



## The Child Support Grant in Thailand: status quo and policy responses

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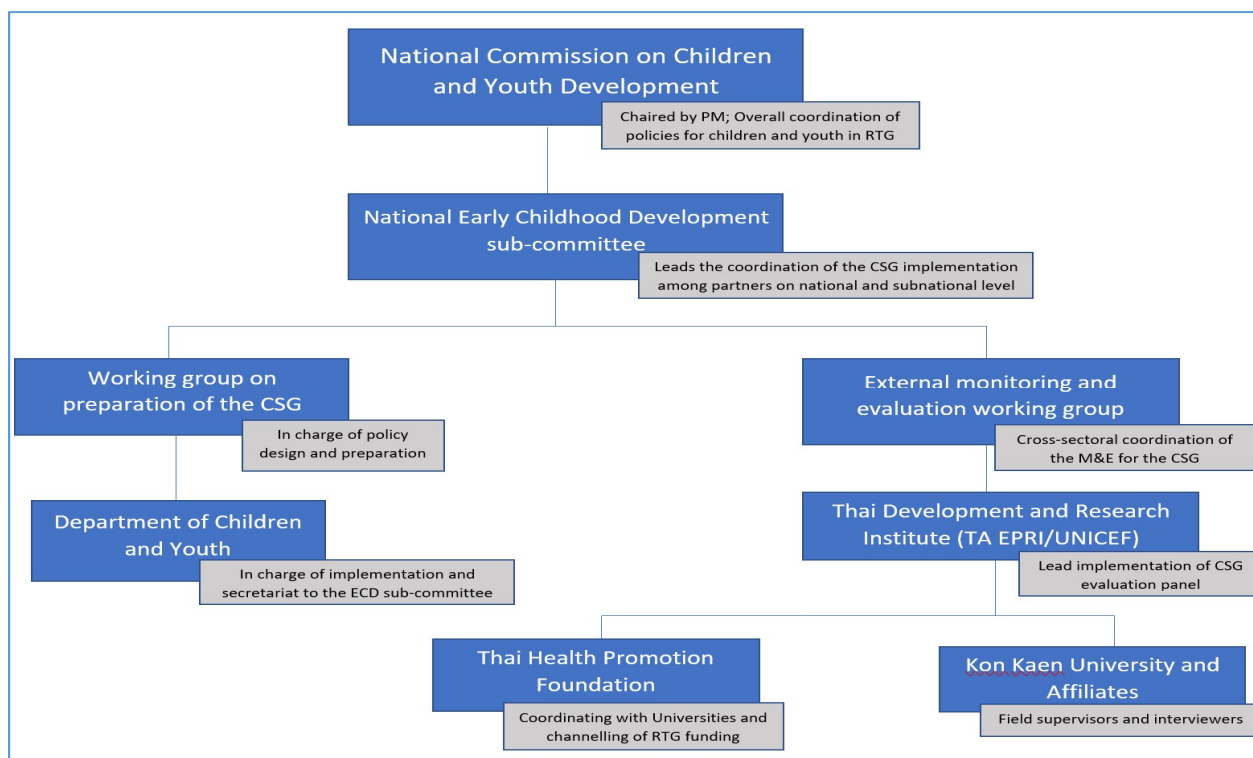
## Child support grant in Thailand: background

- **April 2015 - First decision to adopt the CSG by the RTG:** unconditional Child Support Grant for children up to the age of one living in poor and near-poor households across the nation; 400 bahts for 12 months to the mothers of children up to the age of one living in households with a per capita income less than THB 3 000 per month .
- **October 2015:** national roll out of the policy
- **March 2016** –cabinet resolution revised the age-eligibility to the age of three (extending the initial one-year threshold) with an increase in the benefit value to THB 600 per month effective October 2016.
- **End 2018,** nearly 630 000 children under the age of 3 from poor families have received the grant. Payment of the grant is implemented mostly through direct bank account transfer from the Comptroller general to criterion to cover the currently eligible children up the MOF.
- **December 2018 – January 2019:** RTG Cabinet is considering the final version of the policy design (universal or nearly-universal) based on an earlier commitment by the PM to expand the policy for children under the age of six.
- **March 2019** – RTG has adopted decision to expand the CSG to children under 6 with a policy poverty line of annual income of 100 000 Bahts/family

## National impact evaluation: objectives and design

- Impact evaluation objectives
  - Nutrition
  - Empowerment of women
  - Improved access to services
- Impact evaluation design
  - Baseline and end-line surveys (before and after delivery, 12 months apart)
  - Three stages sampling (PPS on provinces, on tambons, and all pregnant women in tambons)
  - Total end-line samples of 7,145 children of which are 5,257 age-eligible children
  - Propensity score matching (PSM) was employed in impact assessment.

## Political commitment of RTG: partnership for CSG Implementation



Better times for the young children: what happened as result of the CSG?

## Better nutritional outcomes

Model	treatment mean	matched comparison	matched difference	matched t
Households with per capita income < Thb 1 500	0.09	0.26	(0.17)	(2.88)
Households with per capita income < Thb 3 000	0.10	0.15	(0.05)	(1.91)
Households with per capita income < Thb 6 000	0.09	0.16	(0.07)	(2.48)
All Households	0.10	0.14	(0.04)	(2.07)

- Children in households receiving the CSG faced a lower risk of wasting compared to children in similar households not receiving the grant, and this effect is statistically significant across all the relevant sub-samples;
- Unexpectedly, the positive nutritional impacts were particularly strong for near-poor children (where the wasting rate was seven percentage points lower in households receiving the CSG) who lived in households above the threshold for CSG eligibility.=>
- Further evidence suggests the Child Support Grant produced a “spill-over effect” that improved nutritional outcomes for older children in the receiving households, implying that extending the grant to children up to six years of age would likely produce even more powerful impacts.

## Impact on breastfeeding practices

Model	treatment mean	matched comparison	matched difference	matched t
Households with per capita income < Thb 1 500	0.85	0.73	0.12	2.68
Households with per capita income < Thb 3 000	0.82	0.80	0.02	0.73
Households with per capita income < Thb 6 000	0.80	0.72	0.08	3.01
All Households	0.79	0.73	0.06	2.23

- across all households, a higher proportion of infants in households receiving the grant were breastfed for at least six months compared to those in similar households that did not receive the grant;
- in the extreme-poor sample, the proportion of infants breastfed for six months was 12 percentage points higher in households receiving the grant relative to those in comparable households that did not receive it.
- in the poor and near-poor samples, the shares of children breastfed were two and eight percentage points higher in treatment group households than in the matched comparison group.
- across the full sample, the share was six percentage points higher for children in households receiving the grant than in comparable households not receiving the grant.

## Access to post natal services

Model	treatment mean	matched comparison	matched difference	matched t
Households with per capita income < Thb 1 500	1.36	1.24	0.12	1.79
Households with per capita income < Thb 3 000	1.36	1.27	0.09	1.86
Households with per capita income < Thb 6 000	1.35	1.26	0.09	2.16
All Households	1.36	1.29	0.06	1.66

- infants in households receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG) accessed post-natal care more than comparable infants in similar households that did not receive the CSG;
- effect is greatest in the extreme-poor households where the number of visits was 9% higher for infants receiving the grant compared to the matched comparison group,
- and in the overlapping sub-sample of poor and near-poor households where the number of visits was 7% higher.



## Women's empowerment

Model	treatment mean	matched comparison	matched difference	matched t
Households with per capita income < Thb 1 500	0.67	0.57	0.09	1.85
Households with per capita income < Thb 3 000	0.65	0.67	(0.02)	(0.65)
Households with per capita income < Thb 6 000	0.64	0.65	(0.01)	(0.38)
All Households	0.63	0.61	0.02	0.60

- empower women by improving their bargaining power within the household;
- mothers in extremely poor households receiving the Child Support Grant (CSG) were more likely to be the primary decision-makers in food expenditure decisions compared to mothers in similar extremely poor households that did not receive the CSG.
- mothers in extremely poor households receiving the CSG had more control over their income and food expenditure decisions in the household.
- the impact models demonstrate that in the sample of extremely poor households, the share of women with primary control over the food expenditure decisions within the household is nine percentage points higher for those receiving the grant compared to those in similar households that did not receive the grant. The differences for other sub-samples and the whole sample were not significantly different, but for these other groups, the shares of women with primary control is higher than the share in the extremely poor group.

Are all kids benefitting from the CSG? Levels of  
exclusion and causes

# Targeting Assessment

- Eligibility

- CSG covers households with per capital income equal or lower than 3,000 baht per month, which is slightly above average poverty line.
- Initially excluded households eligible to other child support grants from the government (Social Security Fund, civil servants, and children under the care of government agencies such as public nursing homes.
- Later, the government allowed those under Social Security Fund to be eligible

- Screening

- Income means-testing
- Proxy means-testing, 4 criteria (abolished after one year)
  - the household with dependent members such as disabled persons, elderly 60 years old or above, children 15 years old or below, unemployed persons, or single parents;
  - decayed houses or houses made from local materials such as bamboo leaves, nipa leaves or reused materials or rented houses;
  - did not own any personal cars, pickup or other 'big' vehicles;
  - being farmers with less than 1 rai (1,600 square meters) agricultural land.

# Targeting Assessment

- Community-based screening

- Require two persons to endorse eligibility: the first one is local community leaders or local health volunteers and the second one is head of local governments.
- local governments post name list of the applicants in an open space for 15 days, allowing other community members to voice their objection
- These are either ineffective or causing conflicts within the communities. Only 1% of those aware of the program and did not apply for it reported that they had difficulty finding the two endorsers.
- There was tendency that village headmen verify all villagers in the community to gain political popularity within their communities.

We focus on assessing exclusion error

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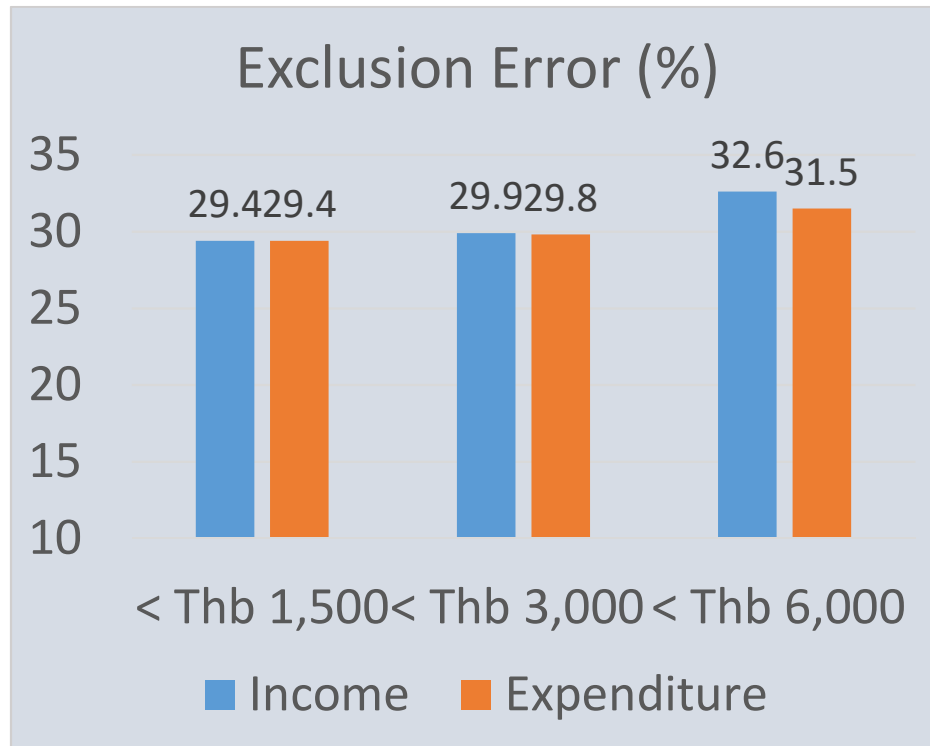
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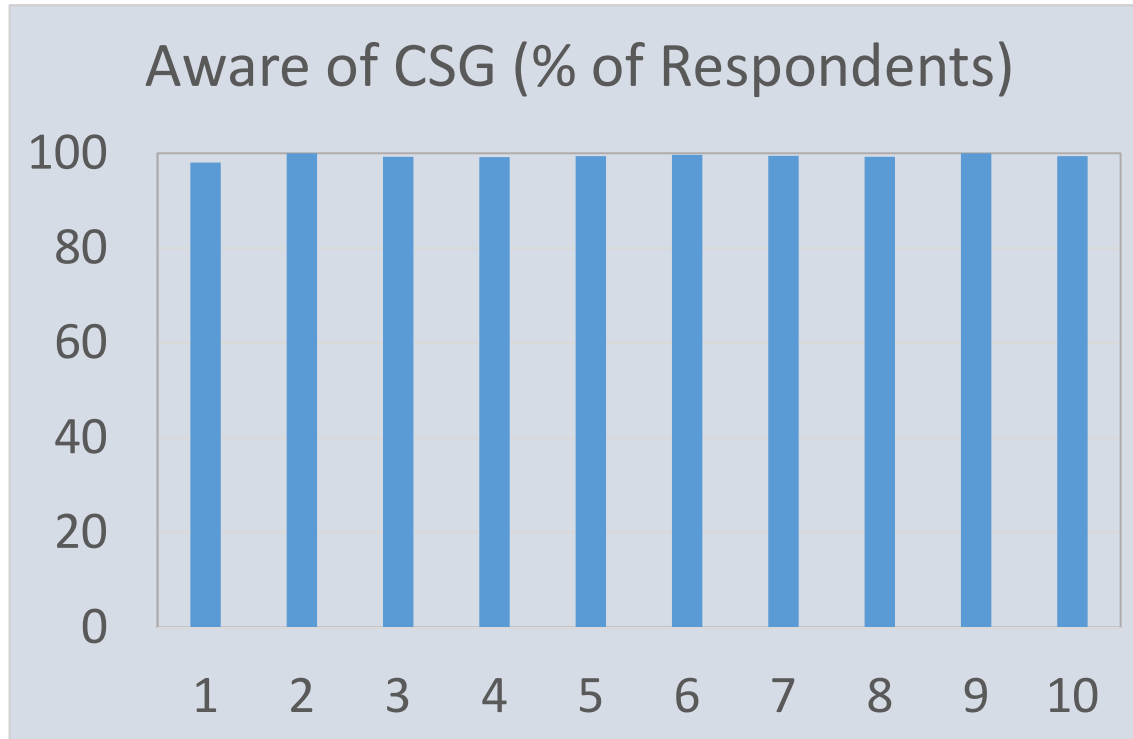
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## Exclusion error



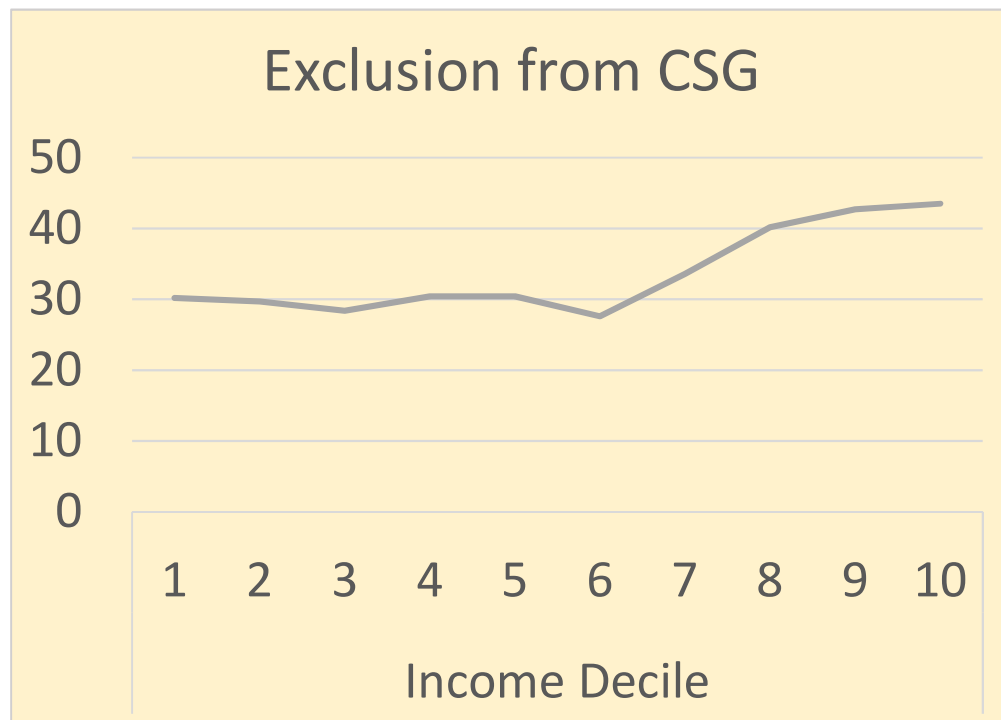
Although the exclusion error is low compared to comparable programs around the world, eliminating it would be necessary for Thailand, given its rapidly aging, to build productive labor force that would take the country into an advanced economy in the foreseeable future.

## Awareness of CSG, by Income Decile



Effective awareness measures as well as 'light targeting' seem to be the contributing factors to low exclusion error.

## Awareness of CSG, by Income Decile



- The exclusion error among poor households (decile 1-6/7) were somewhat 'flat' and started to rise slightly into the 'near-poor' households (decile 7/8-9).
- The non-poor (decile 10) HHs were as likely to get CSG as the near-poor ones.



## Slide 15

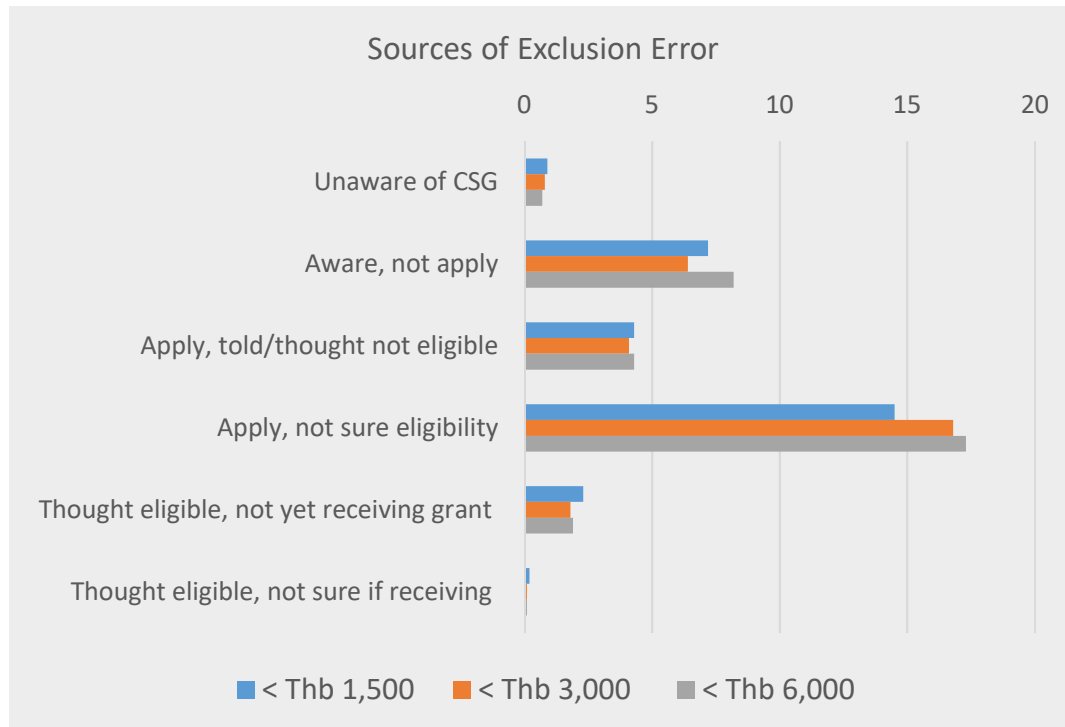
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## Sources of exclusion (% of respective HH groups)



- Of those poor HHs not receiving CSG, the knowledge of eligibility was a major concern.
- Detail investigation confirms that these are likely truly excluded.

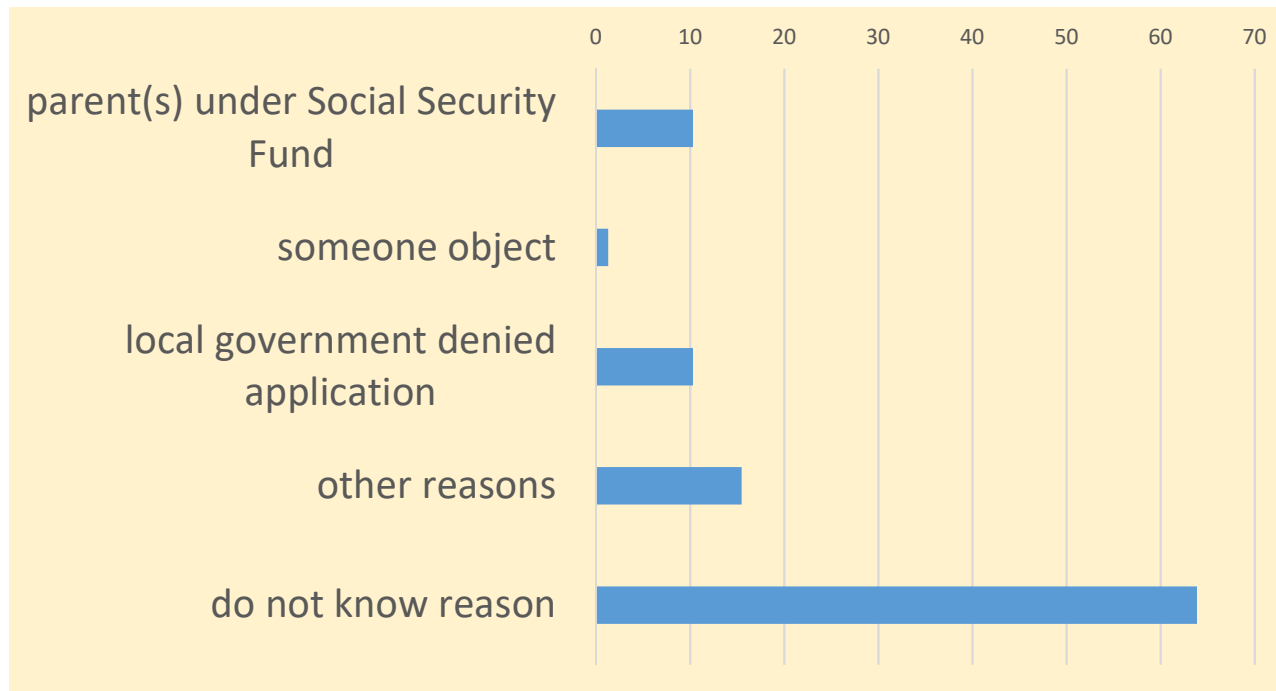
## Reasons for not applying for CSG

	End-line Results		
	All HH	non-poor	poor
consider yourself not eligible	27	29	24
do not want to be considered as a poor	1	2	0
too complicated procedure	7	9	5
do not know registration process	12	9	16
cannot find/still finding endorsers	1	1	1
do not have required documents yet	5	4	7
thought registration period is over/cannot register in time	12	10	14
not living in this jurisdiction anymore	2	3	2
no time to register or finding required documents	1	1	1
waiting until after delivery	0	0	0
other (specify)	31	33	30

### Three major reasons

1. uncertainty and changes of grant eligibility
2. Uncertainty of program continuity
3. lack of awareness of the registration process

## Reasons told of not being eligible (THB <6000 HHs, who reported non-eligibility)



Uncertainty about eligibility remained throughout the process

The way forward: universal CSG?

## Conclusions

- An evaluation of Thailand's Child Support Grant provides robust evidence for positive impact on young children
- Government of Thailand is committed to progressive evidence-based approach to universalism

## Recommendations

1. Universal CSG for children under six years of age
2. Continue the progressive approach:  
Targeted CSG for children under six years of age @ 100 000 Bahts/year (alignment with national welfare card).

Thank You

