

# The 1<sup>st</sup> Three: Thailand's Progressive Road Toward Universal Child Grant Coverage



กรมกิจการเด็กและเยาวชน

unicef   
for every child

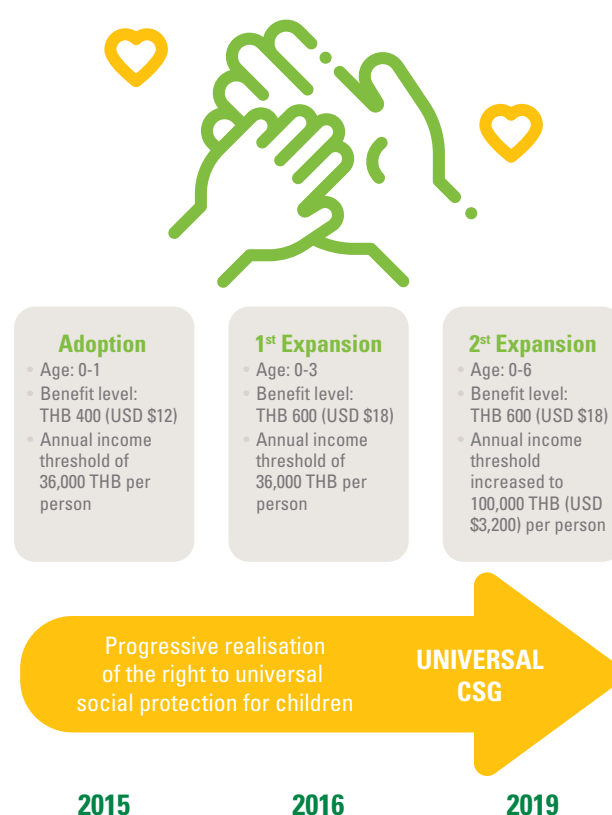
## What is the Child Support Grant?

- The Child Support Grant (CSG) is a non-contributory, non-conditional targeted cash transfer to caregivers of children between ages 0-6. Eligible poor and near poor families have an average income of less than THB 100,000 per year (USD \$3,200). Currently, 1.01 million Thai children (23% of children under six) have received monthly income support under the CSG.<sup>1</sup>
- **The primary goals of the CSG are to:**
  - ▶ Support families to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable Thai children
  - ▶ Promote access to key services to promote healthy development and help children achieve their full potential
  - ▶ Break the intergenerational transmission of poverty.
- The Child Support Grant demonstrates the Thai government's clear commitment to end child poverty, address inequality and invest in the future of the nation. The grant is in line with the 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan strategy to strengthen and develop human capital, as well as the 20-year National Strategy (2018-2037).

## Evolution of the CSG

- Following policy ratification in 2015, the CSG was rapidly implemented nationwide. International social protection experts have noted that the rollout of the CSG was conducted in one of the shortest timeframes ever recorded globally.
- Based on evidence of its successful impact, the policy was subsequently expanded three times between 2015 and 2019 (see Figure 1), indicating the strong commitment of the Royal Thai Government (RTG) to the core principles of the Child Support Grant.

**Figure 1: Development of the Child Support Grant in Thailand**



- The RTG started with a cautious approach, which covered children aged 0-1 from poor and near poor families. Based on evidence from the rapid assessment indicating high demand and the positive impact of the grant, the policy was expanded to children under 3 and monthly grant value raised from THB 400 to THB 600 in 2016.

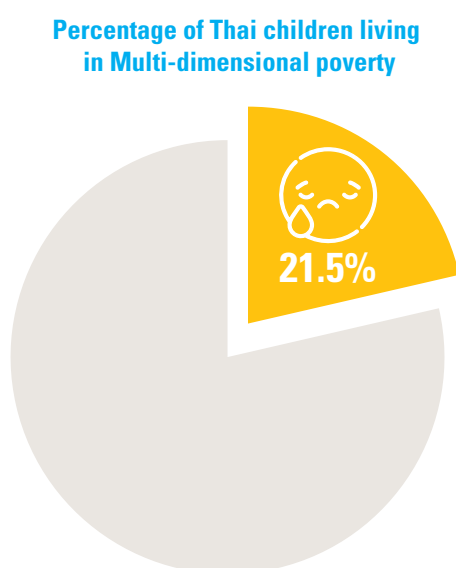
<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of Children and Youth, as of December 2019.

- A third expansion was conducted in 2019, following the National Impact Evaluation and Targeting Assessment results, along with public and high-level advocacy campaigns. To strengthen the positive impact and reduce exclusion of children in need, the grant was expanded to children under 6 and income threshold increased from THB 36,000 to THB 100,000 per person. This aligned the CSG with the National Welfare Card targeting mechanism, which is the largest social cash transfer and financial inclusion scheme in Thailand.

## Why does Thailand need a grant to support children?

- Thailand is an aging society and it is therefore in the national strategic interest to prioritise future human capital development, enhancing the potential of children from birth throughout their lifespan, as outlined in the National 20 Year Strategy.
- Investment in children's development in their early years has been shown to be a highly effective strategy for ensuring future productivity.
- Two million children live in poor households and 21.5% of children, or over one in every five, are living in multidimensional poverty. Due to limited opportunities and resources, these children may be unable to develop to their full potential, which can have adverse outcomes for not only their future but national human capital and economic development.
- Internationally, similar child support grants have proven to eliminate child poverty and subsequently help countries achieve long-term human capital goals.

**Figure 2: Children living in multi-dimensional poverty - based on 2015/16 data.**



## How does the CSG help vulnerable children and families?

- Investing in children's early years provides greater potential for breaking the inter-generational transmission of poverty.
- Research shows that interventions during early childhood years yield greater benefits to society compared to interventions later in life.
- As found in the National Impact Evaluation, the Thai Child Support Grant is having proven impacts on children and families.

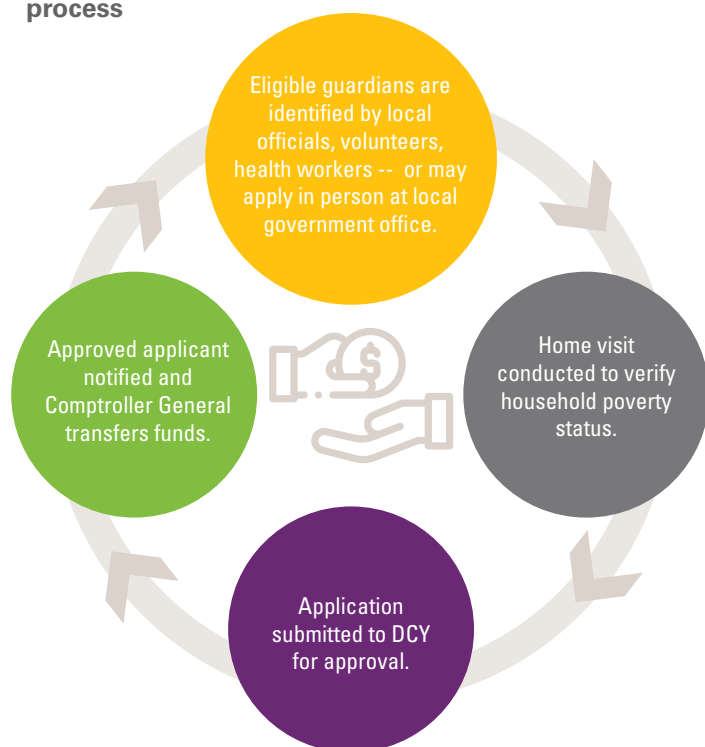
**The National Impact Evaluation** clearly showed that the Child Support Grant has:

- Helped improve **infant nutrition status**;
- Expanded access to **vital social services**;
- Helped improve maternal care practices and **empower women** with potential for longer-term productive gains.

## How does the CSG implementation work?

- The CSG Operational Centre is housed within Department of Children and Youth (DCY) and receives ongoing technical support from UNICEF, TDRI, ThaiHealth and other key partners.
- The policy requires strong coordination between Government ministries at central and local levels, including the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Public Health to support implementation at the local level, as well as the Ministry of Finance.
- Targeting of recipients is done by Health volunteers, Social volunteers and Village Heads, while registration and verification are largely managed by sub-district administrative organisations under MOI in the provinces and the BMA in Bangkok.
- The Ministry of Finance, through the Comptroller General's Department is responsible for payments to CSG beneficiaries made under the national E-payment system, making the process more efficient and transparent.

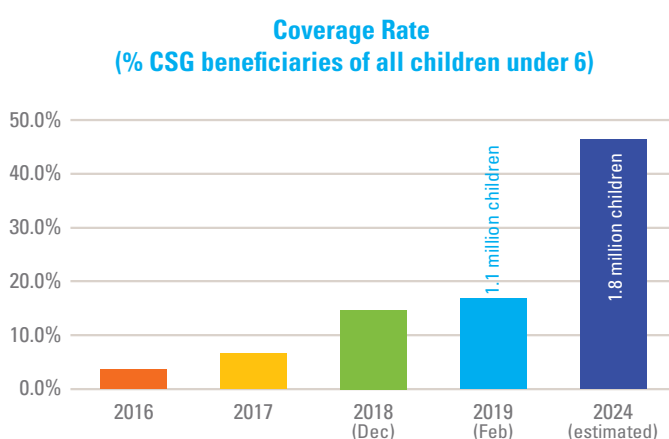
**Figure 3: Grant application, approval & disbursement process**



## How many children benefit from the CSG?

- The number of children benefiting from the policy has dramatically increased from 180,000 children in Year 1 to over one million children or 23% of children aged under 6 in under four years.

**Figure 4: Coverage rate (% of CSG beneficiaries of total population under 6 in Thailand)**



- Following the latest policy expansion in March 2019, it is expected that around 1.8 million children, or nearly half of all Thai children under 6, will have access to income security (see Figure 4) by 2024. This important step towards ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children and families represents a clear investment in the future of the nation.
- However, the Targeting Assessment of the CSG indicates an exclusion error of 30%, meaning that almost one

in three children who should benefit from this grant do not, for a variety of reasons. The Government addressed this challenge by increasing the poverty threshold in the last expansion.

## What have been the key policy success factors?

### A. High quality evidence generation

- High-quality evidence was generated through the National Impact Evaluation and Targeting Assessment, which were funded and implemented through a public private partnership led by the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)
- All existing and relevant data, including cost projections in relation to GDP, the numbers of current and projected beneficiaries, as well as lessons from international experience were effectively utilised to inform budget forecasting and develop compelling advocacy calling for the initial adoption and subsequent expansions of the grant.

### B. Strong partnerships

- The Coalition on Universal Child Support Grant was established in 2018 and comprised of over 100 NGOs working in Thailand on child-related issues. UNICEF established a strong partnership with the Coalition to mobilise public support and engage with high-level policy makers.
- UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore met with Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan o Cha in Bangkok to congratulate him the success of the CSG and propose that the grant be expanded.
- The Minister of Social Development and Human Security gave a presentation and affirmed Thailand's commitment to the CSG at the Universal Child Grant conference in Geneva in February 2019. Support for the CSG from high level Thai officials played an important role in the successful adoption and expansion of the policy.

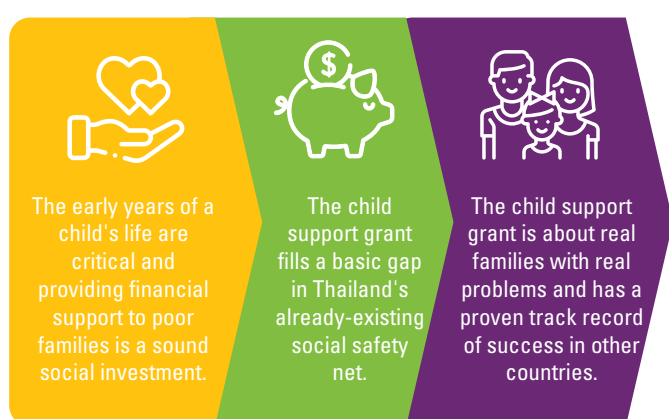


UNICEF Executive Director Fore and PM Prayuth Chan o Cha, Bangkok, 2019

### C. Establishment of modern monitoring and data collection and management systems

- ▶ A management information database system was established with UNICEF support after a year of CSG implementation. The MIS system serves as an important monitoring tool to collect accurate and up-to-date information on the Child Support Grant implementation, outcomes and results.
- ▶ A monitoring and evaluation framework was established at the beginning of the grant and recently revised to reflect the third expansion and future direction of the CSG, especially strengthening linkages with other social services.

**Figure 5: Advocacy messages supporting the CSG**



### How did UNICEF and partners successfully advocate for adoption and expansion of the CSG?

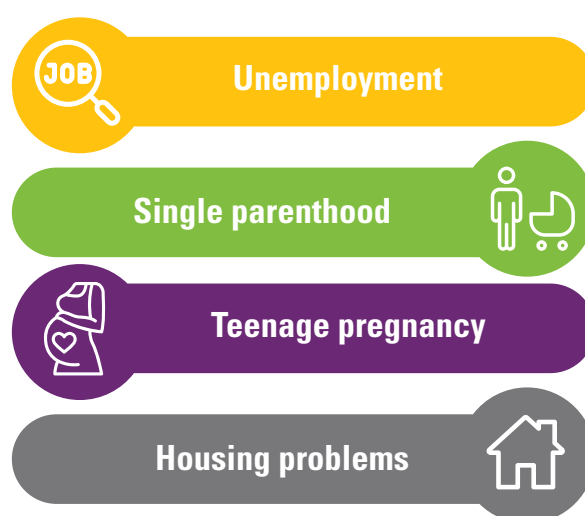
- By developing clear messages for policy makers and the Thai public highlighting the critical need for the grant and comprehensive social protection for children in Thailand following the 1997 financial crisis (See Figure 5 above).
- By sharing international evidence on the impact of similar cash grants implemented around the world with high-level policymakers, as well as taking key Government officials and other stakeholders to see the impact of the implementation of the South African Child Support Grant in person.
- By building strong alliances with leading Thai civil society organizations and NGOs working on children's issues to effectively jointly advocate for the CSG with different target groups and audiences.

- By generating strong, credible evidence of the positive impact of the grant on children and families through the National Impact Evaluation in partnership with TDRI, Khon Kaen University, Thai Health Promotion Foundation and Economic Policy Research Institute.

### Who is receiving the Child Support Grant?

- Almost all (93.8%) poor families in Thailand with eligible children applied for the grant. Of these, 635,966 or 84% of applicants were approved.
- CSG beneficiaries, the majority of whom are mothers, are facing multiple challenges, including:

**Figure 6: Leading challenges facing CSG beneficiaries**



### Do CSG recipients receive any other forms of assistance?

- The grant represents an important opportunity to link vulnerable families with a range of other resources and services to address key child vulnerabilities. Steps are currently underway to design and pilot targeted complimentary initiatives.
- Examples include:
  - ▶ Parenting programmes
  - ▶ Child-care information for new mothers
  - ▶ Pre- and post-natal services
  - ▶ Post-partum depression counselling
  - ▶ Follow-up care and visits by social workers

## Why is the CSG not reaching some families in need?

- The targeting assessment found that the Child Support Grant exclusion error is around 30%, meaning 30 out of 100 eligible babies did not receive the grant.
- The CSG targeting errors are high, yet about as low as the best targeted programs around the world.
- Current barriers to enrolment:
  - ▶ Confusion about grant eligibility requirements and the registration process
  - ▶ Complex poverty status verification procedures
  - ▶ Some poor families do not have bank account or access to a bank or ATM
  - ▶ Lack of official documentation
  - ▶ Transportation challenges for families living in remote areas

## Where do we go from here?

- Continue generating evidence to improve policy implementation and reduce exclusion errors to ensure that all eligible children receive the grant.
- Strengthen implementation at all levels, including developing communication materials targeted to different audiences and providing regular training for front-line officials.
- Strengthen the CSG monitoring and reporting system. Using the redesigned M&E framework, finalize indicators and implement regular monitoring and reporting processes to ensure ongoing learning.
- Strengthen linkages between the CSG and other social services to more effectively reduce family vulnerability and help improve children's wellbeing.
- Based on evidence generated, explore the option of expanding eligibility to all Thai children under six. A universal grant would significantly reduce administrative costs, exclusion errors and promote national solidarity and social cohesion through reduced inequality.

## Where can I learn more about the CSG?

Visit the Department of Children & Youth CSG website:

[www.csg.dcy.go.th](http://www.csg.dcy.go.th)

Or the CSG Facebook fan page:

[www.facebook.com/CSGProjectOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/CSGProjectOfficial)

Government delegations from a number of different countries have visited Thailand to learn from the CSG experience. For more information or to organise an official visit, contact Department of Children and Youth and UNICEF Thailand at:

Department of Children and Youth at [dcy.intercorp@gmail.com](mailto:dcy.intercorp@gmail.com)

UNICEF Thailand at [thailandao@unicef.org](mailto:thailandao@unicef.org)

