. The total OVC figure is 25 per cent of all children aged 0-18, and 12 per cent of the total population of 1.1 million.

Table 4 Fees Structure for Selected Manzini Region Primary Schools, 2005
(Emalangen per pupil)

Schools	Basic Fees	Books & Stat.	Building Fund	Maintenance	Sports Culture	Salary	Services	Zondle*	Other	TOTAL
Kwaluseni Infant	50	100	0	0	0	100	30	150	100	530
Mahlanya	32	141	40	40	28	25	30	108	125	569
St Pauls Methodist	50	188	100	25	30	100	20	0	232	805
Engwenyameni	35	35	30	2	30	0	5	100	45	282
Nhlambeni Nazarene	55	0	80	20	20	35	12	86	35	343
Kandinda Primary	20	295	50	10	20	10	21	0	20	46
Mean	40	126	50	16	21	45	20	84	93	496
% of Total	8.1	25.5	10.1	3.3	4.3	9.1	4.0	16.9	18.7	100.0

* zondle in this context refers to the provision of food for preparing a meal

Source: Ministry of Education, Year End Financial Reports and Budgets, 2006

Swaziland has the highest adult HIV prevalence in the world, the latest data from UNAIDS suggesting a total of 220,000 people living with HIV, or 20 per cent of the entire population (UNAIDS, 2007). Due to the age structure of the population, the prevalence rate is much higher among adults aged 15 years and over, at 33.4 per cent. A much-cited statistic on which many HIV/AIDS estimates are based was the finding in 2004 that 42.6 per cent of all pregnant women attending ante-natal clinics tested as HIV-positive. These proportions mean that the number of AIDS orphans is projected to rise through to 2013 (World Bank, 2006b) leading to an associated rising toll on family welfare caused by caring for the sick, purchasing medicines, and meeting funeral costs.

Towards the end of the 1990s awareness began to emerge that growing numbers of school-age children were either unable to attend school or were dropping out of school due to an inability to meet the costs of attendance. A later study by the World Bank showed big differences in 2000-01 between the school enrolment of orphans and non-orphans, as also between orphan boys and orphan girls (Table 1). In urban areas in particular, the school enrolment rate of orphan girls was estimated at 63 per cent as against 86 per cent for non-orphan girls. The corresponding figures for boys were 73 per cent enrolment rate for orphans compared to 87 per cent for non-orphans.

Targeting

A national definition of orphans and vulnerable children in Swaziland is codified in the 2006 National Plan of Action. According to the NPA an orphan is defined as a child under 18 who has lost one or both parents, and 'a vulnerable child is a child under the age of 18 years who satisfies one or more of the following criteria:

- Parents or guardians are incapable of caring for him or her;
- Physically challenged;
- Staying alone or with poor elderly grandparents,
- Lives in a poor sibling-headed household;
- Has no fixed place of abode;
- Lacks access to health care, education, food, clothing, psychological care, and/or has no shelter to protect from the elements, exposed to sexual or physical abuse including child labour.' (Swaziland, 2006: p11).

While this is a recent statement, similar considerations have applied in the past, and these formed the underlying basis for identifying children who should be included in the school fees waiver from 2003 onwards. The procedures for selection put into effect by the Ministry of Education in 2003 are described in Box 1. In its first year of operation the school fees waiver only applied to OVC already in school, while thereafter it applied to all OVC wishing to attend school. The emphasis on 'triangulating' beneficiary selection between school committees, Chiefs and Rural Health Motivators (bagcugcuteli in Swazi) remained a key feature from 2003 onwards.

Table 1: Estimated School Enrolment Rates by Orphan Status 2000-01

	All Children		Orphan (proxy)		Non-Orphan (proxy)	
	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)	Boys (%)	Girls (%)
Urban	82.5	77.6	73.0	62.8	86.6	85.8
Rural	79.3	76.3	77.6	71.7	80.3	79.3
National	80.0	76.6	76.8	69.7	81.9	80.9

Note: These figures use a proxy indicator for orphanhood – where the head of the household is not the parent of the child – which overestimates the absolute number of orphans, but this is not thought to affect these enrolment proportions much.

Source: World Bank (2006a)

Box 1: Selection Procedure for OVC School Bursaries 2003

- Only children in school would be catered for during 2003, since the year had already started and for the reason that out-of-school children would require additional classrooms and teachers;
- At least 50 application forms would be issued per school, so that the additional forms (if any remained unused) could be used by the Ministry to ascertain roughly the number of orphans and vulnerable children in the schools;
- After being signed by parents and/or teachers, application forms would be endorsed by Chiefs, Rural Health Motivators and school Committee chairpersons who are expected to know the most needy families in their communities;
- Each Regional Education Office (REO) would determine the number of beneficiaries and ensure that they did not exceed their respective budgets;
- Head teachers had to supply their school prospectus to REOs as a way of verifying the fees reflected in the application and claim forms;
- Children and schools that were given financial support by other organisations would not benefit from the government bursary scheme in 2003 – this was meant to avoid problems arising from inadequate distribution of benefits.

Source: Ministry of Education OVC Report 2004

Despite these relatively well-defined criteria and procedures, it is widely acknowledged in Swaziland, including in the Ministry of Education, that they are not met by a considerable proportion of the pupils provided with OVC bursaries. This has a dual adverse effect on the intentions of the scheme: it results in the demand for bursaries exceeding the number that can be funded so that rationing occurs, and it means that fewer OVC are reached than the gross figures of grant recipients suggests. This may help to explain discrepancies between different figures available on the impact of the scheme. Thus the Ministry of Education reports that 73,000 primary school pupils received the bursary in 2006, yet (as noted above) primary school enrolments rose by about 18,000 between 2003 and 2006. The difference between these figures (55,000 pupils) represents some (unknown) combination between OVC already in school in 2003 who were able to take up bursaries, and non-OVC who captured a share of the bursaries available.

Since early 2007, the Ministry of Education has been pursuing a re-screening exercise to try to remove non-OVC from the beneficiary lists held in schools and Regional Education Offices. This has involved 'tightening up' the definitions of OVC for school screening purposes in the following ways:

- double orphan: defined as a child who has lost both parents and has no estate, insurance, sponsor, pension or any source of income;
- single orphan: defined as a child who has lost one parent and has no estate, insurance or other source of income, and whose single parent is not in any gainful employment;
- vulnerable child: defined as a child who has absolutely no means of paying for his or her education, such as a child neither of whose parents are in gainful employment or business.

If applied rigorously these criteria evidently differ considerably from the generic definition of OVC provided in the NPA, as cited above. This is because lack of income sources becomes the deciding factor for selection, irrespective of the demographic category to which particular OVC belong. This also holds the risk of wrong exclusion because the terms 'any gainful employment' or 'any source of income' could be used to rule out those earning casual income, or seasonal income in agriculture, or indeed a wide variety of payments that may nevertheless leave a person or family unambiguously below the poverty line.

Coverage

As already discussed, the true coverage of the school bursary scheme is obscured by the probably quite high proportion of grants that have accrued to non-OVC children. The official data for 2006 indicate that 93,000 bursaries were provided across both primary and secondary schools. The NPA envisages that all primary school age OVC should receive bursaries from 2006 to 2010, with a baseline figure of 55,279 eligible children being adopted for 2006. The NPA envisages the payment of school fees (E400), uniform costs (E225), and exam fees (E147), the latter only applying in the year that primary school examinations are taken. These figures may be out of date (refer to the earlier comment about the drop in fee payments from E400 to E250, with schools being compensated by an increase in their allowances for stationery and books). The total budget

for school bursaries and related costs envisaged in the NPA is US\$34.9 million over five years.

Coordination

The OVC bursary scheme represents the Ministry of Education's response to growing evidence and international agency prioritisation of the social exclusion of AIDS orphans and other vulnerable children. It has been managed and coordinated by the Ministry of Education, through its Regional Education Offices, and at school level through school heads, school committees, chiefs and rural health motivators.

Since 2006, the bursary scheme falls within the framework of the National Programme of Action, and is budgeted accordingly through to 2010 in the NPA. Whether this has materially altered the degree of inter-agency coordination in the implementation of the bursary scheme is difficult to judge, but possibly rather little. The Ministry of Education has been mainly preoccupied with the introduction of basic education-for-all (EFA) for the past five years, as well as associated changes in funding to schools to make this possible. Interestingly, the NPA envisages phased-in provision of school feeding to all OVC of school age, estimated at 110,000 in 2005. The cost of this is taken to be US\$0.28 per child per day, based on WFP data. In addition, schools will be encouraged to create gardens or farms to assist with the food supply to OVC.

Cost Effectiveness

No data are available that would permit the organisational costs of managing the OVC school bursaries to be distinguished from general Ministry of Education costs associated with public funding to schools. It can be supposed that the cost efficiency of the bursaries is quite high (i.e. low administrative costs per grant) since the institutional apparatus through which grants are paid to schools is in place anyway.

However, this assumes little or no leakage of funds in their distribution between central government via regional education offices to schools. Moreover, cost effectiveness requires not just that grants are transmitted to schools at low administrative cost (and low leakages) but that the grants made available correspond to the numbers of OVC enabled to attend school. In this respect, a number of difficulties in the implementation of the OVC bursary scheme have been noted since its inception in 2003:

- (a) as already noted under targeting above, it is thought that there has been considerable 'elite capture' of grants intended for OVC, thus reducing the number of true OVC who have been able to benefit from the policy;
- (b) this has exacerbated an underlying limited access problem arising from budgetary allocations to OVC bursaries lagging behind demand for uptake, such that rationing has occurred;
- (c) the level of the bursaries does not always cover the full costs of attending school, and OVC must meet the gap between the grant level and the school's standard fees, which effectively excludes the poorest and most vulnerable OVC who are unable to make any contribution to their education.

Market Effects

It is not thought that market effects are a crucial policy feature of school bursaries to OVC. Nevertheless rationing of school places for particular categories of pupil is a kind of market effect, even if it occurs more in a government-funded than market environment. It is known that quite a few school heads and committees have placed caps on the number of OVC they are prepared to enrol, since they do not think that the bursaries adequately compensate them for the additional overhead costs of taking on more pupils. This applies especially to buildings and equipment, but also to permanent teaching staff numbers.

Asset Building

The OVC bursary scheme recognises that a growing proportion of Swaziland's children might otherwise not be able to participate in education, thus affecting human capital in the future, and potentially causing rapidly increasing problems of social exclusion. However, not too much should be read into the asset building side of OVC bursaries. The NPA makes it clear that OVC policy is principally driven by rights criteria.

Strengths

The OVC school bursary scheme displays a number of strengths that can be identified as follows:

- (i) since 2006 it has formed part of an integrated approach to OVC, as set down in the government's National Plan of Action for Orphans and Vulnerable Children;

- (ii) due to this, it is in principle coordinated administratively and in budget terms with other OVC initiatives such as Neighbourhood Care Points (Case Study No.14);
- (iii) the scheme experienced rapid initial success, resulting in a measurable rise in OVC enrolment in the education system as well as improved actual school attendance by OVC;
- (iv) the government has displayed awareness of emerging problems (especially 'elite capture') and has sought to address these in evolving Ministry of Education practice in implementing the scheme.

Weaknesses

As identified in several of the preceding sections, the OVC school bursary scheme has also been prone to certain weaknesses since its inception in 2003:

- (i) there is a widespread feeling among carers, parents, NGOs and other observers that a considerable proportion of OVC grants were captured by children who did not fit the OVC criteria;
- (ii) this is the problem of 'elite capture' which occurs to some degree with many different types of social transfer and is often fuelled by a perception amongst the citizenry that since 'everyone is poor here' there should be universal coverage of that social group (in this case, school children);
- (iii) a different problem concerns the gap between the fees charged by schools to other pupils and the value of the bursary, which can mean that OVC still confront payments that they or their carers are unable to afford or sustain in the long term;
- (iv) it is possible that the most vulnerable children have hitherto been excluded from the scheme, since in order to participate at all it is necessary to undergo formalities and minor costs that are beyond the reach of truly destitute carers and children.

Policy Lessons

The National Plan of Action for OVC 2006-2010 includes school bursaries in its overall portfolio of policy responses. The NPA has a total 5-year budget of US\$230m, representing rising expenditures from US\$36.1m in 2006 to US\$57.2m in 2010. The main components by sector of this total are education (31 per cent); food (26 per cent) including school feeding, NCP feeding, and various farm and garden support schemes; and health (13 per cent) of which a major share is represented by anti-retroviral drugs. The cost of school bursaries represents nearly half the NPA education budget.

On balance, positive gains for OVC seem to have been achieved by the school bursary scheme. It has enabled a considerable number of OVC to attend school where otherwise they would have not been able to do so, and it has measurably increased overall school enrolment and attendance in Swaziland, particularly at primary level. It has also led to changes in overall government policy towards education, that moves in the direction of increasing the equity of resource provision across pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.

Some social responses to this provision are, however, illuminating because they represent broader difficulties surrounding social protection at scale in poor southern African countries. The key issue here is the sheer magnitude of the poverty problem, the enormous livelihood stresses that so many families have had to deal with over the past ten or more years, and the disintegration of social reciprocity to which these stresses have tended to give rise. It is this issue that results in most families considering that they should be eligible for social protection that is on offer, even when they do not strictly fit the type or criteria of social group that is being targeted.

Sources

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More Information

REBA material, including these briefs and fuller case study reports, as well as information regarding the REBA process can be viewed and downloaded from: http://www.wahenga.net/index.php/core_activities/building_evidence

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