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.
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 Eastern Cape.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adelaide Advice Office</th>
<th>Bedford Advice Centre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Advice Centre</td>
<td>Burgersdorp Community Resource and Legal Advice Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dordrecht Advice office</td>
<td>Flagstaff Community Advice Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mqanduli Advice Office</td>
<td>Nonesi Advice Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qunu Community Advice Office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: Other organisations may be involved

Eastern Cape Map of areas monitored (stars) - (Jan – Nov 2011):

In addition we also wish to thank the SASSA EC – 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.

Open Society Foundation of South Africa
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### General

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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

The Social Change Assistance Trust (Scat) is a veteran independent fund-raising and grant-making development agency based in Cape Town. Scat was established in 1984 to channel resources to rural communities. Scat works in partnership to support local non-profit community-based organisations in their human rights work. Scat's focus is on capacity development, human rights, gender equity, HIV and AIDS awareness and local economic development. For more information see www.scat.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 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 Eastern Cape 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 11 January 2011 to 14 November 2011. Please note that the percentages provided here are rounded off to the first decimal point (nearest whole number in the case of graphs).

The findings presented in this report takes into account the experiences and opinions of 204 respondents from 42 SASSA service or pay points across 5 districts in the Eastern Cape. These include 6 responses (4 service users, 2 officials) at service points (SP) and 198 service users’ responses at pay points (PP). All of the interviewees were South African citizens.

The majority of the respondents interviewed at service points were male (75%). At the pay points the majority of the respondents were female (67.7 %). The bulk of these respondents were elderly
(60+). This is also the only age group where the female and male beneficiaries are almost equal. The other age groups have predominantly female respondents.

**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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 1: Respondent: Officials</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earliest</td>
<td>Latest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usual Opening Time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening Time day of monitoring</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time started attending clients</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time stop attending clients</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 2: Respondents: Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Earliest /Shortest</td>
<td>Latest /Longest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Arrived</td>
<td>04:30</td>
<td>14:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time waiting for seating</td>
<td>0 min</td>
<td>360 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time waiting to be attended to</td>
<td>2 min</td>
<td>720 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The time between the service points opening and when the officials started attending to clients was only 15 minutes at both of the points monitored. One of the service points monitored, Adelaide 250903 in the Amatole district, opened 3 hours after its’ usual opening time (12:00 instead of 9:00) and closed at 13:30.
A female (aged 46-60) arrived at the FNB (Ngcobo Town) pay point in the Chris Hani district arrived at 04:30 to collect her Child Support Grant. She walked approximately 10 kilometres and there was no security present on her arrival and she also commented that security needed to be increased. She rated the service as bad.

At the monitored pay points, 87.4% of the respondents stated that they had to wait in a queue. By comparison, 100% of respondents at service points had to wait in queues. In the OR Tambo district at the Ntsimbini pay point, a woman collecting her Child Support Grant had to wait 12 hours to be served. This client had arrived at 9:00 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.

Graph 3: Conditions of venues of Eastern Cape SASSA /service providers

NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed, therefore the graph only reflect the responses of service point officials.

The officials rated various aspects of the venues. Although they thought that the locations were adequate with enough shelter, they thought that there was not sufficient seating and the toilets facilities could be improved. At the Adelaide 250903 service point in the Amatole district, the monitor commented that the venue was dirty and that the building needed renovation. Furthermore, the venue had no fence. Adequate fencing is important because it also relates to the security of the premises.

Graph 4: Arrangements made for disabled, elderly persons and pregnant women
NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed, therefore the graph only reflect the responses of service point officials and service users and, pay point service users.

In terms of special arrangements made for the elderly persons, disabled persons and pregnant women, a worrying amount of both service users and officials, as well as pay point users, felt that there were no special arrangements made.

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3: SECURITY</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents: Officials</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel safe working at the pay/service point?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a private security company or the police present?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If YES, do you think they are adequately resourced to protect?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you know of any loan sharks who operate on the pay/service point premises?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents: Beneficiaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you feel safe at the pay point?</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you feel safe when you leave?</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>37.4%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed; therefore the table only reflect the responses of service point officials.

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. Although all service point officials interviewed stated that they felt safe, one in 2 of the officials stated that there was no fencing around the venue.
NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed, therefore the graph only reflect the responses of service point officials and service users, and pay point service users.

The beneficiaries at pay and service points are particularly vulnerable to loan sharks who charge exorbitant interest rates. Moreover, 53% 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. As an example, the female, previously referred to, who arrived early at the FNB (Ngcobo Town) pay point in the Chris Hani district, would be particularly vulnerable. She arrived at 04:30 and there was no security present.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table: 4</th>
<th>Respondents: Beneficiaries</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>0.5 km</td>
<td>65 km</td>
<td>25 km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>30 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of travel</td>
<td>R0.00</td>
<td>R120.00</td>
<td>R9.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated by the graph, most of the respondents had used public transport to reach the point. There are cases, however, where people had to walk up to 42km to the point. A 60+ female walked 42km to the FNB (Ngcobo Town) in the Chris Hani district.

The average cost of transportation to the service and pay points are R32.25 and R15.50, respectively. The exceptional cases have to be noted though. For example, an elderly woman (age 60+) paid R120.00 to rent a car to take her to the Adelaide Town Hall pay point in Amatole from her home in Willowvale Town.
5. Personnel
This looks at how many SASSA officials serve beneficiaries and the adherence to the principles of Batho Pele and customer care.

NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed; therefore the graph only reflects the responses of service point officials.

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 they felt that their strongest principle was that of value for money. The service point officials scored themselves low in the principles of Setting Service Standards; Ensuring Courtesy; Openness and Transparency; and Redress.

Table 5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents: Officials</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff members adequately trained?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs with customer care norms visibly displayed?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officials Identifiable? (Uniforms or name tags, etc.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed; therefore the table only reflects the responses of service point officials.

The small percentage of service points that have signs with customer care norms visibly displayed is particularly noteworthy. Many of the officials are also not always clearly identifiable.

At the Adelaide 250903 service point in the Amatole district 2 officials attended to 218 clients. This speaks to the client/official ratio at service points.
In general the beneficiaries rated the service at pay points as being good or fair, with the largest proportion being good. 2 out of 3 of the beneficiaries at service points monitored in the Eastern Cape 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 83.3% of beneficiaries felt that officials were helpful and respectful, compared to 50% at service points. The beneficiaries were also asked how they thought the services could be improved.

Some of the comments include employing more staff, ensuring staff are punctual, and locating the points closer to the South African Police Services to avoid travelling far for certifications and affidavits. Further recommendations include making the point wheelchair accessible, by adding more machines and physical changes to the location, such as shelter.

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 service points the main purpose of the beneficiaries’ visit was to apply for new grants. At the service points most of the respondents’ visits related to Child Support Grants, Disability Grants or Grants for Older Persons. Whereas the majority of the respondents at the pay points accessed Grants for Older Persons with Child Support Grants coming in at a close second.
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 50% of the respondents. The maximum number of return visits was three times, with the minimum being twice.

### Table 6: RECEIPTS AND INFORMATION ON APPLICATION/REVIEW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents: Service Point Users</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were you informed about the date of payment of your grant?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you receive a receipt detailing the reason for your visit today?</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you informed of the outcome of your application?</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Respondents: Pay Point Users**

| Did you receive a receipt? | 97.0% | 1.0% | 2.0% |
| Is the amount the same as the receipt? | 18.7% | 1.0% | 80.3% |

The fact that only 50% of service point users were given a receipt detailing the reason for their visit needs to be addressed. 75% of the applicants were informed of the outcome of their application, with 33.3% of these being informed verbally and 66.7% in writing. For those who were not informed about the outcome of the grant, 75% 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. 75% said yes, 0% no and 25% were not sure if they were informed.
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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7: Respondents: Officials</th>
<th>Pay Points</th>
<th>Service Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are information materials available in required languages?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are officials able to communicate with clients in the required languages?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are translators present to assist local foreign nationals with the payment process if required?</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: No pay point officials were interviewed, therefore the graph only reflect the responses of service point officials.

The percentage of respondents who were aware of the fact that SASSA communicates information on the back of receipts is low with only 48% at pay points and 50% at service points. In terms of communication of information, besides information regarding which documents are required for grant application, much more needs to be done by SASSA EC and service providers.

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 four people on average. The maximum number of people supported by one grant is 15. A 60+ male from the Mqanduli pay point in OR Tambo district used his Grant for Elderly Person to...
support 15 people. The R1140 grant was used “to pay for school fees, to buy food, to pay for the funeral policy”.

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

- Food
- Clothing
- School Fees
- Funeral coverage / Insurance policy
- Rent and services, especially electricity
- Doctors and medication
- Transport
- Savings / Loan sharks
- Religious purposes

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.

According to my observation I noticed that people are not safe from loan sharks or money lenders, since their money is being taken from them in a violent manner. Thirdly the officials are alleged to be corrupt by taking monies of the service users - Sizwe Zimba, Ezibeleni Community Hall Pay Point, Chris Hani District

_Nonesi Advice Office, Queenstown_

AllPay staff members were helpful to the people. They have special arrangements for older people and pregnant women and people who cannot walk they provide them by wheel chairs. Secondly they did not wait in a queue. - Kamastone Pay Point, Chris Hani District

I think SASSA failed to tell them all the information they needed because she doesn’t know that she could receive her grant at the post office and I think this is the reason why there are many people who pay their grants at this service point. They lack knowledge. Security is provided and they are safe in and outside of the service point - Sanelisa Qwayede, Ezibeleni Community Hall Pay Point, Chris Hani District

_Mqanduli Advice Office, Mqanduli_

I have observed that people visiting SASSA are encountering problems because of their office is outside the Town, people have to travel up and down for affidavits and they are exposed to tsotsis/robbers. I think since SASSA and social development offices should be within the Town for accessibility even by the disabled people and old people. - Mqanduli Service Point, OR Tambo District

ADDITIONAL OFFICIALS/BENEFICIARIES COMMENTS TO CMAP MONITORS:

_Beneficiary, Ezibeleni Community Hall Pay Point, Chris Hani District_

I think they must add at least two pay point in this area because we are many and we have to wait too long to receive our money.

_Beneficiary, Lower Didimana Pay Point, Chris Hani District_

Service providers must give us the exact time because they told me to come at 10h00 today and I arrived at 09h30 but they didn't come at that time, they came at 12h26.

_Beneficiary, Adelaide Town Hall Pay Point, Amatole District_
The venue has no place for my wheelchair to enter and it’s difficult to go inside the hall.

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE BLACK SASH**

**General**
- In this report, we have found that “all of the respondents were South African nationals”. 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.
- 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 immensely long distances that some beneficiaries have to travel to access a SASSA service or pay point.
  - The unhygienic conditions of toilets at certain sites – which is undignified and unhealthy.
  - Insufficient shelter at some of these sites.

**Recommendations: Time**
- We recommend the release of an updated and relevant National Norms and Standards Policy that guides the implementation of the Agency’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 Lower Didimana Pay Point and the Ezibeleni Community Hall Pay Point, both in the Chris Hani District to ensure the service is rendered to beneficiaries when the Point opens or in terms of the contract agreement and the allegations of corrupt officials.
- 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 essential to have an overall appraisal 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 organisations 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:
- The Agency needs to take appropriate measures to ensure that grants are paid to beneficiaries in a dignified manner and therefore must ensure basic facilities like shelter, seating, toilets, water and 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 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 pay 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 employed 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 EC implements a norm as part of its proposed Norms and Standards which ensures that service points are within 5 km range of beneficiaries.
- SASSA EC investigates the public transport system 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.
- We recommend that SASSA EC inform beneficiaries about their nearest service point through intensifying public campaigns in the Eastern Cape to prevent beneficiaries’ spending money and time unnecessarily.
- SASSA EC 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 EC prioritise and appropriately adjust its communication strategy to reach beneficiaries in more rural areas.

Recommendations: Personnel
We must acknowledge that at least 50 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.
• That SASSA officials are made aware of legislative and regulatory change in order for the officials to communicate the right information to clients.
• That SASSA continues to employ officials who are able to communicate with their clients in the language of their choice.

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, since one in five interviewees indicated that they do not receive a receipt.
• We recommend that at each pay point of SASSA (or service provider) ensures that beneficiaries are educated through information materials.
• 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.

• 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 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.