

Social service centres

Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on Universal Social Protection through South-South and Triangular Cooperation

6-8 September 2016 - Beijing

Information and Services



The need for Social Service Centres

Over the past few years, the global understanding of social protection as part of countries' development strategies has shifted from a pro-poor vision where the objective was to alleviate poverty, to a universalistic vision where the objective is to install sustainable and comprehensive social protection systems as enablers for fair and inclusive development. This system approach to social protection is enshrined in the ILO's Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), which calls for governments to establish and maintain basic social protection guarantees for all residents and all children.

The ILO and other development partners have supported a number of developing countries in assessing their existing social protection systems and in developing strategies and adequate legal frameworks. Even in countries where the legal coverage of social protection schemes has increased, their effective coverage is still relatively limited due to barriers to access.

As a response, many developing countries are rethinking the way social transfers are channelled to the population, notably to reduce transaction costs, and to better coordinate the

different schemes and programmes in order to provide people with more consistent support throughout their lives. Social Service Centres facilitate access to social protection and contribute to the realization of the right to social protection.

Social Service Centres are usually developed to address one of the following main four objectives:

- improve the **population's access** to social transfers and services through lowering transaction costs;
- improve the **efficiency** of the social protection system through minimizing duplications and the administrative costs of operating social protection;
- improve the **effectiveness** of the social protection system through better supporting and protecting individuals by developing a more client-centric approach to answering the different needs of beneficiaries; and
- improve the **consistency** of the social protection system through coordinating and integrating social protection schemes and programmes with a view to progressively install an SPF.

Designing Social Service Centres

Seven dimensions can be used to describe, analyse and compare the different Social Service Centres that exist around the world.

Variable

Target group	Focused <i>Specific population group and/or contingency</i>	Universal <i>Entire population for all contingencies addressed through social protection</i>
Breadth	Narrow <i>One component of social protection (e.g. social assistance)</i>	Broad <i>All components of social protection, including national and local schemes and related policies (e.g. employment)</i>
Depth	Shallow <i>Information/signposting only</i>	Deep <i>Information, advice and assistance with applications</i>
Access channel	Unique <i>Only one channel is used (e.g. physical or hotline)</i>	Comprehensive <i>Multiple channels are used for different services</i>
Proximity of the physical channel	Distant <i>No physical structure or regionally based desk</i>	Close <i>Physical structure at the most decentralized level and/or facilitator at the community level</i>
Horizontal integration	Low horizontal integration <i>Co-located services but separately managed</i>	High horizontal integration <i>Resource pooling (common front officers); case management and combined benefit packages; shared tools (social registry and integrated management information system)</i>

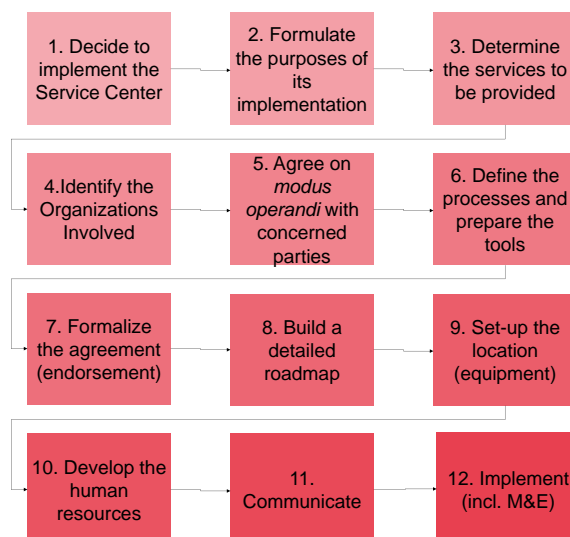
Vertical integration

Low vertical integration
Mechanism limited to a shared front line (e.g. delivery only)

High vertical integration
Involvement of the different administrative levels with appropriate functions; monitoring and reporting systems

From design to reality

Twelve steps can be followed to design and implement Social Service Centres that address the specific challenges of social protection administration and respond to the needs of the population.



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