

Key Findings

Time

Our questions related to opening and closing times of the service point and the length of time beneficiaries spend waiting to be served. While the Knysna service point achieved positive results with respect to time, we have concerns with respect to the Metro and Boland:

- 20% of service points in the Metro did not begin their service on time
- 64% of respondents in the Metro and 100% in the Boland arrived at the service point before 8am to secure a place in the queue. In these situations, beneficiaries wait outside of secure areas and are at risk of crime.
- The average queuing time in the Metro and Boland was over three hours, with over 60% in the Metro and over 80% in the Boland waiting more than two hours to be served.
- The longest waiting time by a respondent was 13 hours in Belhar by a man over 60.

Venue

Our questions related to the physical state of the venue, availability of the chairs, toilets and clean water. Based on the data interviewees are generally satisfied that SASSA provides adequate and well maintained shelters.

However, 25% of SASSA officials confirmed that their sites had inadequate seating available. On the issue of special arrangements for persons with disabilities, old and frail persons and pregnant women, the SASSA officials felt there were adequate special practices for these groupings. However 42% of beneficiaries interviewed felt these practices were only available in theory.

Security

Our questions related to the availability of private security or police at venue. While the 2002 Norms and Standards only consider security issues for paypoints, we are concerned that these do not take account of the vulnerability of the majority of applicants who arrive before the service point opens, often in the

early hours of the morning, and before eight o'clock when the service point opens. In this context, it is cause for concern that our monitors found that 22% of Metro points, 100% of Boland points and 80% of Knysna points were without adequate security.

Transport

Questions related to how beneficiaries arrived at the site, how long it took for them to travel and how much it cost. We found that over 65% of respondents were comfortable to walk to the service site. In the Metro over 80% of respondents said the venue was within 5km of where they live, but this fell to 40% in Knysna, where one respondent reported travelling for 5 hours to get to the service point, and another reported a cost of R50 to travel to the point.

Personnel

Our questions related to customer care and here we found the Boland service points to be particularly poor. Monitors observed that officials were not identified by badges, there was no help desk or 'floating' official and customer norms were not displayed. Not surprisingly, in this area 50% of respondents felt that SASSA did not provide good service and did not treat them with respect. This contrasts with respondents in the Metro and Knysna where under 10% were dissatisfied. Monitors observed in the Metro that the administration infrastructure of satellite service sites was inadequate and led to inefficient service.

Language & Communication

Our questions relate to whether official languages are spoken and foreign language translators are available at sites; how much people know about the grants and services of SASSA and where they received their information. It is clear from our data that communication remains a problem.

- 40% of the interviewees were unaware that some crucial documents expire after three months
- 33% were unaware that SASSA communicates information through all-pay receipts
- 42% of beneficiaries interviewed were not aware of the toll free number.

Processing of Grants

Our questions related to how long it took for a matter to be resolved and how this was communicated to beneficiaries (including whether receipts were

provided). Our data shows that beneficiaries return on average once to resolve their matters, which conflicts with the SASSA norm that an application process must not take more than 45 minutes to complete and approve. We found particularly at satellite service points that the system was inefficient and was observed as follows.

1. The beneficiary registers his/her name in the morning at the service point,
2. There is an interview process which screens the client and the client receives a number of forms and is sent home to complete them.
3. The client returns on another occasion with the completed forms which are checked by the officials
4. If the forms are completed correctly, the client receives verbal notice that they should return to the site within at least two weeks to check for a letter confirming the outcome of the application/review.

Throughout this process all details were handwritten by the SASSA officials – a process that takes up much time. Upon interviews with officials, the majority of the officials indicated that the use of technology (computers linked to the same online system used at the local/district office) at the satellite service points would shorten the application process and feedback time.

An average of 47% of the beneficiaries interviewed claimed not to have received receipts as proof of them entering the application process. *“It would be nice to get a receipt of a note that I can take to my boss to prove that I was at the SASSA office for the whole day. I will not get paid for the day that I did not work unless I have a certificate showing that I was at the doctor or maybe here”*. Receipts should be given as a matter of course.