

## North West CMAP South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Report

September 2011 – May 2012



*The Black Sash - in partnership with the Social Change Assistance Trust or SCAT - launched the national Community Monitoring and Advocacy Project or CMAP in 2010 in a bid to help **improve government service delivery**, with a particular focus on poor and vulnerable communities in South Africa.*

*"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

## 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 North West.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bojanala Legal Advice Centre</li> <li>• Itireleng Advice Centre</li> <li>• Kopano Women Venture</li> <li>• Lesedi Home Based Care</li> <li>• Reatlegile CC Centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dryharts Youth Connection</li> <li>• Kgetleng River Carers</li> <li>• Leeudoringstad Advice Centre</li> <li>• Reagile Advice Office</li> <li>• Thusanang Home Based Care</li> </ul>
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**Map of areas monitored (stars) - (September 2011 – May 2012):**



In addition we also wish to thank the SASSA North West – 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.



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## 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](http://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) was 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 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

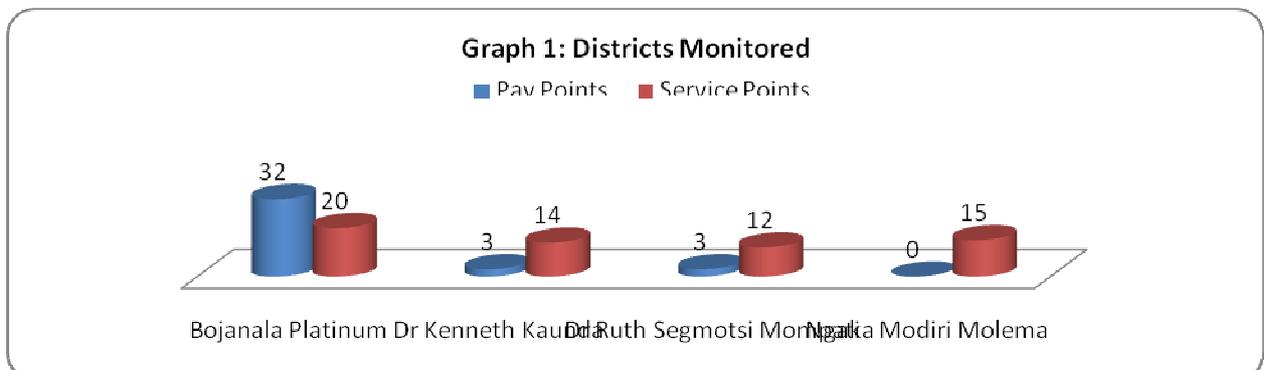
analysis are forwarded to the relevant government department for response within an agreed period, after which they are made available to the public.

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.

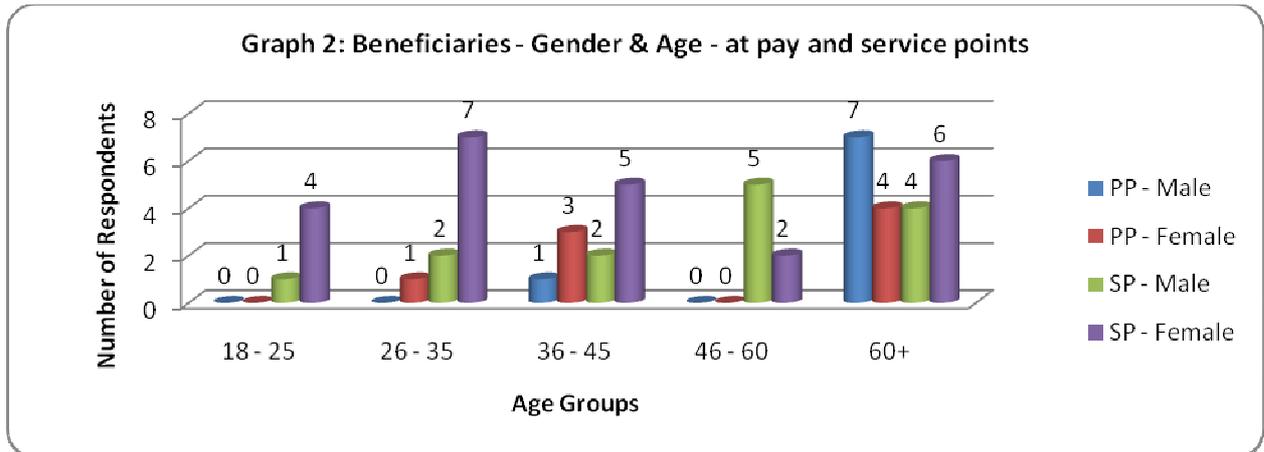
## FINDINGS

The efficiency and quality of the service provided by SASSA sites monitored in the North West province 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 22 September 2011 to 23 May 2012. Please note that the percentages provided here are rounded off to the first decimal.

The findings presented in this report takes into account the experiences and opinions of 101 respondents from 15 SASSA service or pay points across all districts in the North West. These include 61 responses (39 service users, 22 officials) at service points and 40 responses (16 service users, 24 officials) at pay points. At the pay points 93.8% of the respondents were South African citizens, with 6.3% being permanent residents. At the service points 84.6% were South African citizens and 7.7% permanent residents.



The majority of the respondents were in the Bojanala Platinum district. A large portion of the respondents were females.



### 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 from the perspective of the officials and then from beneficiaries.

<b>TABLE 1:</b> Respondent: Officials	<b>Pay Points</b>		<b>Service Points</b>	
	<b>Earliest</b>	<b>Latest</b>	<b>Earliest</b>	<b>Latest</b>
<b>Usual Opening Time</b>	06:00	08:15	07:30	09:00
<b>Opening Time day of monitoring</b>	07:00	09:00	07:30	09:00
<b>Time started attending clients</b>	07:30	10:00	07:34	09:30
<b>Time stop attending clients</b>	10:45	18:00	10:30	17:30

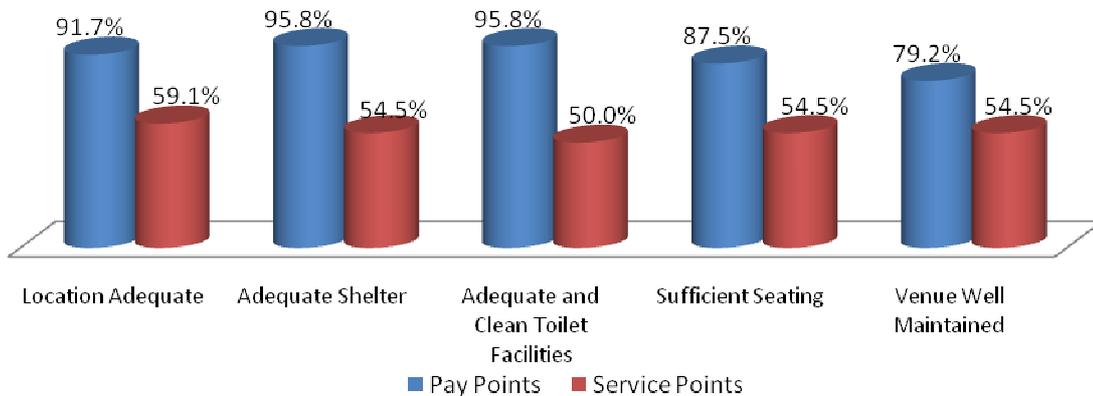
<b>TABLE 2:</b> Respondents: Beneficiaries	<b>Pay Points</b>		<b>Service Points</b>	
	<b>Earliest /Shortest</b>	<b>Latest /Longest</b>	<b>Earliest /Shortest</b>	<b>Latest /Longest</b>
<b>Time Arrived</b>	06:00	08:20	06:30	12:00
<b>Time waiting for seating</b>	1 min	10 min	1 min	120 min
<b>Time waiting to be attended to</b>	10 min	120 Min	-	-

At some of the pay points monitored the officials started attending to clients within minutes of opening the points, others within half an hour. However, at a pay point in Bojanala it took officials two hour to start attending to clients. At most of the service points monitored the officials started attending to clients within 30 minutes. However, at the Maquassie Hills service point, Dr Kenneth Kaunda, it took an hour. At the monitored pay points, 50.0% of the respondents stated that they had to wait in a queue. By comparison, 69.2% of respondents at service points had to wait in queues.

### 2. Venue:

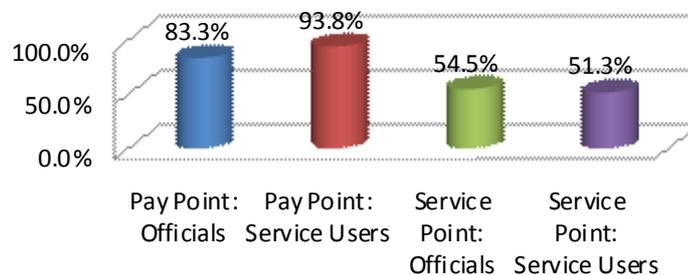
The physical state of the venue, the availability of chairs, and whether or not the premises has adequate and clean toilet facilities is important to achieving efficient service.

**Officials' view re conditions of venues of SASSA /service providers**



The officials at pay points rated the conditions at the venues very high, except in how well maintained the venue is. The service point officials gave lower overall ratings and their lowest was in the area of toilet facilities. Only 50.0% of the officials at service points felt that there were adequate and clean toilet facilities.

**Graph 4: Arrangements made for disabled, elderly persons and pregnant women**



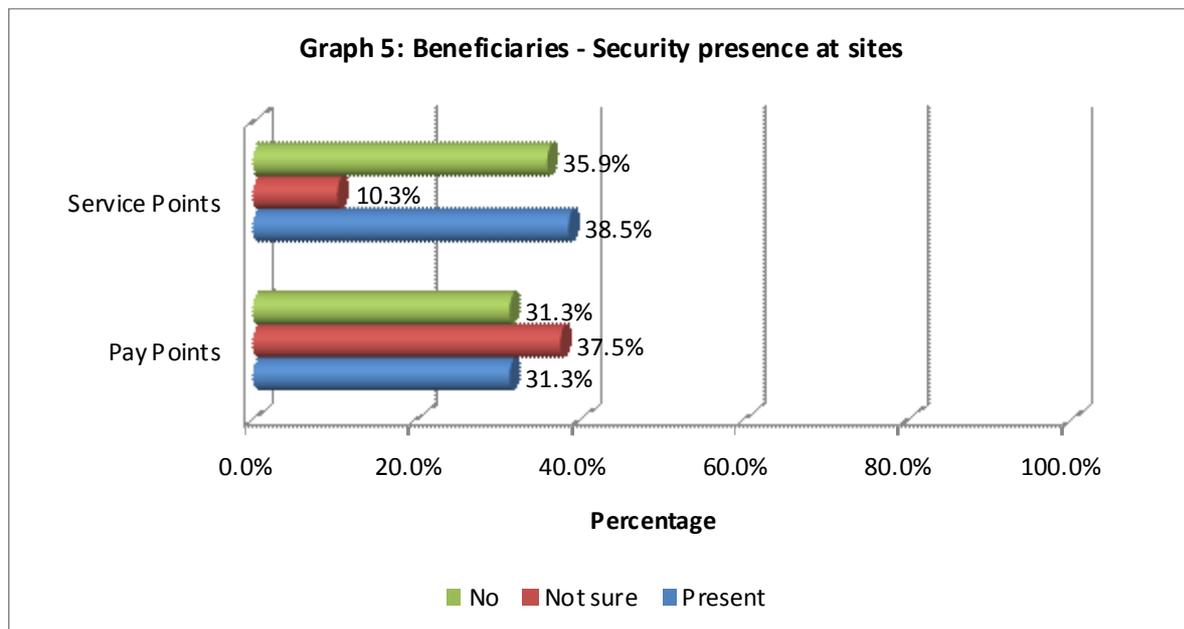
The officials were asked in what way the location could be improved. The officials at the Maquassie Hills service point in Dr Kenneth Kaunda said that there was “not enough shelter, [and the service point could be improved] by providing a new location or shelter”. At the pay point in Maquassie Hills and the Pension Shop, both in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda district, officials said that they need more security.

In terms of special arrangements made for the elderly persons, disabled persons and pregnant women there were varying responses. The officials’ assessments ranged from 54.5% at service points to 83.3% at pay points. By comparison, the beneficiaries’ responses ratings ranged from 51.3% at service points to 93.8% at pay points. In general, the perspectives of officials and beneficiaries align with each other.

### 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?	83.3%	16.7%	-	54.5%	40.9%	4.5%
Is there a private security company or the police present?	87.5%	12.5%	-	54.5%	40.9%	4.5%
If YES, do you think they are adequately resourced to protect?	90.5%	9.5%	-	16.7%	83.3%	-
Do you know of any loan sharks who operate on the pay/service point premises?	16.7%	83.3%	-	4.5%	86.4%	9.1%
<b>Respondents: Beneficiaries</b>						
Do you feel safe at the pay point?	87.5%	12.5%	-	-	-	-
Do you feel safe when you leave?	87.5%	12.5%	-	-	-	-



In this report, data points to one of the biggest concerns, namely the safety at the SASSA sites. These sites could become targets of criminals if not adequately protected. At pay points only 31.3% of the officials said that there was security present and at service points only 38.5% of the officials said that this was the case.

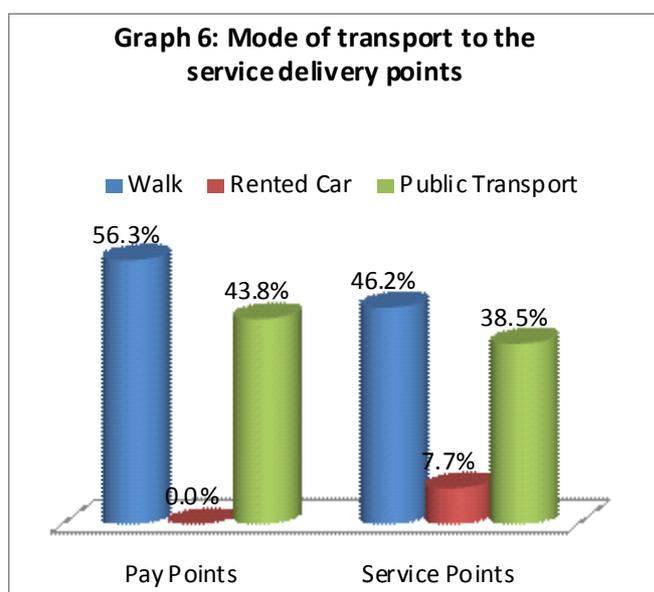
At the pay points, only 6.3% of the beneficiaries monitored said that they know of loan sharks who

operate in or close to the pay point. Most of the officials stated that they did not know of loan sharks operating close by, with only 16.7% answering yes to this question. The beneficiaries at pay and service points remain particularly vulnerable to loan sharks who charge exorbitant interest rates. Another consideration is the security of those individuals who arrive early at service and pay points. Respondents at the pay and service points stated that they started arriving at the respective points as early as 06:00 or 06:30.

#### 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	2 km	1 km	20 km
Time	-	-	5 min	120 min
Cost of travel	R5.00	R10.00	R5.00	R60.00

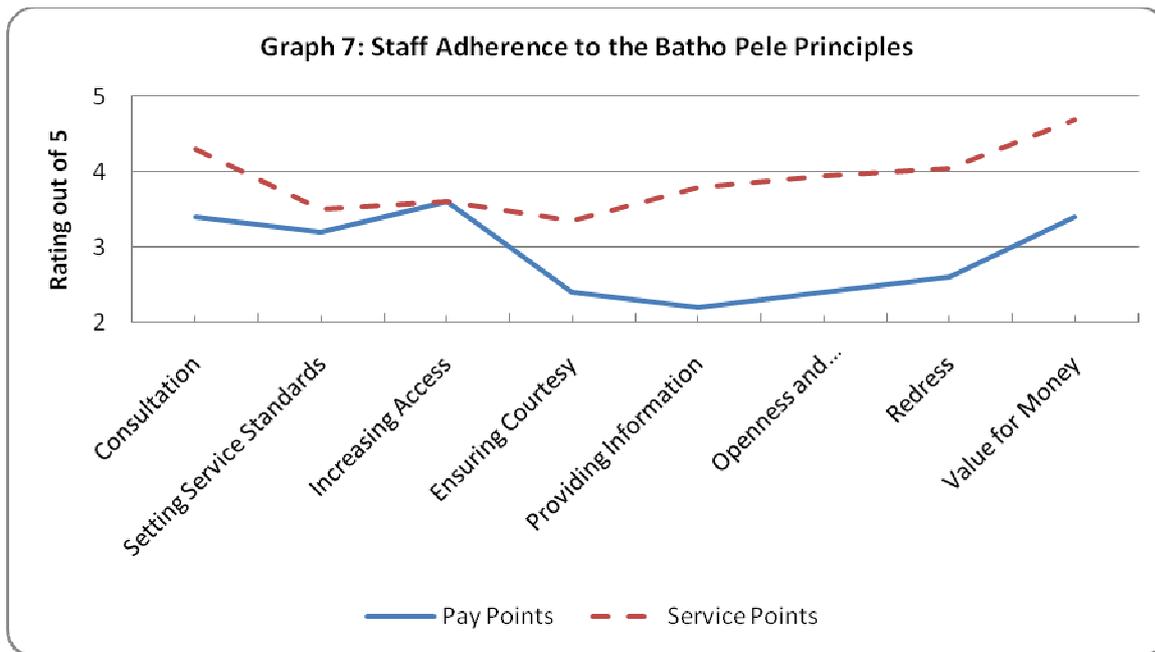


A large percentage of the respondents stated that the service and paypoints were situated within 5km of their home. There are cases, however, where people had to travel up to 20km to the point. One female respondent at the SASSA Taung service point in Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompoti travelled 20km to reach that point. At both pay and service points the majority of respondents walked, 56.3% and 46.2% respectively. However, the percentage of respondents who used public transport was not far behind, with 43.8% at pay points and 38.5% at service points.

The average cost of transportation to the service and pay points are R5.83 and R26.36, respectively. The reason why the average at service points is higher is because a number of the respondents rented cars. We have found that these travelling times compare favourably to several of the other provinces.

#### 5. Personnel

This section of the report looks at how many SASSA officials serve beneficiaries and the adherence to the principles of Batho Pele and customer care.

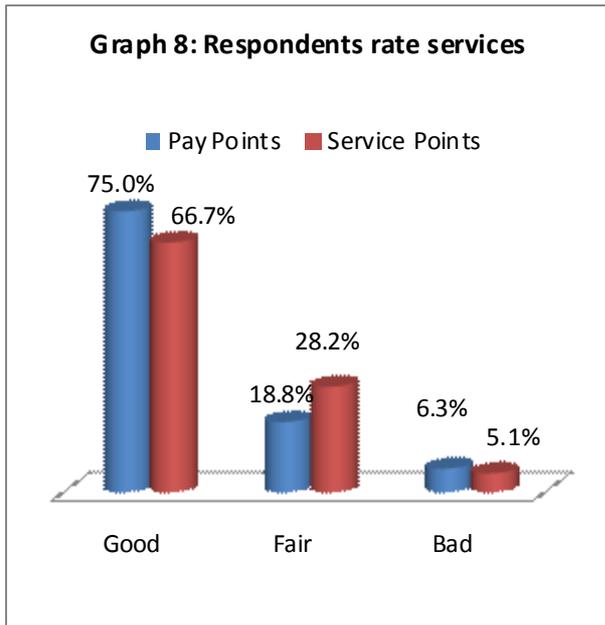


The officials at the pay and service points were asked to assess their adherence to the principles of Batho Pele. From their self-assessment it shows that officials at pay points thought that their strongest area was increasing access. Whereas, for service point officials they thought that their strong point was value for money. For pay point officials their weak point was providing information and for service point officials the weak point was ensuring courtesy.

Respondents: Officials	Pay Points			Service Points		
	Yes	No	No Answer	Yes	No	No Answer
Staff members adequately trained?	83.3%	16.7%	-	50.0%	45.5%	4.5%
Signs with customer care norms visibly displayed?	83.3%	12.5%	4.2%	50.0%	40.9%	9.1%
Officials Identifiable? (Uniforms or name tags, etc.)	83.3%	12.5%	4.2%	50.0%	40.9%	9.1%

In terms of how the staff felt about their training, the staff at pay points felt that they were better equipped than staff at service points. The staff at pay points were also easier identifiable than staff at service points.

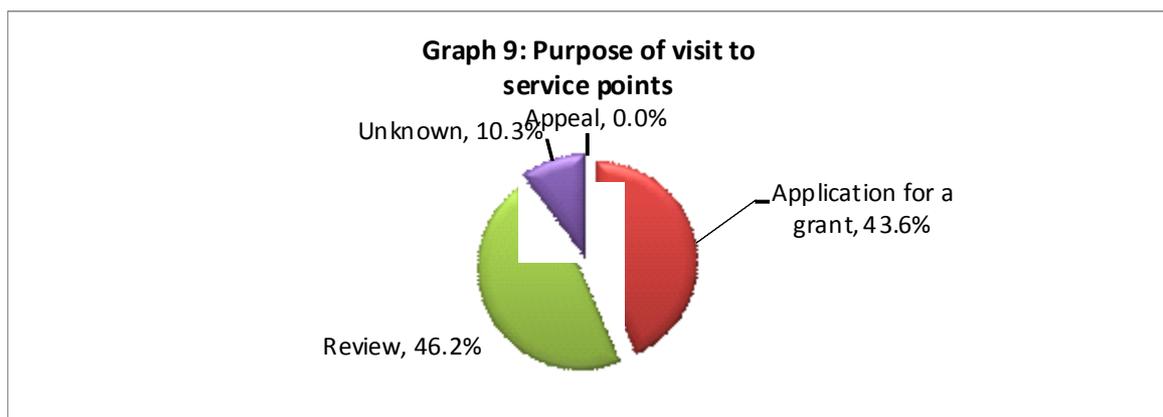
Respondents: Officials	Pay Points		Service Points	
	Minimum	Maximum	Minimum	Maximum
Number of staff members	1	10	1	12
Number of people served	6	1180	6	110



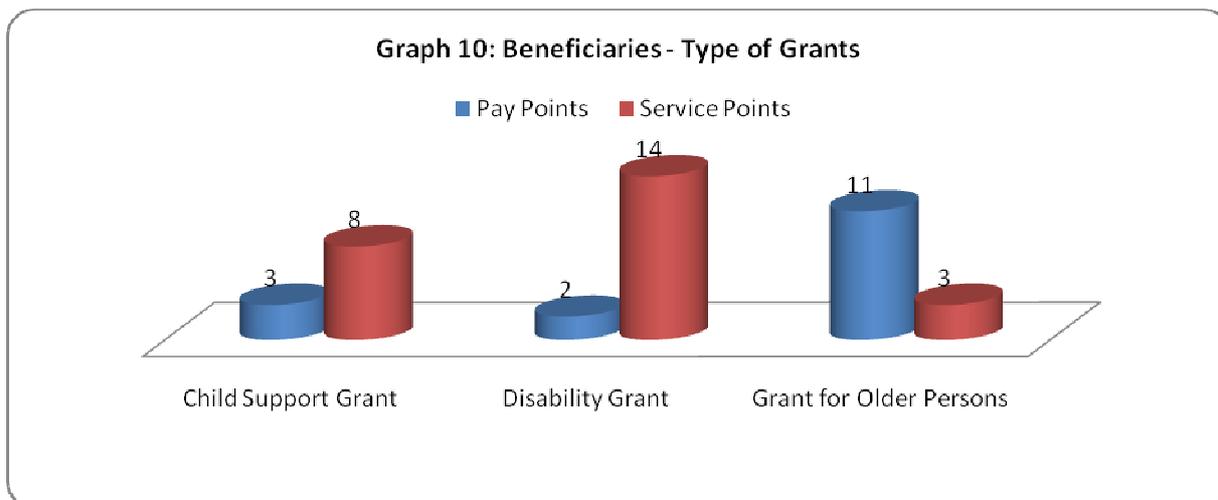
The majority of the beneficiaries rated the service at both service and pay points as being good. In addition to being asked to rate the service, the beneficiaries were also asked whether they thought officials were helpful and treated them with respect. At pay points 93.8% of beneficiaries felt that officials were helpful and respectful, compared to 82.1% at service points. The beneficiaries were also asked how they thought the services could be improved. At the pay point one respondent suggested that “shelter, water and security” can be improved. At service points they also suggested that they “build toilets and provide water”, that they appoint more staff and employ more security.

## 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 points most of the respondents were there for a review (46.2%), with 43.6% being there for an application. At pay points the majority were collecting Grants for Older Persons (68.8%), and at service points the majority were there regarding Disability Grants (35.9%).



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 30.8% of the respondents, with 33.3% being there on a return visit. On average beneficiaries return twice, with the minimum being two and the maximum being five times.

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 days to five months post receipt of an application form. Respondents said that they had to return between one and four times to see medical personnel.

**Table 7: RECEIPTS AND INFORMATION ON APPLICATION/REVIEW**

<b>Respondents: Service Point Users</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
Were you informed about the date of payment of your grant?	35.9%	10.3%	53.8%
Did you receive a receipt detailing the reason for your visit today?	59.0%	15.4%	25.6%
Have you ever been informed about the whole process you have to follow when applying for the disability grant?	43.6%	10.3%	46.2%
<b>Respondents: Pay Point Users</b>			
Did you receive a receipt?	100.0%	-	-
Is the amount the same as the receipt?	100.0%	-	-

Only 30.8% of the applicants were informed of the outcome of their application, with 66.7% of these being informed verbally and 33.3% in writing. Of the respondents who were not informed of the outcome, only 25.0% 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: 59.0% said yes, 2.6% were not sure and 5.1% said no, with 33.3% not answering the question.

## 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.

<b>Table 8: Respondents: Officials</b>	<b>Pay Points</b>			<b>Service Points</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Answer</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Answer</b>
Are information materials available in required languages?	83.3%	16.7%	-	77.3%	18.2%	4.5%
Are officials able to communicate with clients in the required languages?	87.5%	12.5%	-	77.3%	13.6%	9.1%
Are translators present to assist local foreign nationals with the payment process if required?	70.8%	25.0%	4.2%	31.8%	59.1%	9.1%

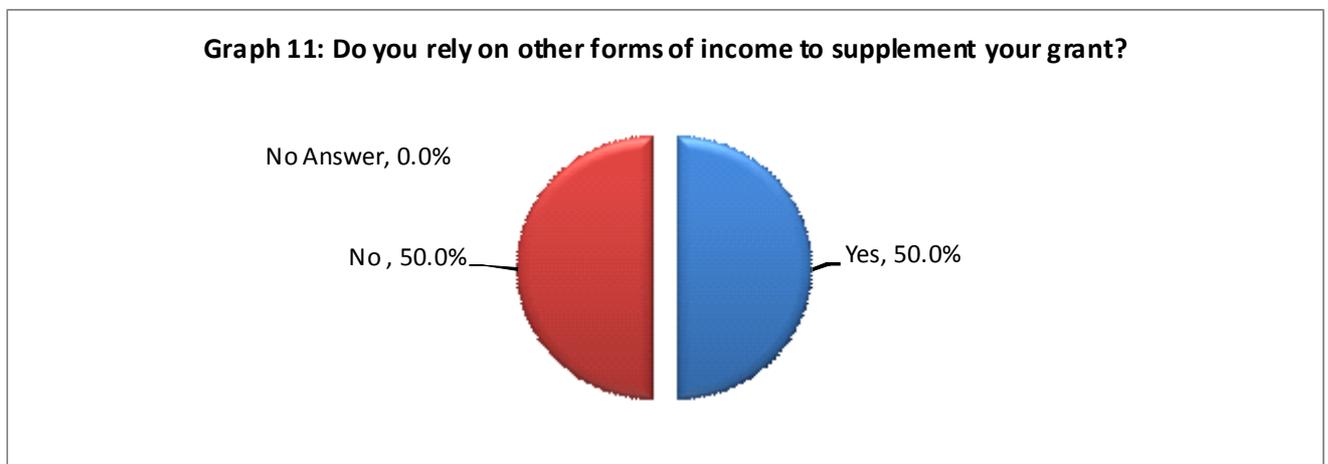
Officials at pay points said that English, Afrikaans, Tswana, Sotho, Xhosa, Venda, Zulu and Tsonga translators would be helpful. At service points the officials said that English, Tswana, Sotho and Xhosa would be helpful.

<b>Table 9: Respondents: Beneficiaries</b>	<b>Pay Points</b>	<b>Service Points</b>
Beneficiaries who knew what documents to bring for their visit	100.0%	94.9%
Beneficiaries who DID NOT KNOW that certain documents expire after a period of time	-	28.2%
Beneficiaries who were aware that SASSA communicates information on the back of receipts	6.3%	30.8%
Beneficiaries who were aware they can receive money from grants at pay points as well as at a bank	50.0%	-
Beneficiaries who were aware that all persons aged 60 can access the Older Persons Grant from 1 April 2010	75.0%	53.8%
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	68.8%	84.6%
Beneficiaries who were aware they could apply for Social Relief Distress (SRD) if in immediate need	18.8%	15.4%

Only 6.3% of the respondents at pay points and 30.8% at service points were aware that SASSA communicates information on the back of receipts. Only half of the respondents at pay points knew that they could receive money from banks as well as the pay points. Of concern, is that very few of the respondents were aware of the Social Relief of Distress grant that they could obtain if in immediate need, with only 18.8% at pay points and 15.4% at service points aware of this grant.

## 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. For half of the respondents the grant(s) was the only form of income. The grant is used to support three people on average. The maximum number of people supported by one grant is three. A 60+ female at the Reagile Community Hall pay point in the Bojanala district supported 6 people with her Grant for Older Persons.



Beneficiaries used the grant for (in order of importance):

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

This shows the importance of the grant system in maintaining entire families.

## MONITORS' OBSERVATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

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

At pay and service points monitors observed that there were long **queues**:

- “Clients are waiting so long in the queue and some of them sometimes they don't get the money, so they told to come the following day.”
- “According to client the service is poor and very delaying.”
- “Young people are the ones that can be patient and don't really mind waiting in long queues unlike elderly. Signage should be put up to direct clients, even me it took me a very long time to find a manager. There's not even an info desk.”

Others **concerns** were also raised:

- “A need for proper shelter and water. Speed up services to avoid long queues. Maximise security as old people get robbed along the way. Communicate effectively and in Setswana on all documents as other old people cannot read and interpret.”
- “On this the situation was very bad because most of the pensioners received a lot of shortage of their grant. The office manager asked me to call my organisation members to come and help to read the money for our elders. Those who can't read and count we all realise that every grant has a shortage of R100 then we bring the money back and they replace it. Unfortunately others had already gone home.”
- “My client says there is no safety, no clean toilets and there is no special arrangement for old people.”
- “SASSA officials are coming late on Tuesdays and there are those coming from surrounding farms. They almost come at 12h00 and knock off at 15h30. They send those people back home for next Tuesday.”
- “This poor guy is mentally challenged and yet he has to go back home not helped. He is sent back because he must bring someone who "is sane" and he has no one. He stays alone and here in SASSA he was told he must go look for someone he trusts otherwise they cannot help him. At 37 he still hasn't received grants.”

Monitors suggested **that more staff be employed**:

- “There must be a translator at the pay point for foreigners.”
- “There must be enough security that will escort inside and outside. The vendors must at least keep a distance from the community pay point premises.”
- “On Tuesday, the manager sent only two officials to come and assist more than sixty people.”

There were suggestions that clients receive **more information from SASSA**:

There was also **praises for the services received** at SASSA:

- “Today the service point was good but still no water for our community and people have to suffer about toilets but otherwise the seats are there.”
- “Every Tuesday in the community hall SASSA is coming to visit people when applying for grants. In the hall is the women's toilet and a men's toilet and there is more chairs and water.”
- “The service was good today.”

There were some **concerns about the presence of loan sharks at pay points**:

- “The loan sharks must stay away from the pay point office.”

## **ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS/BENEFICIARIES' COMMENTS TO CMAP MONITORS:**

The officials at **pay points raised the following concerns**:

- “Loan sharks and vendors must go away 500m.”
- “The debt collectors must not collect debt at the pay point.”

The officials at **service points raised the following concerns:**

- “At Tuesday the managers sent only two officials to come and assist more than sixty people. She worked hard to finish this people. She came in at 08h00 the morning and she started immediately.”
- “Older people, pregnant women and disabled people, they do not get special treatment. They stay in the queue for long time. No accessible toilets, not enough seats. This point there is not enough shelter for everyone and they say they are not safe.”
- “The queue is long, they get paid after a long time of waiting. They arrive at 09h00 but they paid after one or two hours. They are told to borrow money to the nearest loan shop, old people are complaining about the service at this point.”
- “This service point forces people to borrow the money first before they get paid. This point withdraw some of the money from people and they say forced to do back. There is not a good service at this point. This service don't treat people with respect at all.”

## GENERAL COMMENTS/INFORMATION

### Time:

- The standard time for starting work at some of the pay points is delayed for more than 2 hours because of the distance from SASSA Offices to the pay point. The distance from SASSA Delareyville to Ottodal pay point is 62km and they still have to travel to farm areas around Ottodal.

### Venue:

- Facilities at pay point venues are generally improved except for toilets which are usually not well cared for or adequate.
- It must be noted that the banks are not safe pay points for use by beneficiaries because there are not enough chairs, no shelter, no toilets and security is not always visible. The elderly, the disabled and pregnant women suffer the most. This is evident in Banks at Koster in the Bojanala District and Bloemhof and Makwassie in the Kenneth Kaunda District.

### Security:

- The presence of security personnel at the pay point does not scare the loan sharks. It is discovered that beneficiaries are afraid to comment openly about loan sharks because they (beneficiaries) feel that loan sharks and debt collectors would not help them if they divulge information. Loan sharks and debt collectors do not usually visit SASSA service points.

### Transport:

- Transport is always a challenge for beneficiaries who access their services through mobile services because if they fail to reach such services, they are forced to travel to the main offices of such services. These are usually far away and costly to reach. Beneficiaries at Phatsima in the Bojanala district and Ottodal in the Ngaka Modiri Molema district are constantly experiencing this problem.

- Permanent SASSA Satellite offices to be established closer to beneficiaries in every area of operation.

**Personnel:**

- SASSA officials are always treating beneficiaries with respect and adhere to the Batho Pele principles.

**Processing of Grants:**

- Due to the level of literacy of most beneficiaries, information on how or when to enquire/require progress on applications is always not readily well understood, hence regular visits to SASSA services.

**Language and Communication:**

- It must be noted that most of the beneficiaries do not know how to read or write and struggle unless there is someone to help them with regard to information and understanding

**Use of Grants:**

- Grants usage for the majority of beneficiaries is for basic needs like food and clothing. Very few of the beneficiaries misuse the grant money on mainly alcohol.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BLACK SASH**

### **General**

- In this report, we have found that “at the pay points 93.8% of the respondents were South African citizens, with 6.3% being permanent residents. At the service points 84.6% were South African citizens and 7.7% permanent residents”. This clearly indicates that either the refugees do not know, and/or SASSA is not educating them of their right to social assistance
- 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.

**Recommendations: Time**

- We recommend the release of an updated and relevant National Norms and Standards Policy that guides the implementation of the Agency 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 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.

### **Recommendations: Venue**

It is critical to have an overall assessment of whether SASSA or service providers honour 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.

- The Agency take appropriate measures to ensure that grants are paid to beneficiaries in a dignified manner and therefore must ensure that 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.
- The Agency must produce an assessment report on the banking and post office infrastructure that exists around fixed pay points and in areas where the current mobile pay points operate to measure where beneficiaries are situated in relation to this infrastructure.
- We recommend that the Agency negotiate with relevant banks for reduced rates and charges so that beneficiaries can access their grants through these institutions. However all charges should be borne by the Agency and not the beneficiary.
- We recommend that the Agency negotiate with post offices for beneficiaries to access their grants through these institutions.
- 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 select 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 points;
- 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 deployed at pay points 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 implements a norm as part of its proposed Norms and Standards which ensures that service points are within 5 km range of beneficiaries.
- We recommend that SASSA inform beneficiaries about their nearest service point through a public campaign to prevent beneficiaries spending money and time unnecessarily.
- SASSA 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 prioritise and appropriately adjust its communication strategy to reach beneficiaries in the rural areas of all the districts in the Province.

### **Recommendations: Personnel**

We must acknowledge that at least 80 percent of beneficiaries felt that SASSA officials were helpful and respectful. However, in our view, adequately trained staff will significantly decrease the waiting period spent by beneficiaries to access SASSA services. 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.
- 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 designs, 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.

### **Recommendations: Processing of grants**

- 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 and technology infrastructures (including laptops equipped with SOCPEN and the relevant network connections) 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.
- That SASSA and service providers clients with the option of a receipt as a matter of course for any service that was offered.
- We recommend that at 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. 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 all relevant languages and are distributed at all service points.
- 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.