

Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) REPORT: Mpumalanga

Monitoring of South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Pay & Service Points

May 2011 – October 2011



(Photo: Courtesy – T. Ndhlovu)

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this document are the sole responsibility of the Black Sash and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.



Open Society Foundation of
South Africa

BLACKSASH
MAKING HUMAN RIGHTS REAL



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Black Sash would hereby wish to thank the following community monitors and their respective organisations who volunteered their time to monitor the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) services in the Mpumalanga.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bavumile Home Community Based Care • Daggakraal Community Advice Centre • Dientjie Advice and Resource Centre • Land a Hand Home Based Care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nkomazi Advice Centre • Qedusizi HBC and Drop in Centre • Simile Sonke Tjakastad Kwanda Project • Zimiseleni Dots and HBC
--	--



Mpumalanga Map of areas monitored (stars)- (March – Nov 2011)

In addition we also wish to thank the SASSA Mpumalanga – and SASSA National Offices for their collaboration and openness to facilitate our monitors’ access to all service and pay points. The Black Sash wishes to thank the following organisation for their financial commitment to the Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	4
FINDINGS.....	5
1. Time:	6
2. Venue:	7
3. Security:	8
4. Transport:.....	9
5. Personnel	10
6. Processing of Grants:	11
7. Language and Communication:	12
8. Use of Grants	13
MONITORS OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES	14
ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS COMMENTS TO CMAP MONITORS:.....	14
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BLACK SASH.....	15
General.....	15
Recommendations: Time	15
Recommendations: Venue.....	16
Recommendations: Security	17
Recommendations: Transport	17
Recommendations: Personnel	17
Processing of grants: Recommendations.....	18
Recommendations: Language and Communication	19
Recommendations: Use of Grants	19

INTRODUCTION

The Black Sash, a human rights organisation active for the past 56 years in South Africa, works to alleviate poverty and inequality; and is committed to building a culture of rights-with-responsibilities in South Africa. We focus specifically on the socio-economic rights guaranteed by our Constitution to all living in South Africa. For more information see www.blacksash.org.za

Our premise is that quality service is a critical factor that our society should be able to tackle even at a time of economic recession and that we, as civil society, should hold our government responsible for delivering – affordably, appropriately, effectively and with dignity as is promised in public speeches, ruling party manifestos and service delivery norms and standards. We argue that only active community-based civil society will be able to monitor service delivery as it is experienced by beneficiaries and constructively engage with government at all levels to improve these services.

It is in this context, that the Black Sash's Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project (CMAP) were implemented, in collaboration with other civil society organisations and networks.

The objectives of the project are two-fold:

- To assess and report on the quality of service delivery in specified government departments and municipalities across South Africa as experienced by beneficiaries; and
- To develop a system for civil society organisations and community members to hold government accountable for the principles of Batho Pele (People First) as well as specific norms and standards that govern service delivery and promise excellence.

Working closely with our partners, the Black Sash:

- Ensures widespread, visible, standardised and regular monitoring of service delivery points by Community Monitors that are selected by civil society organisation (CSO)/community based organisation (CBO) networks;
- Co-ordinates the development of the monitoring instruments and the databases; collates and analyses the monitoring information; produces and distributes regular reports to our partners and the public;
- Presents reports to the appropriate government officials in order to affirm good practice and to work together to make improvements where required.

Monitors are selected by CSO/CBOs, CSO/CBO networks, civil society groups and faith-based organisations and are then trained to monitor selected public services using the monitoring tools. Prior to monitoring, they are also asked to sign a code of conduct. Each monitor identifies the day(s), within a specified timeframe, that they will monitor selected sites in the communities where they live or work. Once the site has been visited and the assessed, the completed questionnaires are forward to the Black Sash for capturing and analysis. The reports developed as a result of this

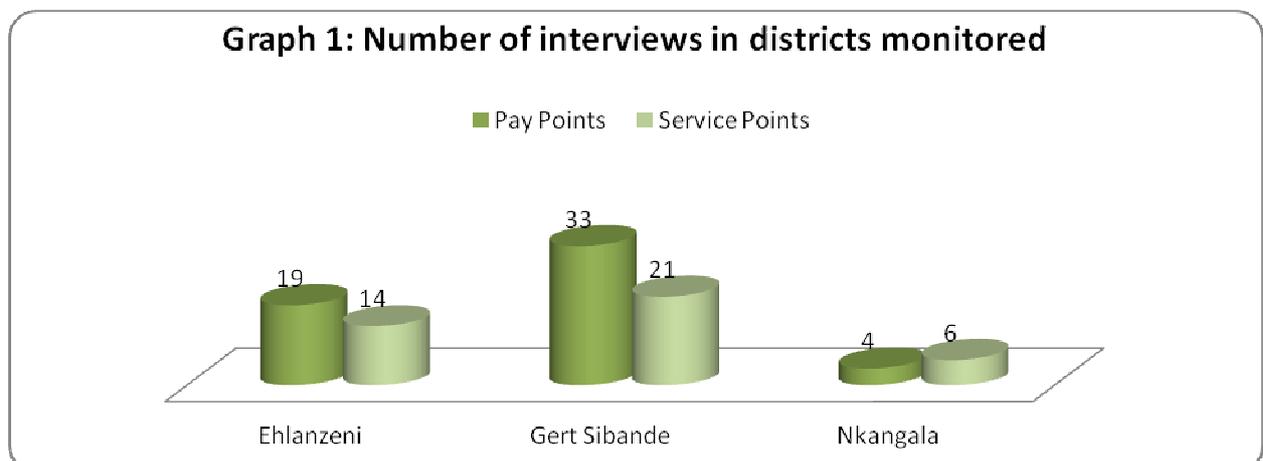
analysis are forwarded to the relevant government department for response within an agreed period, after which they are made available to the public.

It is important to note that monitors undertake the monitoring in the areas where they live or work and that the selection of sites to monitor, depends either on where the monitoring organisation is located or where the monitor resides. No scientific formulation is used to select the geographic spread; however, we do encourage organisations that have a diverse presence to participate in the project. However, the monitoring data analysed here is real, and a reflection and perspective of the beneficiaries interviewed at the service site on the particular date of the interview. We also try to ensure the data generated through CMAP does not reflect an urban bias.

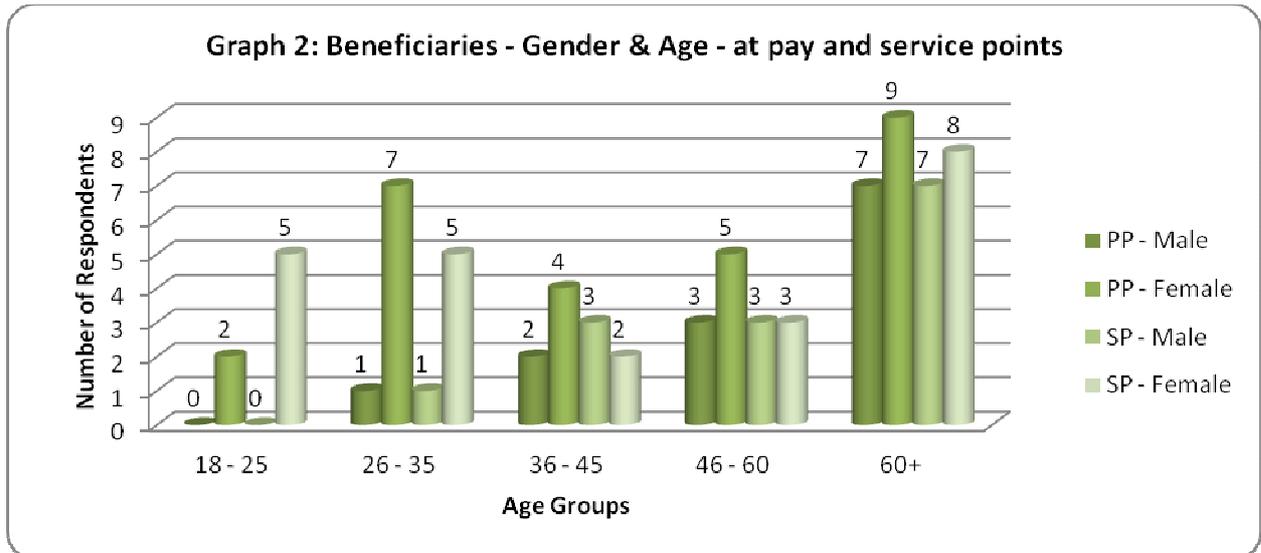
FINDINGS

The efficiency and quality of the service provided by SASSA sites monitored in Mpumalanga has been monitored according to the following standardised entities, namely time, venue, security, transport, personnel, processing of grants, language and communication. The monitoring took place during the period of 4 May 2011 to 3 October 2011. Please note that the percentages provided here are rounded off to the first decimal point (to the nearest whole number in the graphs).

The findings presented in this report takes into account the experiences and opinions of 99 respondents from 25 SASSA service [SP] or pay points [PP] across 3 districts in Mpumalanga. These include 42 responses (38 service users, 4 officials) at service points and 57 responses (42 service users, 15 officials) at pay points. Most of the interviews were South African nationals, with 1% being permanent residents. As can be seen from the map on p.5 - the sites monitored are 8 in total with at least one in each district, and with the majority done in the east of Mpumalanga.



The majority of the service users at the pay and service points were females (66.7% and 63.2%, respectively). The bulk of these respondents were the elderly (60+ age group).



1. Time:

We look at the opening and closing times of the service and pay points and the length of time beneficiaries spend waiting to be served.

TABLE 1: Respondent: Officials	Pay Points		Service Points	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Usual Opening Time	06:00	10:00	07:30	13:15
Opening time day of monitoring	06:00	11:00	07:30	14:00
Time started attending clients	07:00	11:15	07:30	14:30
Time stopped attending clients	10:30	16:00	15:50	16:30

On the days that the monitoring was done, the pay points generally opened at the same time as they “usually opened”. The Tweefontein A pay point in the Nkangala district opened an hour later than usual (11:00, instead of 10:00). Most of the pay points opened at 07:00 and started attending to clients within 30 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes of opening. However, the Tjakastad/830508 pay point in the Gert Sibande district opened at 6:00, but only started attending to clients at 10:59. Two of the service points monitored, Tweefontein B2 in the Nkangala district, only opened after lunch and attended to clients for approximately 2 hours each.

Table 2: Respondents: Beneficiaries	Pay Points		Service Points	
	Earliest /Shortest	Latest /Longest	Earliest /Shortest	Latest /Longest
Time Arrived	05:30	12:30	05:00	15:30
Time waiting for seating	0 min	60 min	0 min	20 min
Time waiting to be attended to	2 min	420 min	-	-

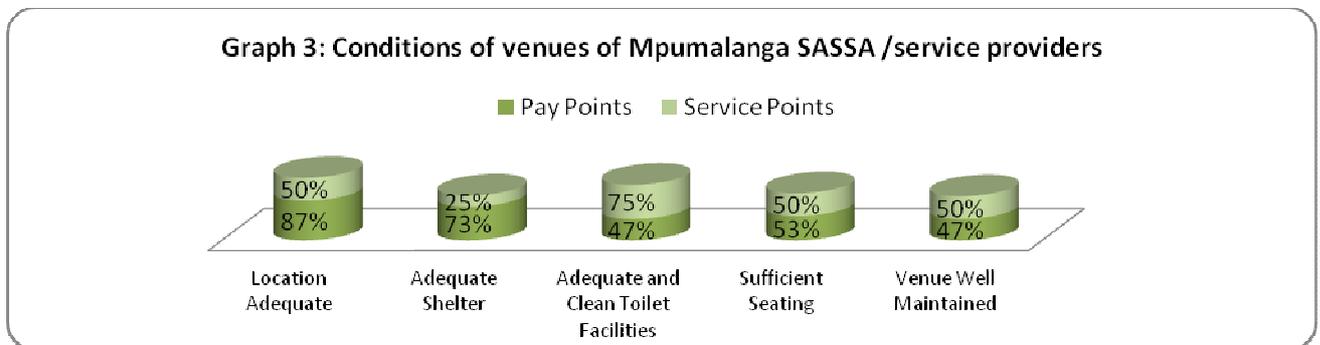
The earliest pay point arrival recorded was a 60+ male who arrived at 5:30 at the Driekoppies Clinic pay point in the Ehlanzeni district. At the service points the earliest arrival was recorded at 5:00, this

was for three separate individuals, two from the Ehlanzeni district and one from the Gert Sibande district. One monitor at the Tonga service point in the Ehlanzeni district said that, “people come early in the morning; some of them sleep outside the gate so that they can be attended to and the officials are too slow”.

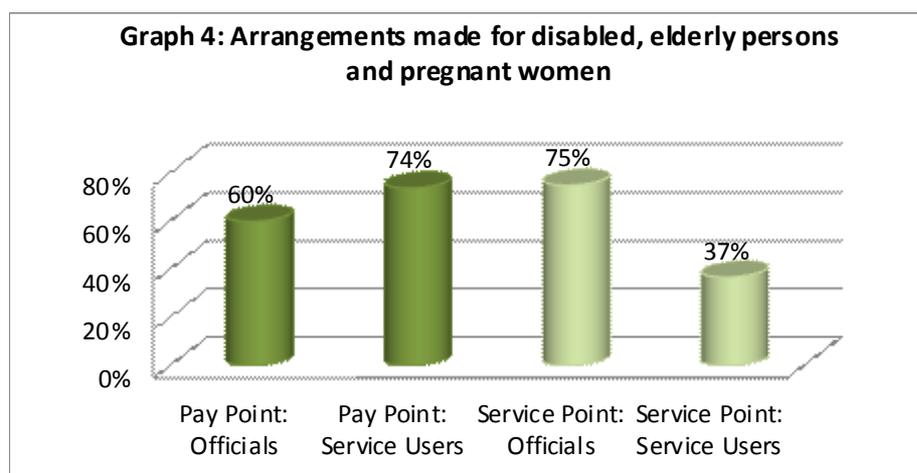
At the monitored pay points, 90.5% of the respondents stated that they had to wait in a queue. By comparison, 92.1% of respondents at service points had to wait in queues. In the Ehlanzeni district at the Matsamo Tribal Authority pay point, a woman in the age category 18-25 collected her Child Support Grant and had to wait 8 hours 20 minutes to be served. This client had arrived at 6:00 in the morning, and she said that there was no seating.

2. Venue:

The physical state of the venue, the availability of chairs, and whether or not the premises has adequate and clean toilet facilities is important to achieving efficient service.



There were varied responses regarding the venue, with 50% of the officials at service points stating that the location was not adequate, whereas only 6.7% of officials at pay points feeling this way. The fact that such a high percentage of service point officials feel that the location is not adequate is a matter for concern.



When asked in what way the location could be improved, numerous officials noted that there was not fencing around the premises. Adequate fencing is important because it also relates to the security of the premises. Another aspect that was also mentioned was a lack of water. An official at

the Tweefontein B2 service point in the Nkangala district commented that “the pay point has no water, we live (sic) in open veld and we need to be provided with at least tents and chairs and a community hall.” Only 46.7% of the officials at pay points felt that there were adequate and clean toilets. At the Nhlazatshe P6/830510 in Gert Sibande, the officials felt that the shelter was not adequate, nor were the toilet facilities, seating and the venue well maintained.

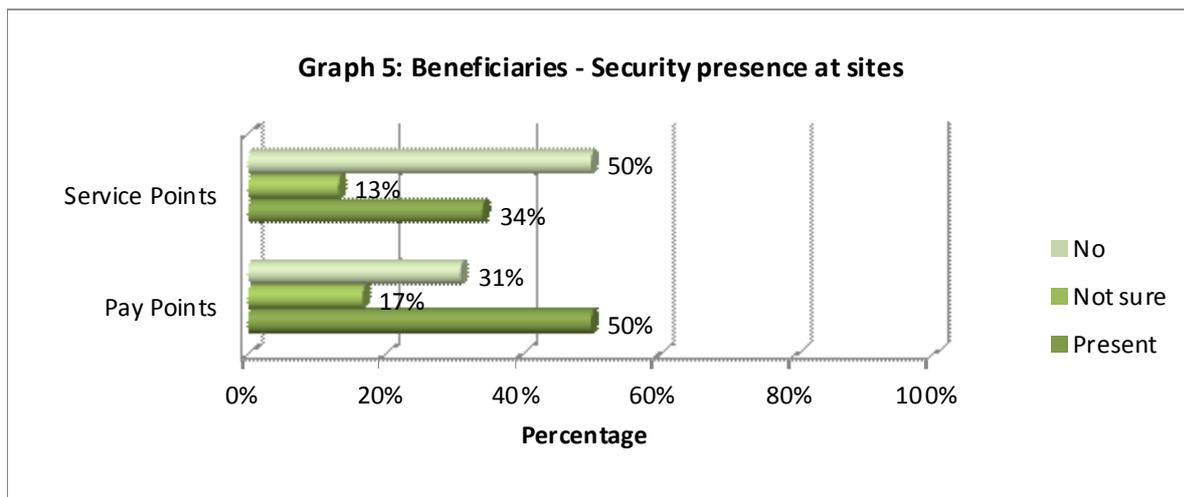
In terms of special arrangements made for the elderly persons, disabled persons and pregnant women, a worrying amount of service users at service points felt that there were no special arrangements made. What is especially noteworthy is the discrepancy between the percentage of officials at service points that feel that there are special arrangements, compared to the perception of and that of service users.

3. Security:

The availability of private security or police at the venue is important in ensuring the safety of both the officials and the beneficiaries.

TABLE 3: SECURITY Respondents: Officials	Pay Points			Service Points		
	Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer
Do you feel safe working at the pay/service point?	60.0%	33.3%	6.7%	25.0%	75.0%	0%
Is there a private security company or the police present?	66.7%	20.0%	13.3%	75.0%	25.0%	0%
If YES, do you think they are adequately resourced to protect?	90.0%	10.0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%	0%
Do you know of any loan sharks who operate on the pay/service point premises?	46.7%	53.3%	0%	25.0%	75.0%	0%
Respondents: Beneficiaries						
Do you feel safe at the pay point?	59.5%	38.1%	2.4%	-	-	-
Do you feel safe when you leave?	52.4%	45.2%	2.4%	-	-	-

One of the biggest concerns is safety at the sites. These sites could become targets of criminals if not adequately protected, i.e. fencing around sites as expressed above. Almost one in 3 of the officials at pay points stated that they did not feel safe, with 75% of the officials at service points not feeling safe. Only 59.5% of the beneficiaries at the pay points felt safe.

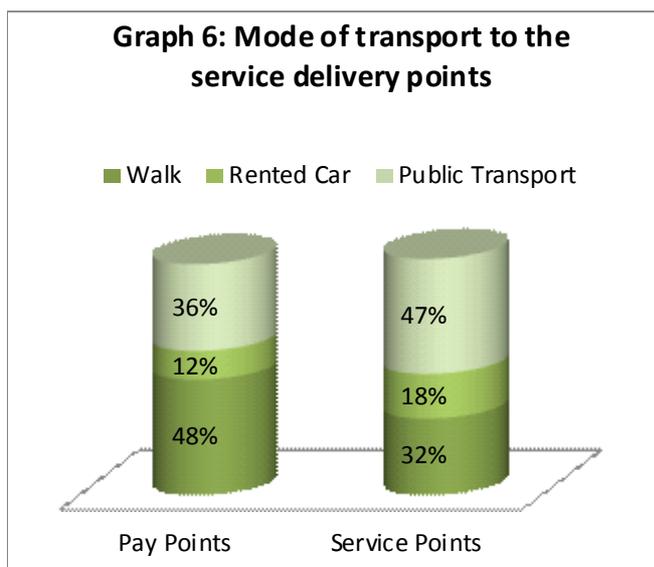


The beneficiaries at pay and service points are particularly vulnerable to loan sharks who charge exorbitant interest rates. Moreover, 26.2% of beneficiaries at pay points said that they knew of loan sharks who operate in or close to the pay point. Another consideration is the security of those individuals who arrive early at service and pay points.

4. Transport:

This looks at how beneficiaries arrived at the site, how long it took them to travel and how much it costs.

Table 4: Respondents: Beneficiaries	Pay Points		Service Points	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Distance	0.5 km	15 km	1 km	150 km
Time	-	-	10 min	240 min
Cost of Travel	R0.00	R150.00	R7.00	R150.00



The beneficiaries were asked the approximate distance that they had to travel to reach the pay/service point. 66% of respondents at the pay points said they had to travel approximately 4 kilometres or less, the furthest being 15 kilometres. Whereas 52% of service point users had to travel more than 5 kilometres, with the furthest being a 60+ male travelling 150 kilometres to the Tonga service point in the Ehlanzeni district. An official at the Daggakraal Hall pay point in the Gert Sibande district said that, “it will be better if the old people can have free transport from home to the pay point”. To reach the pay points most of the

respondents (47.6%) walked, whereas most of the service point respondents used public transport (47.4%).

The average cost of transportation to the service and pay points are R28.00 and R22.00, respectively. At the service points 59% of the respondents paid R20.00 or less, this being 79% at pay points. The exceptional cases have to be noted though. For example, a disabled man (age 46-60) paid R150.00 to rent a car to take him 4 kilometres to the Tjakastad/830508 pay point in the Gert Sibande district. Another person, an elderly woman (age 60+) also paid R150.00 to rent a car to take here to the Matsamo Tribal Authority service point in Ehlanzeni district from her home in Nkomazi West. This is especially noteworthy since she was there for a review and it was her fourth time at the service point.

5. Personnel

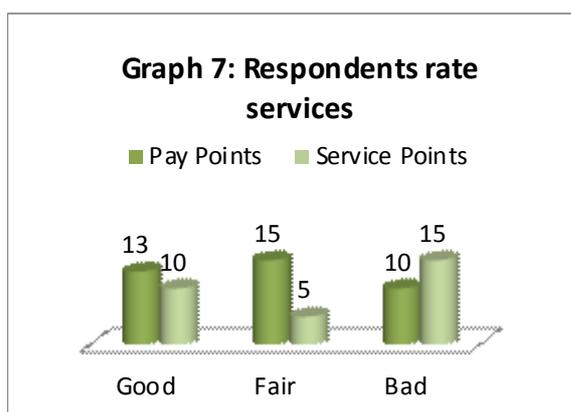
This looks at how many SASSA officials serve beneficiaries and the level of customer care.

Table 5: Respondents: Officials	Pay Points			Service Points		
	Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer
Staff members adequately trained?	93.3%	6.7%	-	75.0%	25.0%	-
Signs with customer care norms visibly displayed?	26.7%	73.3%	-	100%	0%	-
Officials Identifiable? (Uniforms or name tags, etc.)	80.0%	6.7%	13.3%	100%	0%	-

The small percentage of pay points that have signs with customer care norms visibly displayed is particularly noteworthy.

Table 6: Respondent: Officials	Pay Points		Service Points	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Number of staff members	4	10	3	6
Number of people served	7	817	7	520

Six of the 14 pay points monitored averaged approximately 100 people served, with 5 serving less than 20. Two of the pay points, with only six staff members each, at the Tjakastad/830508 and Avontuur points both in Gert Sibande district, served 817 and 750 people respectively. At the Tweefontein B2 in the Nkangala district approximately 520 people were served by only six staff members.

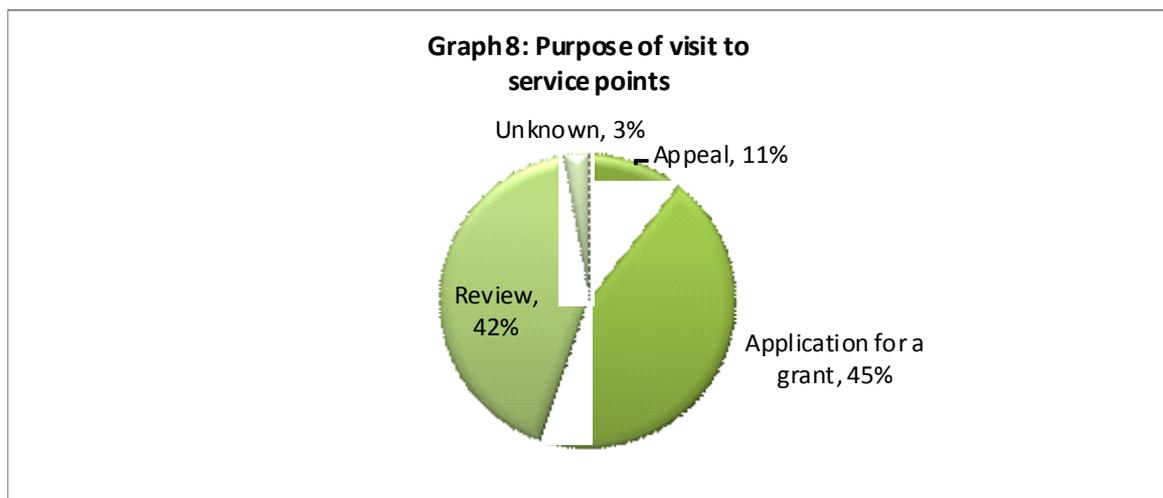


The service at the pay- and service points had differing ratings. At the pay points the service was generally rated as good or fair, whereas at the service points the majority of the respondents rated the service as bad. In addition to being asked to rate the service, the beneficiaries were also asked whether they

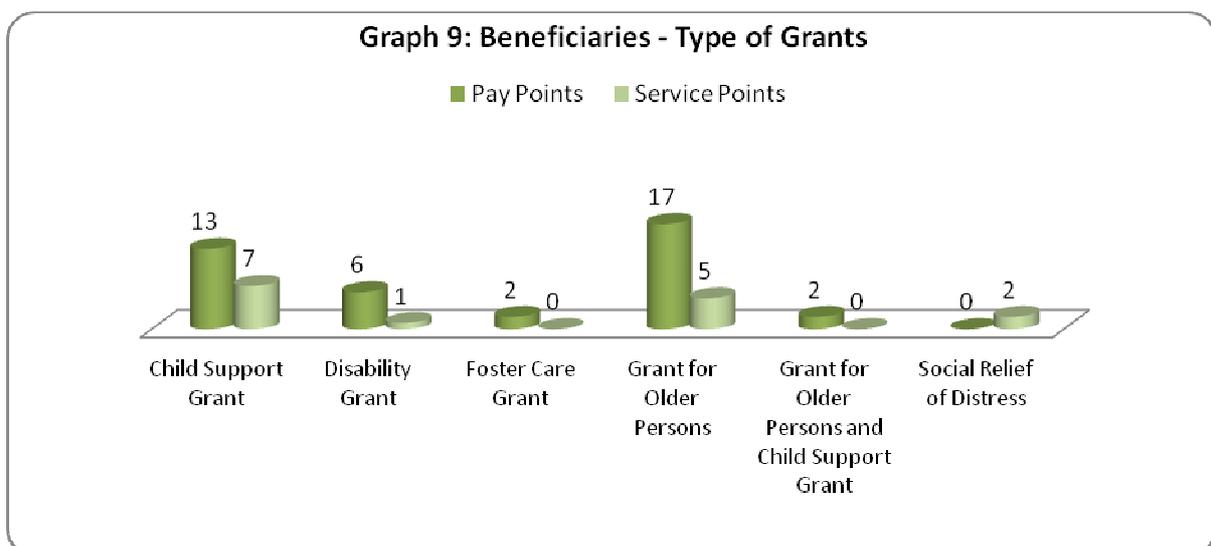
thought officials were helpful and treated them with respect. At pay points 85.7% of beneficiaries felt that officials were helpful and respectful, compared to 68.4% at service points. The beneficiaries were also asked how they thought the services could be improved. Most of the responses were regarding the fact that they felt more staff members are needed at the points. A few also said that more materials and equipment would be helpful.

6. Processing of Grants:

The focus is on the type of grants being applied for/ reviewed, the number of times beneficiaries return for the same application/review, time lapse in processing, receipts and information on outcome of the application/review.



At the service point most of the respondents were there for either a grant application (44.7%) or a review (42.1%). At the service points most of the respondents' visits related to Child Support Grants, whereas the majority of the respondents at the pay points accessed Grants for Older Persons.



Respondents at service points were asked how many times they had to return for the same application or review. It was the first visit for that particular application for 63.2% of the respondents, with 34.2% being there on a return visit. On average beneficiaries return three times, with the minimum being two and the maximum being five.

Beneficiaries who were there regarding a disability grant were asked how long it would take from the time of the visit to the service point to be assessed by a doctor. The responses ranged from as soon as they received an application to six months, post receipt of application form.

Table 7: RECEIPTS AND INFORMATION ON APPLICATION/REVIEW			
Respondents: Service Point Users	Yes	No	No Answer
Were you informed about the date of payment of your grant?	52.6%	39.5%	7.9%
Did you receive a receipt detailing the reason for your visit today?	68.4%	23.7%	7.9%
Were you informed of the outcome of your application?	55.3%	39.5%	5.3%
Respondents: Pay Point Users			
Did you receive a receipt?	85.7%	2.4%	11.9%
Is the amount the same as the receipt?	31.0%	-	69.0%

Only 68.4% of service point users were given a receipt detailing the reason for their visit. Only 55.3% of the applicants were informed of the outcome of their application, with 42.9% of these being informed verbally and 47.6% in writing. For those who were not informed about the outcome of the grant, only 20.0% were informed that they have to make an inquiry about the date of approval of their grant.

Respondents were asked if they were given an option to choose where they wanted to receive their grants, either through a bank, post office or pay point. 60.5% of the respondents said that they were given this option.

7. Language and Communication:

This looks at whether or not the official languages are spoken and if there are foreign language translators on site. There is also a focus on how much people know about the grants and the services of SASSA and where they received their information.

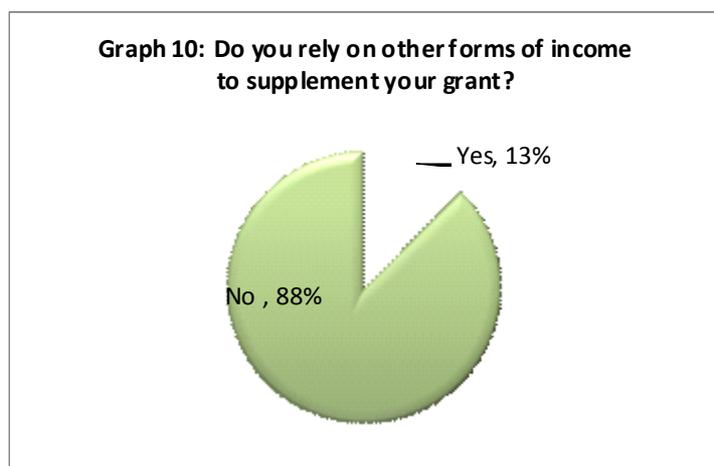
Table 8: Respondents: Officials	Pay Points			Service Points		
	Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer
Are information materials available in required languages?	66.7%	33.3%	-	50.0%	50.0%	-
Are officials able to communicate with clients in the required languages?	93.3%	6.7%	-	100.0%	-	-
Are translators present to assist local foreign nationals with the payment process if required?	53.3%	40%	6.7%	50.0%	50.0%	-

At pay points the officials suggest that there should be English, isiZulu, seSwati and seSotho language translators present. At service points one official suggested seSwati.

Table 9: Respondents: Beneficiaries	Pay Points	Service Points
Beneficiaries who knew what documents to bring for their visit	92.9%	65.8%
Beneficiaries who DID NOT KNOW that certain documents expire after a period of time	-	50.0%
Beneficiaries who were aware that SASSA communicates information on the back of receipts	73.8%	52.6%
Beneficiaries who were aware they can receive money from grants at pay points as well as at a bank or at the post office	73.8%	-
Beneficiaries who were aware that all persons aged 60 can access the Older Persons Grant from 1 April 2010	52.4%	76.3%
Beneficiaries who were aware that the Child Support Grant has been extended to age 18 and that all eligible children born on or after 1 October 1994 can apply for the grant in 2010	57.1%	65.8%
Beneficiaries who were aware they could apply for Social Relief Distress (SRD) if in immediate need	9.5%	34.2%

8. Use of Grants

This looks at what the beneficiaries use the grants for, how many people it supports and if there is any additional source of income besides the grant.



The grant(s) is the only form of income for the majority of the beneficiaries.

The grant is used to support six people on average. The maximum number of people supported by one grant is 13. A 60+ male at the Tjakastad pay point in the Gert Sibande district supported 13 people from his Disability Grant.

Another, a female in the age group 26 - 35 year from the Avontuur pay point in the Gert Sibande district, also supported 13 people with her Child Support Grant.

In order of importance, beneficiaries used the grant for:

- Food
- Clothing
- School fees
- Rent and services, especially electricity
- Transport
- Doctors and medication

This shows the importance of the grant system addressing, to the extent that it is possible, the fundamental needs of entire families challenged by chronic poverty.

MONITORS OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

Besides interviewing beneficiaries and monitoring service sites, the monitors recorded their own observations. Some of these are listed below.

Nkomazi Advice Centre

By the time we arrive, people were just sitting down on the floor. Computers were offline because of cable problems. The lapsing of grants is a very huge problem in people's lives, especially to older people. This is because it lapses, but they are not informed of this – *Monitor, Matsamo Tribal Authority service point, Ehlanzeni district.*

Dientjie Advice and Resource Centre

Persons here need a Home Affairs service [nearby] because they travel a very long distance to get to the department. Some people [struggle to] reach there because of financial problems so they need the DHA to be near and the SAPS to be near too. – *Monitor, Leroro Paypoint, Ehlanzeni district*

Bavumile Home Community Based Care

Officials answer all the questions of the clients. Staff are very active in their work – *Monitor, Nhlazatshe P6/830510 pay point, Gert Sibande district*

Qedusizi HBC and Drop in Centre

The Pay Point is in a very bad condition, beneficiaries are coming to the Pay Point very early. They stand in the cold, but there are no chairs and no shelter. The place is not maintained, it has holes and they can fall in any minute. There is no security, only a pensioner's committee and they are all old persons and illiterate. There's no fence. Hawkers are roaming around as they wish, even criminals. Loan sharks take grannies' ID's and I advise the pension committee to let the police or CPF know about the situation. – *Monitor, Tweefontein A pay point, Nkangala district*

Simile Sonke Tjakastad Kwanda Project

What I've seen are that toilets are available but they are dirty. [There is] no shelter, no chairs. Clients have to wait in the queue, standing on their feet or have [to bring] their own chairs to sit down. Some are from Mbhejeka, far from the pay point. They have to wake up early in the morning to get to the pay point – *monitor, Avontuur 830512 pay point, Gert Sibande district*

Simile Sonke Tjakastad Kwanda Project

People have to come to the service point two or three times just because of the lack of staff and SAPS – *monitor, Tjakastad 830508 service point, Gert Sibande district*

Qedusizi HBC and Drop in Centre

This service point is one of the best I have ever seen. These days the staff are dedicated, ready to help, even the security guards are very helpful – *monitor, KwaMhlanga service point, Nkangala*

ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS COMMENTS TO CMAP MONITORS:

Official, Bourke's Luck service point, Ehlanzeni district

There should be home affairs and SAPS in the office so that people do not have to travel in order to get the necessary service required by SASSA. A ramp for the disabled should be built in the centre. There should be a waiting area for clients.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BLACK SASH

General

Comments from beneficiaries and officials to monitors that were at pay point and service points highlight a range of challenges outside of the control of SASSA. These include:

- The absence of Department of Home Affairs services that are located very far from many SASSA Service and Paypoints
- The stark reality of conditions at paypoints from pictures taken at selected sites. These pictures clearly violate the most basic norms and standards by Agencies subcontracted to render these services to people in Mpumalanga – these include lack of shelter, seating, water and ablution facilities.
- Moreover, the significant percentage of service point officials (who may reside in more urbanised areas), who feel that the location is not adequate bears testimony to the poor services and conditions at some rural service and paypoints is concerning and we urge that SASSA Mpumalanga and National work urgently to address the non-compliance of Agencies rendering services on behalf of SASSA.
- In a meeting with the CEO of SASSA Mpumalanga, the CMAP Manager and CMAP Fieldworker learnt of the challenges SASSA faces especially in the Nkangala District that skirts both the Swaziland and Mozambican borders – underscoring the critical need for verification of documents to ensure that persons who qualify for grants do in fact receive grants and that persons who do not qualify for these grants are excluded.

Recommendations: Time

- We recommend the release of an updated and relevant National Norms and Standards Policy that guides the implementation of the SASSA's and its service providers operations at all pay points and service points in all provinces.
- We further recommend the implementation of clear norms and standards which guides the operations and payment grants through mobile units and fixed pay points to ensure that beneficiaries do not wait longer than 30 minutes for their grant payment.

- We specifically recommend that SASSA investigate and monitor the Tjakastad/830508 pay point in the Gert Sibande district and the reason it took almost 5 hours to start attending to clients at 10:59. We also urge SASSA to investigate, monitor and intervene in the services provided at the Tweefontein B2 site in the Nkangala district that “only opened after lunch and attended to clients for approximately 2 hours each”.
- We recommend that the implementation of the recommendations in all the categories below will reduce the time beneficiaries will spend at pay points and at service points.
- We recommend that SASSA engages in an education drive that alerts and create awareness of the fact that Refugees have the right to Disability, foster care and Care dependency.

In this report, we have found that “most of the interviews were South African nationals, with 1% (2 people) being permanent residents”. It is not clear whether these were the persons applying for Social Relief of Distress (again 2 people). It may strongly indicate that the very few number of refugees seeking assistance either do not know of, and/or SASSA is not educating them of their right to social assistance.

Recommendations: Venue

It is essential to have an overall appraisal of whether SASSA or service providers honor the 5 km radius of bringing the service to the people. It is critical for clients and civil society organizations to know how far away are these points are, whether there are adequate mobile services available, and how frequent these services occur. We further recommend that:

- SASSA takes appropriate measures to ensure that grants are paid to beneficiaries in a dignified manner and therefore must ensure basic facilities shelter, seating, toilets, water, fencing are available at all times at all pay points and at service points.
- It is recommended that the Agency negotiate service level agreements with service providers that allow for review and standard application at all sites which will ensure that the beneficiary is maximally protected and provided for. We further recommend the contracts allow the Agency to monitor regularly and to act reasonably when a breach of contract occurs.
- It is specifically recommended that sites such as those photographed in the Tweefontein area, in the Ehlanzeni District (and those with similar challenges must be investigated and upgraded immediately where beneficiaries demanded that toilets, shelter, seating or adequate arrangements for the elderly, pregnant or disabled are made available – as is required by policy.
- The Agency must produce an assessment report on the banking and post office infrastructure that exists around fixed paypoints and in areas where the current mobile paypoints operate to measure where beneficiaries are situated in relation to this infrastructure.
- We recommend that the Agency negotiate with relevant banks, post office for reduced rates and charges to pay beneficiaries, where appropriate, and their grants through these institutions. However all charges should be borne by the Agency and not the beneficiary.
- We recommend that the Agency embarks on an effective communication strategy to educate beneficiaries of the benefits of more convenient ways to receive grants. Beneficiaries must be able to elect the payment method most convenient for beneficiaries.

Recommendations: Security

In order to minimise the need for beneficiaries, especially females, to wait outside in unprotected, unfenced and insecure areas for hours before opening of pay point sites, we recommend the following;

- SASSA should introduce a standard in the proposed Norms and Standards which ensures that beneficiaries will at all times feel safe from the time they arrive and leave a SASSA service and pay point.
- That SASSA implement the recommendations made in the section on “Time” to address the unacceptably long queues and pay special attention to this issue with regards to the waiting times at mobile service and paypoints;
- SASSA immediately prioritise and employ security guards at the sites where inadequate or no security exists.
- SASSA should arrange with the South African Police Service to monitor pay point and service sites regularly during the early mornings specifically and on the days the sites are open for business as an additional security measure. Furthermore, we recommend that SASSA arrange with the South African Police Service to monitor in the proximity of pay points regularly, as an additional security measure.
- We recommend that additional measures like patrol vehicles are employed at paypoints to patrol areas immediately outside the pay point and ensure the safety of beneficiaries when they leave the premises.

Recommendations: Transport

In order for beneficiaries to spend less money and time to reach the service points we recommend that;

- SASSA MP implements a norm as part of its proposed Norms and Standards which ensures that service points are within 5 km range of beneficiaries.
- SASSA MP investigates the public transport system and recommends intervention in far flung areas, such as near the Tonga service point in the Ehlanzeni district, and the Daggakraal Hall pay point in the Gert Sibande district, to understand why some beneficiaries had to rent a car to get to the service site, or pay exorbitant fees to gain access to SASSA services.
- Where necessary, based on the above analysis, SASSA MP should start densifying services at rural service - and satellite sites where needed in cooperation with other government departments and subcontracted service providers.
- We recommend that SASSA MP inform beneficiaries about their nearest service point through intensifying public campaigns in Mpumalanga to prevent beneficiaries’ spending money and time unnecessarily.
- SASSA MP must educate and communicate effectively with beneficiaries about what documents are needed for services like reviews and further to inform beneficiaries about what is required of them in order to reduce the visits to the service site for the same reason.
- We further recommend that SASSA MP prioritise and appropriately adjust its communication strategy to reach beneficiaries in more rural areas.

Recommendations: Personnel

We must acknowledge that at whilst the interviewed beneficiaries thought that SASSA officials at paypoints were well trained, there was an inadequate visible display of customer care norms.

Identifiability was excellent at service points, but there is significant room for training of these officials. Ratings of the quality of service were also mixed with an equal distribution of good, poor and fair ratings recorded. Further, if beneficiaries and applicants have the correct information, it will ensure cost saving of an already financially vulnerable person therefore we recommend the following:

- SASSA immediately start to implements the above recommendations especially those made under heading 'Time'.
- SASSA increases staff to ensure the average waiting time of the number of beneficiaries serviced is reduced to one hour at service points to administer the new changes in regulations as well as for the review process.
- However, if Table 6 is a general reflection of staff ratios of SASSA MP /or Service Provider staff, it may reflect seriously disproportionate under- or overstaffing, that has ultimately led to poorer service that undermines the beneficiaries' dignity and the well being of staff members. The staff to beneficiary ratios varies greatly in the areas we monitored and we recommend that this discrepancy be addressed urgently.
- SASSA implements the same administrative system used in local offices at satellite offices and provides officials at service sites with laptops equipped with IGAP, SOCPEN and the relevant network connections and relevant work systems.
- Where this is already not practiced, SASSA appoints a floating official to reduce and manage queues at all sites all the time. Where no official at a service site is appointed in the interim we recommend that each official at the site play that role for at least half an hour of their time at the service point until a dedicated person is appointed.
- That all SASSA officials at all service points have identifiable name tags.
- That SASSA design and displays and distributes its customer care norms at all service points.
- Those SASSA officials are made aware of legislative and regulatory change in order for the officials to communicate the right information to clients.
- That SASSA make beneficiaries aware of legislative and regulatory changes through information materials suitable for the sites and rural areas, and in relevant languages. Photocopies of information sheets should be seriously considered if budget allocations are exhausted for printed materials and radio and other means be considered for rural areas.
- That information material should be displayed at all SASSA service sites to address standing issues such as: the validity of documentation, relevant time periods, required documentation for reviews, right to apply for Social Relief of Distress and the SASSA toll free number.
- That SASSA continues to employ officials who are able to communicate with their clients in the language of their choice.
- That all SASSA's information materials are available in all three languages and are distributed at all service points.
- That an effort is made to ensure the availability of sign-language interpreters where they are need.

Processing of grants: Recommendations

- We recommend that the application process be in line with the norms and standards of SASSA and take no more than 30 minutes to complete; and further that the verification takes place within same amount of time.
- We recommend that the same administrative support, personnel, technology infrastructure are extended to the satellite service points (on the assumption that the satellite service

points are seen as an extension of the local/district offices), and that immediate efforts are made

- to increase the number of staff (formal or informal/volunteer) to enable an efficient service.
- to provide SASSA officials with appropriate technology (including laptops equipped with SOCPEN and the relevant network connections for it to operate effectively)
- to implement the same administrative system used in local offices at satellite offices.
- That SASSA and service providers clients with the option of a receipt as a matter of course for any service that was offered, since almost a quarter of interviewees indicated that they do not receive a receipt.
- We recommend that each pay point of SASSA (or service provider) ensures that beneficiaries are educated through information materials. It would then also be necessary to ensure that the receipt amount stated must be the same as the monies received in hand.
- We recommend that SASSA inform applicants of the outcome of the application in writing and not verbally, as indicated by almost 40% of the respondents. This is highly irregular and not in line with promotion of administrative justice and the constitutional requirement to be informed requires an administrative decision in writing.

Recommendations: Language and Communication

We recommend:

- That information material should be displayed at all pay points and service points to address standing issues such as: the validity of documentation, relevant time periods, required documentation, right to apply for Social Relief of Distress and the Agency's toll free number and the review process.
- That SASSA make beneficiaries aware of legislative and regulatory changes through information materials suitable for the sites and rural areas, and in relevant languages. Photocopies of information sheets should be seriously considered if budget allocations are exhausted for printed materials and radio and other means be considered for rural areas.
- That SASSA continues to employ officials who are able to communicate with their clients in the language of their choice.
- That the pay point service providers employ translators to ensure they are able to communicate with beneficiaries in their language. This is a serious problem highlighted and can attribute to the fact that the amounts of money receive in hand differs from what is on the receipt.
- That all SASSA's information materials are available in local languages and are distributed at all service points, viz. isiZulu, seSwati and seSotho or otherwise indicated.
- That an effort is made to ensure the availability of sign-language interpreters where they are needed.

Recommendations: Use of Grants

- We recommend the continued payment of grants to beneficiaries because it assists with the immediate needs of not just the direct beneficiaries but others in the household where grants are received.
- We recommend that the policy gaps that remain in the grants system be narrowed and the inclusion of more vulnerable into this safety net, such as the unemployed and the chronically

ill. Specifically, we also recommend that orphaned children in the care of relatives also have access to foster care grant in the absence of any other form of grant for those children, other than CSG, as it currently is provided for.

- We understand that the Agency may not necessarily be able to implement all of these recommendations. However, these findings once again highlight the important role of the Agency as a delivery agent entrusted to effectively deliver the grants to beneficiaries with dignity, but requires massive intergovernmental support to address the range of determinants that impede and challenge access. Failing to do so not only affect the beneficiary, also the households receiving these grants. Therefore we must reiterate our recommendation that the Agency ensures that grants are paid in a dignified manner and on time.