

## South Africa

The Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme (ICROP) for socially excluded people in rural and semi-urban areas of South Africa has considerably improved people's effective access to existing social services and benefits.

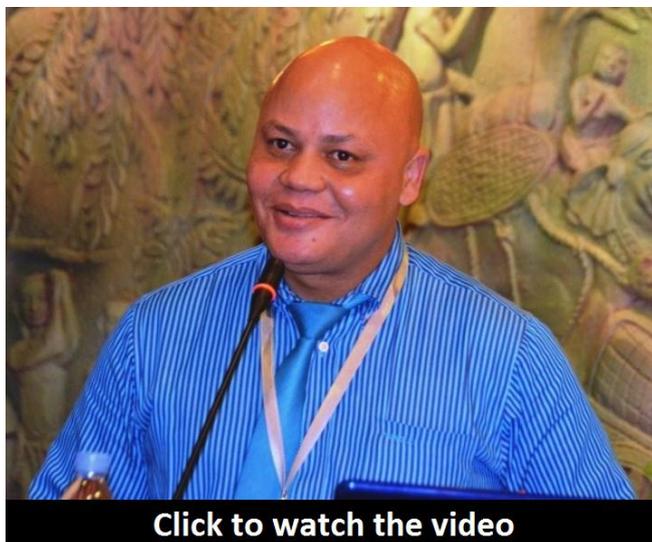
Despite the existence of basic social services and benefits in South Africa, a significant number of people did not have effective access to social protection. This situation led the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to consider a more integrated and intensive approach to reach excluded people. As a result, mobile units were dispatched to deliver the Child Support Grant (CSG) in 2001. This programme was the predecessor of ICROP, which was launched in 2007.

ICROP is an outreach programme delivering social services through fully equipped mobile one-stop service units, or vehicles equipped with modern technology, facilities, and personnel. Its objective is to promote development, poverty reduction, and social inclusion for isolated people.

National social protection floors (SPFs) guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working-age, and older persons.

185 countries have adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), an approach to achieve universal social protection.

This brief presents a successful country experience of expanding social protection.



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### Lessons Learned

- A shared delivery mechanism can increase outreach of existing social protection programmes while reducing administrative costs.
- It also contributes to improve coordination across institutions by establishing common administrative processes and tools.
- In addition to decentralized local registration units, mobile units can be necessary to reach out to communities in remote places.
- A common delivery mechanism needs to be embedded in national law, to ensure its sustainability and facilitate collaboration of all existing programmes and schemes.

## 1. How was ICROP set up?

The South African Constitution stipulates that “everyone has a right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance”.

Since 1996, government priorities included eliminating poverty and reducing inequality, unemployment, mass deprivation, and serious service delivery lags. Redistribution of resources through cash transfers became the country’s main poverty reduction strategy. South Africa also provides free primary health care for all, school nutrition, and fee waivers for poor students.

Despite the existence of social protection programmes, between 2001 and 2007 there were no major improvements in poverty and deprivation indexes (where deprivation was measured along five dimensions, including income and material, employment, education, biological parents, and service delivery), particularly in rural and semi-rural areas (Barnes et al., 2007). An evaluation of social interventions showed the need to expand and improve the delivery of social services and transfers.

Concerned with these findings, SASSA decided to launch ICROP in 2007 in order to institutionalize and expand the existing successful Child Support Grant (CSG) outreach programme. Since the President’s launch of the ‘war on poverty’ in 2008, ICROP has evolved into a government-wide programme that takes all services in an integrated manner to the most excluded people.



ICROP mobile unit (Source: SASSA)

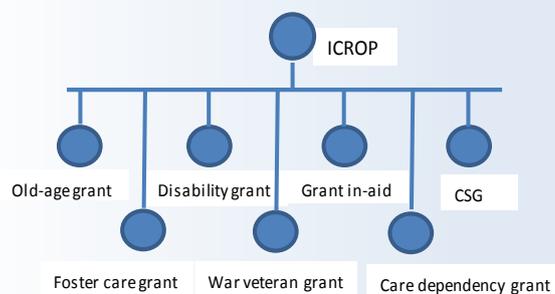
## 2. What does ICROP look like?

ICROP aims to reach out to socially excluded and isolated people and communities in order to ensure accessibility, availability, adequacy, affordability, and acceptability of social services and benefits. ICROP primarily targets deep rural, rural, and semi-urban areas, which were the most socially excluded and isolated areas in terms of the 2007 deprivation index.

Through fully equipped and well-staffed mobile units and other outreach services, ICROP:

- facilitates beneficiary enrolment and registration processes, as well as issues smart cards that give access to benefits under seven welfare programmes;
- identifies beneficiaries through biometric (fingerprint and voice) recognition since 2013;
- updates a web-based beneficiary database in real-time or within 7-21 working days, depending on connectivity;
- raises awareness and provides information on existing benefits and services;
- provides access to pay points where smart cards can be used at a minimal cost and with reduced waiting periods. (Note that ICROP does not pay the grants; the grant payment system is outsourced to a private company and the benefits can be retrieved at accredited merchants, ATMs, banks, or pay points);
- facilitates access to the appeals process, including applications for representation to appeal against the decision to terminate benefits; and
- conducts home visits by medical staff and social workers to ensure that individuals unable to go to the hospital or leave their homes—due to disability or sickness—have access to services and benefits.

## Programmes facilitated by ICROP



Source: SASSA website

The lead agency for social protection programme implementation is SASSA, which falls under the Department of Social Development. Other departments, including Home Affairs, Health, Justice, Education, Agriculture, and Cooperative Governance, as well as local municipalities, are involved in programme delivery. The police are involved to ensure safety and security. An inter-ministerial committee facilitates coordination across departments. Although decisions are made at the central level, delivery occurs at the provincial, district, and local levels through local offices, pay points, or ICROP mobile units. The benefits provided by SASSA are rights-based and implemented according to uniform standards governed by a solid legal framework.

The budget for ICROP is allocated by Parliament and managed according to the Public Finance Management Act. The programme is funded from tax revenues. For 2013-14, the budget was approximately 4.5 billion rands (ZAR) (US\$481 million). ICROP expenditures mainly include staff and vehicle maintenance costs.

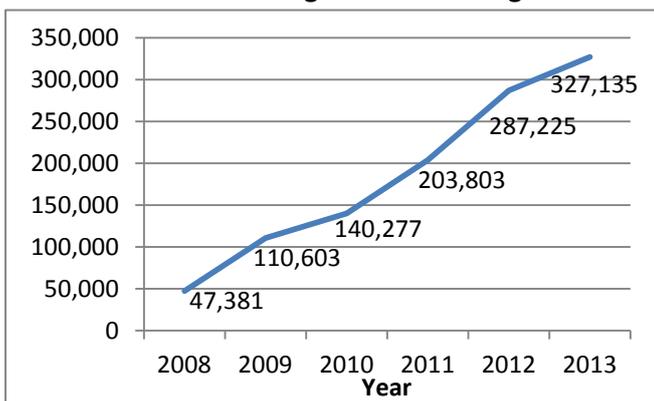


People queuing to receive services (Source: SASSA)

### 3. The impact of ICROP on people's lives

In 2011, about 45 per cent of the country's total population was concentrated in rural areas, of which 20 per cent lived in deep rural areas. A recent study indicates that in rural areas targeted by the ICROP programme, the proportion of the population effectively covered by existing social protection programmes was high compared to the estimated target population (UNICEF, 2011). Between 2007 and 2013, ICROP served over 730 wards and completed more than 320,000 applications for children to access the Child Support Grant.

#### Cumulative Child Grant Registrations through ICROP



Source : UNICEF (2013)

The ultimate aim of ICROP is to contribute to poverty reduction. It is interesting to note that since the introduction of ICROP in 2007, the poverty headcount ratio decreased from 57.2 per cent in 2006 to 45.5 per cent in 2011 (World Bank).

ICROP also aims to make beneficiaries financially independent by providing opportunities for skills

development, employment, and entrepreneurship through small public employment initiatives. For example, SASSA's Social Relief of Distress programme awards food purchased from local garden producers and school uniforms purchased from local cooperatives to destitute individuals within the community. Hence, the initiative not only benefits children and families, but also enhances local economic development within poor communities.

### 4. Next steps

ICROP has significantly improved the access of rural populations and persons with disabilities to existing grants. However, a few challenges yet remain:

- The programme was designed without considering physical impediments. For example, in some cases the vehicles are too large to reach communities. It is important to assess how to best reach out to these communities.
- SASSA needs to further invest in training for the staff of the mobile ICROP units who are in direct contact with the beneficiaries.
- ICROP's initiative to increase beneficiaries' economic independence aimed to provide financial opportunities to more than 8 million people. Due to its large scale, the initiative faced many challenges. The programme has since been refocused on smaller scale projects that promote linkages between social grants and employment or skills development initiatives.
- SASSA needs to adapt its strategies to enhance its service delivery to the poor living in affluent provinces and urban areas. The number of potential beneficiaries in this demographic who do not have effective access to existing social grants has increased in recent years. Although services may be available in these areas, they are often insufficient and understaffed.
- An institutionalized mechanism for service delivery audits, public consultations, and collection of feedback needs to be designed and established to assess satisfaction and help improve the delivery system.
- Several reforms are being initiated as part of the extension of a national social protection floor, which may lead to the establishment of new schemes. ICROP needs to be ready to support the effective delivery of these potential new services and transfers.

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