



VOLUME 28 ISSUE 2

Administratio Publica



ASSADPAM

Journal of the Association of
Southern African Schools and Departments
of Public Administration and Management

Social Protection Interventions to Attain Sustainable Development Goal One in South Africa

S Vyas-Doorgapersad

School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy
University of Johannesburg

ABSTRACT

The article reviews social protection interventions in South Africa to determine how they give effect to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Of particular interest is SDG One, which targets the alleviation of poverty. South Africa lags behind in terms of achieving the targets of SDG One, and therefore invests hugely in social protection interventions aimed at fighting poverty. The aim of this article is to answer the question, "What is the role that social protection interventions in South Africa play in attaining sustainable development?" The findings explore that social protection requires state-led interventions to improve citizens' welfare. A qualitative conceptual and documentary literature analysis was used as the research methodology, where a qualitative description of findings focuses on themes that emerged from the literature review and was conceptualised by way of unobtrusive research techniques. The article recommends that social protection interventions be prioritised in public policy implementation in pursuance of sustainable development.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 2015 for the year 2030. The SDGs are part of Resolution 70/1 (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2019:1) of the UNGA, namely the 2030 Agenda. The 17 SDGs to transform our world are (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2019:2): no poverty; zero hunger; good health and well-being; quality

education; gender equality; clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduce inequality; sustainable cities and communities; responsible consumption and production; climate change; life below water; life on land; peace and justice; strong institutions; and partnerships to achieve the goals.

This article focuses on SDG One, which is linked to the eradication of poverty. Social protection including social protection floors (SDG 1.3) is significant to address poverty, poverty reduction strategies, pro-poor growth, and hence foster “great productivity, and consequently increased growth and social cohesion” (ILO 2019:2). Social protection is “key for socio-economic recovery, inclusive growth and human development, an essential component of the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development goals” (Chawdhury 2019:5). In order to eradicate poverty, this article aims to assess the role that social protection interventions play in attaining SDG One in the South African context.

METHODS

The research methodology utilised in this study is based on the qualitative research approach. Nyikadzino (2019:20) by citing Merraim (2009) emphasises that, “qualitative research originates from the interpretive worldview, which is mainly concerned with understanding deeper meanings and experiences of human lives”. The major qualitative research method utilised is to contextualise the setting of a case study approach, in this case South Africa. Qualitative research is useful when there is need to sensitise concepts for exploring and understanding the phenomena under study (Flick 2014:11). This approach is further adapted by Joel and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2019:3), who state that “qualitative research (a phenomenological enquiry) seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings”.

This article adopted unobstructive research that, according to Babbie (2010:331), is the study of social behaviour without affecting it. Auriacombe (2016:1) adds that “unobstructive research techniques can be applied in qualitative and quantitative research to eliminate bias and promote conceptual and contextual analysis”. There are, according to Babbie (2010:331–351), various types of unobstructive research techniques, which include conceptual analysis, historical or comparative analysis, and analysis of existing statistics.

This research utilised qualitative conceptual and documentary analysis of published information and documents that are in the public domain. Through review of research documents of the University of Southern California (2018), it was adapted by Nhlapo (2019:33), that the “primary reason for using conceptual analysis is to understand the meaning of an idea or concept. The secondary reason is

to determine how that idea or concept relates to other philosophical problems". Document analysis is a social research method and is an important research tool in its own right, and is an invaluable part of most schemes of triangulation, the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon (Research Methodology in Education 2018:1). As cited by Bowen (2009:28), the triangulation aims "to provide a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility".

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

SDG One is linked to poverty reduction. From "an economic perspective, the poor can be defined as those living under \$1 per person per day" (Banerjee and Duflo 2007:141). From a social perspective, the poor are defined as "those who live in an environment which does not allow them to develop to their full potential" (Ludi and Bird 2007:1). This concept of poverty, according to Lötter (2007:1202) "is only applied to humans in everyday language and poverty is an evaluative concept used by human societies to set minimum standards for those aspects of human lifestyles acquirable through economic capacities".

It is expected from governments to implement pro-poor strategies to eradicate poverty that can offer socio-economic sustainable development to citizens. Pro-poor is when any government establishes policies for the socio-economic upliftment of the poor, and according to Gondo (2014:2), "a situation in which any distributional shifts accompanying economic growth favour the poor, meaning that poverty falls more than it would have if all incomes had grown at the same rate, in this case the incomes of the poor grow at a higher rate than those of the non-poor. The growth process is said to be 'pro-poor' if and only if poor people benefit in absolute terms, as reflected in an appropriate measure of poverty".

Pro-poor growth strategies are aimed at reducing the poverty levels of disadvantaged groups of people through the creation of employment. These strategies serve to reduce inequality, for example, by implementing gender mainstreaming and enabling both women and men for participating in economic growth and social development. It was further emphasised by Vyas-Doorgapersad (2014:109) that with no adequate pro-poor strategies, the "human capacities of poor men and women may remain underdeveloped despite increased incomes leading to a lack of development of human capacities among the poor, which, in turn, reduces the rate of growth and the extent to which growth" is pro-poor resulting in countries failing to achieve (socio-economic) sustainable development.

Social protection is usually provided by the state; it is theoretically conceived as part of the 'state-citizen' contract, in which states and citizens have rights and responsibilities (European Union (EU) 2019:1) to one another. In a study commissioned by the African Union (AU) Commission led by Prof Vivienne Taylor, social

protection is defined as a variety of government-driven funding interventions to assist all “individuals, households, and communities to better manage risks and participate actively in all spheres of life” (Holmes and Lwanga-Ntale 2012:4). This according to the EU (2019:2) is witnessed whereby “a small number of countries (including India, South Africa, and Uruguay) recognise social protection as a human right and an entitlement against low standards of living”.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

SDG One highlights the extent of poverty at a global level, and hence aims to eradicate poverty for the sustainable development of communities. The poverty experienced at global level is as follows (United Nations (UN) 2019:1):

- 783 million people live below the international poverty line of US\$1.90 a day.
- In 2016, almost 10% of the world’s workers lived with their families on less than US\$1.90 per person per day.
- Globally, there are 122 women aged 25 to 34 living in extreme poverty for every 100 men of the same age group.
- Most people living below the poverty line belong to two regions: Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- High poverty rates are often found in small, fragile, and conflict-affected countries.
- One in four children under the age of five in the world has inadequate height for his or her age.
- As of 2016, only 45% of the world’s population was effectively covered by at least one social protection cash benefit.

In the African context, according to Patel (2018:1), “the average poverty rate for sub-Saharan Africa stands at about 41 percent, and of the world’s 28 poorest countries, 27 are in sub-Saharan Africa all with a poverty rate above 30 percent”. The African statistics, when compared with global statistics, show a scenario whereby “global estimates of undernourishment rose from 777 million in 2015 to 821 million in 2017. Africa has the highest prevalence of undernourishment, estimated in 2016 to be 20% of the population” (World Hunger Education Service (WHES) 2018:1). This is further highlighted by WHES (2018:1), that it is especially alarming in Eastern Africa, where it is suspected that one-third of the population is undernourished. Due primarily to its larger population size, Asia has the highest total number of undernourished individuals – 520 million, versus Africa’s 243 million.

The factors causing poverty vary internationally, regionally, and nationally, ranging from conflict, the environment, governance, to population growth, to state a few. The 2030 Agenda therefore stresses the achievement of SDG One (no poverty)

in country-specific contexts. The preamble of the 2030 Agenda states that (UN 2019:5), “this Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom. We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development”.

The 2030 Agenda highlights the following aspects of SDG One (UN 2019:19) emphasising by 2030 to “reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women, and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions; implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including minimum social floors; achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable; ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership, and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology, and financial services, including microfinance; and build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social, and environmental shocks and disasters”.

The UN (2019:19) further adds that it is important to “ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, in order to provide adequate and predictable means for developing countries to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions; and create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional, and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support investment in poverty eradication actions”.

In order to achieve the goals of poverty reduction, African countries are developing pro-poor strategies as a possible solution, as well as to reduce the challenge. The rationale is that pro-poor strategies play a significant part in achieving sustainable development. This link is stated in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1: Link between poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development

Poverty reduction strategies	Sustainable development
Pro-poor economic growth pace and quality	Economic growth is crucial to reducing poverty. A competitive market economy favours secure access for poor women and men to resources such as land, finance, and human capabilities. Social policies foster cohesion, mobility, protection, redistribution, and gender equality.
Empowerment, rights, and pro-poor governance	Empowerment is about enhancing the capacity of poor women and men. Political devolution and increased participation by poor women and men in local or regional government will promote empowerment and pro-poor outcomes.

Poverty reduction strategies	Sustainable development
Basic social services for human development	Sustained pro-poor economic growth raises the income and consumption of poor women and men. Poverty reduction is a critical development issue in Africa. High-level political recognition of the importance of this issue is necessary for any successful human development and poverty reduction strategies.
Human security to reduce vulnerability and manage shocks	Poor women and men see insecurity as both a major dimension and a principal cause of poverty. The risks facing the poor are substantial and call for social protection programmes.
Mainstreaming environmental sustainability using sustainable livelihood approaches	The international development goals, which include income poverty reduction, social development, environmental sustainability, and regeneration, are closely linked to the political principle of sustainable development.

Source: (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2001 cited in Vyas-Doorgapersad 2019:88).

The link between poverty reduction strategies and sustainable development also underpins that “social protection makes growth more pro-poor by enabling household investment in productive activities and human capital” (OECD 2019:1), hence increase economic productivity and household incomes, as stated in Table 1.

The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) (2016:10) emphasises that “social protection is increasingly being recognised by governments in Africa as an important intervention to reduce poverty”. It needs to be considered “that poverty is not only widespread in rural areas, but most poverty is rural...yet this core problem appears to be neglected” (Machethe 2004:1). African countries are therefore focusing on introducing agricultural development projects to eradicate poverty. The rationale is that “agriculture contributes to poverty alleviation at rural, urban and national level in four ways: reducing food prices; employment creation; increasing real wages; and improving farm income” (Machethe 2004:3). This can be achieved through the engagement of three entities the “project authority, in charge of the construction and the management of the infrastructure; the farmers, focused on farming; and the processing industrialists” (Morea and Balzarini 2018:397). The agriculture development projects may bring food security that “is key to the stability of any economy” (Olowu, Olasehinde-Williams and Bein 2019:224). One of the productive outcomes of social protection is to encourage investments in agriculture in order “to generate income and spark positive spill-over effects in local economy” (ASSAf 2016:16), hence an avenue to achieving pro-poor growth and sustainable development.

In African context, a study was conducted by the UNDP in selected countries, highlighting that “poverty, inequality, vulnerability and exclusion

are significant challenges facing a large proportion of the African population. It is increasingly recognised that social protection has substantial potential to address these issues” (Omilola and Kaniki 2014:18). African countries have therefore implemented various social protection programmes. The significant ones are “establishment of delivery institutions” (Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) 2016:11) in West African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone); East African countries (Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda); North African country (Tunisia); “productive safety net programme” (Hanorati, Gentilini and Yemtsov 2015:58) in East African country (Ethiopia); “pension systems, child grants, disability benefits” (UNDP 2019:9) in Southern African Development Community (SADC) (Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland).

Following successes in these countries, other African countries are in a process to reform their public works systems and health services. The studies conducted by AU, UNDP, European University Institute (EUI), International Labour Organisation (ILO) and ASSAf, all explore benefits of social protection recorded in various African countries linking to, “lower levels of inequality” (ILO 2014:2) in South Africa, Mauritius, Ethiopia and Ghana; “positive impacts on food security and dietary diversity” (Bastagli, Hagen-Zanker, Harman, Barca, Sturge, Schmidt and Pellerano 2016:7) in Lesotho and Mozambique; “better and more equal health outcomes” (ILO 2014:2) in Ghana; “enhanced investment in agricultural and non-agricultural activities” (Bastagli *et al.* 2016:56) in South Africa, Mozambique, Ghana, Sierra Leone and Kenya. The article cannot discuss these social protection interventions in African context as a whole, hence the focus on South Africa as a case study.

CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK: SOCIAL PROTECTION INTERVENTION TO ATTAIN SDG ONE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The intention of reducing poverty was stated in the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994) and was further reaffirmed in the National Development Plan (NDP) (2012). Both documents emphasise that “no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of our people remain[s] in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life ... attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government” (Statistics South Africa 2017:6). These intentions are restated in Vision 2030. Notwithstanding these intentions, the *Poverty Trends in South Africa* report shows that, despite the general decline in poverty between 2006 and 2011, poverty levels in South Africa rose in 2015. More than half of South Africans were poor in 2015, with the poverty headcount increasing to 55.5% from a low of

53.2% in 2011. The figures are calculated using the upper-bound poverty line (UBPL) of R992 per person per month in 2015 prices. This translates to over 30.4 million South Africans living in poverty in 2015 (Statistics South Africa 2017:1). The number has only increased and the eNews Channel Africa has reported that in 2017, 30 million South Africans had been living in poverty from 27 million in 2011 which suggests that the country will be unlikely to achieve its goal of eliminating poverty by 2030 because even four years after its launch, poverty had still been on the rise. Of these 30 million citizens, 14 million had been living in extreme poverty (Internet source: <https://enca.com>).

There are various factors which contribute to the increase of poverty in South Africa, such as geographical segregation of land creating urban-rural divide; unavailability of economic opportunities; age, unemployment, gender, to state a few. The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF) (2017:2) identifies that “the country’s development path has not sufficiently broadened opportunities for black South Africans, especially women and youth... the socioeconomic conditions that characterised the system of apartheid and colonialism largely still define our social reality”. The NSTF (2017:2) further emphasised that “previously government focused on the easier actions (such as paying grants and providing water and electricity) and not on difficult things (such as improving education, promoting employment and building houses close to jobs)”. The lack of educational and economic opportunities contributed to the sustained levels of poverty in the country. The additional contributing factors of poverty in South Africa include unemployment, poor leadership, decline in social security, and HIV/AIDS, to state a few. The government has implemented various social protection interventions to tackle these challenges, which are discussed in the next section.

Social protection interventions

Social protection aims to ensure a basic level of well-being, to enable people to live with dignity. Governments introduce social protection policies to meet social, economic, and political objectives. These include addressing poverty and inequality, the promotion of economic growth and social stability, and political legitimacy (ASSAf 2016:1). Social protection, according to Omilola and Kaniki (2014:2), “is wide in many African countries, encompassing a range of social protection interventions and social safety nets. In general, social protection interventions usually include measures to provide adequate housing and nutrition, ensure access to education and health and promote social inclusion and political stability”.

As part of these interventions, the AU has made the promotion of social protection a central part of its mandate for the continent, stated in Table 2 as follows:

Table 2: AU key milestones towards Pan-African consensus on the need for and scope of social protection

Year	Milestone
2000	The Constitutive Act of the AU (Lome, Togo) put poverty, unemployment, and vulnerability on the agenda in order to raise the living standards of African people.
2004	The Ouagadougou Declaration and Plan of Action committed governments to strengthen the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all sectors in society, particularly the poor and vulnerable.
2006	The Livingstone Call for Action and the Yaounde Declaration prioritised social protection in the region, to be realised through programmes such as cash transfers for vulnerable groups, including children, older people, and people living with disabilities. It was agreed that a basic package of social transfers was affordable within the current resources of governments with the support of international development partners.
2008	The Social Policy Framework for Africa (Windhoek, Namibia) agreed on the need for comprehensive long-term national social protection action plans, to be implemented gradually. A consensus was reached that a minimum package of essential social protection should cover essential healthcare benefits for children, informal workers, the unemployed, older persons and persons with disabilities.
2010	The Social Minister's Khartoum Declaration on Social Policy Action Towards Social Inclusion reaffirmed the commitment to "the acceleration of implementation of relevant social protection measures to directly benefit the well-being of the family in Africa", with emphasis on persons with disabilities, children, and the elderly.

Source: (ASSAf 2016:11)

South Africa is a signatory to follow the statutory, regulatory, and policy frameworks for social protection suggested by the AU. The social protection interventions in the South African context are stated under various themes below.

Policy interventions

Social welfare, according to the White Paper for Social Welfare (WPSW) (1997) refers to "an integrated and comprehensive system of social services, facilities, programmes, and social security to promote social development, social justice, and the social functioning of people" (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 2017:5). The following challenges are identified that are internal to the welfare system (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 2017:6–7):

- *Lack of national consensus*: There is no national consensus on a welfare policy framework and its relationship to a national reconstruction and development strategy.

- *Disparities*: Past welfare policies, legislation, and programmes were inequitable, inappropriate, and ineffective in addressing poverty, basic human needs, and the social development priorities of all people.
- *Fragmentation*: There is a lack of inter-sectoral collaboration and a holistic approach. This fragmentation is also reflected in social welfare legislation.
- *Participation*: Citizen and stakeholder participation in decision-making regarding social welfare policies, programmes, and priorities is not exercised fully and effectively. This has resulted in a lack of legitimacy in the welfare system.
- *Lack of sustainable financing*: In the past, social welfare programmes were not considered to be critical social investment priorities and were under-resourced.
- *Lack of enabling environment*: There is a lack of enabling legislation, and taxation policies are not “welfare friendly”.

In order to address the above-stated challenges, it is imperative to restructure social welfare services. This requires “developing representative governance structures to build up the partnership between government, civil society organisations, religious organisations, and the private sector; restructuring and rationalising the social welfare delivery system towards a holistic approach, which will include social development, social functioning, social care, social welfare services, and social security programmes; and developing a financially sustainable welfare system” (Van der Byl 2019:11–12).

However, Haurovi (2019:706) highlights that “the South African social assistance system has been plagued by various challenges that have affected the inclusivity of sector-wide state-led interventions to fight poverty. Such challenges have both precipitated and escalated social exclusion”. The current social assistance system, according to Skosana (2016:14), while reaching some 16 million South Africans, excludes large parts of the population, namely the unemployed or working poor, thus only alleviating poverty in certain targeted groups. In particular, unemployed adults of working age cannot access social security and can only hope to live off the grants awarded to a member of their household, typically an Old Age Grant or a Child Support Grant. In addition, as further emphasised by Skosana (2016:14), it needs to be considered, that, “this exclusion of a large vulnerable sector of society from the social protection system runs counter to the provisions of the Constitution wherein every citizen is guaranteed access to social security and even social assistance if citizens are unable to fend for themselves within the limits of resources available to the state. It further puts a burden on the meagre resources that those in receipt of social grants have to share with the rest of the family members who have no alternative means of survival”.

Haurovi (2019:706) adds unearthing “challenges to existing statutes and policies, which include the absence of statutory insulation of social grant clients, the

absence of oversight or legal provision enforcing public accountability, and lack of sufficient legal conceptualisation of disability”.

Youth Unemployment

The youth unemployment rate in South Africa, according to Trading Economics (2019:1), increased to 54.70% in the fourth quarter of 2018 from 52.80% in the third quarter of 2018. The youth unemployment rate in South Africa averaged 52.15% from 2013 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of 55.90% in the second quarter of 2017 and a record low of 48.80% in the fourth quarter of 2014. It must be considered that, while most international bodies and institutions globally and locally define youths as those between 15 and 24 years, in South Africa youths are regarded as those between 14 and 35 years. This is based on the previous National Youth Policy (NYP 2014 – 2019), but has also been retained in the new NYP 2020. The NYP recognises the difference in approaches used to define youth and acknowledges the need to accommodate this diversity, especially as it pertains to the provision of services to young people (Skosana 2016:3). South Africa adopted the NDP in 2011, also referred to as Vision 2030. The NDP aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. According to the plan, South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society (RSA 2020:1). However, it is further acknowledged by Skosana (2016:14), that while the country has poverty reduction interventions in place, “poverty is still pervasive...[.] Millions of people remain unemployed and many working households live close to the poverty line. Many of these are young people who feel that the odds are stacked against them, as indeed they often are”.

The aim of the NDP is to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. According to the NDP, South Africa “can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society” (Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) 2014:1). In Vision 2030, “an inclusive social protection system addresses all areas of vulnerability and is responsive to the needs, realities, conditions, and livelihoods of those who are most at risk” (Internet source: Brand South Africa.com 2019). Hence there is a need to achieve the following by 2030 to reduce unemployment (Internet source: Brand South Africa.com 2019) ensuring that, “no one lives below a defined minimum social floor; all children enjoy services and benefits aimed at facilitating access to nutrition, healthcare, education, social care, and safety; and social protection systems have responded to the growth of temporary and part-time contracts, and increasing importance of self-employment”.

The South African government has implemented the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) to address the issues of poverty and youth unemployment through a social protection disposition.

Social Assistance

The Department of Social Development (DSD) was established in terms of several pieces of legislation, including the Social Assistance Act of 2004, which provides a legislative framework for providing social assistance. The Act sets out the different types of grants payable, as well as their qualifying criteria. It also makes provision for the establishment of the Inspectorate for Social Assistance (South Africa Year Book 2017/18 2018:2).

Social assistance is one area where significant changes and progress have been made by the democratic government. The changes include modifying the previous social protection system to eliminate racial inequities and introducing several new guarantees and benefits (Van der Byl 2019:13). This was done by ensuring the following (Van der Byl 2019:13), “The Child Support Grant was introduced in 1998. It initially targeted children aged 0 to 7 years. The age limit of the Child Support Grant was gradually raised to 18 years; Old Age Grant was normalised so that blacks would also get a monthly income, unlike before 1994, when they received it bi-monthly. The age limit for men was gradually lowered from 65 to 60, to match the limit for women. Social grants became a core component of South Africa’s poverty alleviation strategy; and Disability Grant, Foster Care Grant, Care Dependency Grant, and War Veterans’ Grant were extended”.

It can be noted, as highlighted by Haurovi (2019:706), that unauthorised social grant deductions have depleted the ability and impact of social assistance to alleviate poverty in some instances. Although the Minister of Social Development gazetted Regulation 26A in 2009 to curb this dishonest practice, financial service providers such as Lion of Africa Insurance Limited have fought running legal battles with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to defend their deduction of funeral cover subscriptions from the children’s grants. In brief, the company took SASSA to court because it perceived the Agency’s interpretation of ineligibility of children’s social grant recipients to subscribe to funeral cover to be incorrect.

Social Security

Social security is defined by Plagerson and Ulriksen (2019:2) “as the provision of minimum income security and support in kind via contributory social insurance schemes and non-contributory social assistance programmes”. Social security in South Africa includes the following:

- Pension rights, where the, “Law provides for a means-tested old age grant for a permanent resident of South Africa aged 60 and over. A worker is entitled to old age grant (means-tested) if his/her annual income is below a certain amount. The old age pension is 1,600 Rand for pensioners aged 60–74 and 1,620 Rand for pensioners aged 75 or older” (Internet source: My Wage.co.za 2019).
- Dependents’/survivors’ benefit, where the survivors’ “benefits are payable to workers as provided under the Unemployment Insurance Act. The employee must have accumulated credits at the time of death. One credit (one day of paid leave) is earned for every five completed days of employment, and up to 365 days of paid leave may be accumulated in the four years before application for the survivor benefit” (Internet source: My Wage.co.za 2019).
- Invalidity benefits are given, “in the case of non-occupational accident/injury/disease resulting into permanent invalidity. If a citizen or permanent resident aged 18–59 years is assessed with temporary disability for more than six months, that person is entitled to the means-tested disability benefit of up to 1,620 rand per month. The benefit is considered permanent if a citizen is assessed as medically disabled for more than 12 months” (Internet source: My Wage.co.za 2019).

The Social Security Rate in South Africa, according to Trading Economics (2019:1), “stands at 2%. The Social Security Rate in South Africa averaged 2.92% from 2004 until 2016, reaching an all-time high of 3% in 2005 and a record low of 2% in 2016”. Social security payments and benefits are primarily handled by SASSA, which is “a semi-autonomous state agency reporting into the Department for Social Development. Its mandate is ‘to ensure the provision of comprehensive social security services against vulnerability and poverty within the constitutional and legislative framework’” (Kidd, Wapling, Bailey-Athias and Tran 2018:5). The head office of SASSA is situated in Pretoria. The management tasks are delegated to regional SASSA offices, hence “there is a degree of inconsistency in how the social grants are delivered” (Kidd *et al.* 2018:5). The Ministry of Labour is responsible for the oversight and delivery of social insurance benefits. When SASSA was established, it was intended that it would take over responsibility for all social security benefits in South Africa; however, the transfer of responsibilities from the Ministry of Labour has still not taken place (Internet source: Brand South Africa.com 2019).

Key Medium-Term Targets for 2019

The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) (2014–2019) lists targets to achieve the aims of social protection, as stated in Table 3 as follows:

Table 3: Social Protection Targets for 2019

Impact Indicator	Baseline	Target
Comprehensive early childhood development (ECD) services for children from conception to formal schooling	Establish baseline	100% more children access quality ECD
Children under five stunted	21%	10%
Access to social security, including social assistance	16 million social assistance beneficiaries	At least 95% of people who qualify for access to social assistance
Access to social insurance under the Unemployment Insurance Fund, Compensation for Occupational Injuries & Diseases Act, and pension and provident funds	–	Double the number of people accessing social insurance

Source: (Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation ((DPME)) 2014: 21.)

The MTSF is the strategic plan for the 2014–2019 electoral term established by the South African Government. It “reflects the commitments made in the election manifesto of the governing party, including the commitment to implement the National Development Plan (NDP). The MTSF sets out the actions Government will take and targets to be achieved” (DPME 2014:1). These targets will be assessed in the near future to determine their level of achievement.

During March 2020, South Africa faced the Corona virus pandemic and the country experienced the national lockdown. This situation affected mostly the poor people who were earning a living through daily jobs, most were retrenched and even lost jobs, due to the closing down of businesses. In terms of social protection measures, the South African President Cyril Ramaphosa, on 23 April 2020 “announced a set of safety net interventions to ‘cushion our society’ against the economic and human consequences of the lockdown. These include a Solidarity Fund financed mainly by voluntary donations, a Temporary Employee Relief Scheme for employees of companies in distress, and a tax subsidy for low-income private sector workers (The Conversation 2020:2).

The impact of these interventions on socio-economic upliftment in South Africa will only be assessed in the coming years”.

CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through literature review, the article deduces that there are challenges associated with social protection interventions due to historical legacy of the past, lack of

clarity regarding social welfare and related concepts, gaps in policy framework and implementation levels. These challenges are discussed below.

Apartheid South Africa offered welfare services to white people and delineated black people and other races. This fragmented level of services, which was based on social, economic, political, and racial criteria, created a divided society whereby white people were well served with welfare services and other races experienced poverty, inequality, and social exclusion. This scenario is validated by the literature review that corroborates that, “the pre-1994 social welfare services system, both in its design and in its implementation, entrenched the socio-economic privileges of the white population. The system was inefficient and ineffective, with fragmented and duplicated services that did not meet the human needs of vulnerable and poor citizens. There were 14 different departments for the various race and ethnic groups and the then homelands that were also administered through the welfare system. There was no consistency in operating approaches and priorities for these different departments in the area of social welfare” (Van der Byl 2019:6).

This segregation of welfare services imposed tremendous pressure on the first democratic government to bring transformation in governance and equality reforms in society. The transformative intention was enshrined in the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996), which stipulates that “everyone has a right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents” (RSA 1996). Section 27(2) of the Constitution (RSA 1996) further emphasises “that the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of the right of access to social security and social assistance”. However, although the concepts of social security and social assistance are referred to in the Constitution, no clear definition of these concepts has been established in South Africa, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably, and also as synonyms for other terms, such as ‘social protection’, ‘social welfare’ and ‘social insurance’ (Van der Byl 2019:5).

A document titled *Twenty Year Review: South Africa 1994–2014* (DPME 2019:21) also highlighted additional concerns, such as that there is, “a different understanding of what social welfare services are and how they are to be transformed—both within government departments and among stakeholders; social welfare programmes being planned and implemented differently in the various provinces, with varying degrees of inter-sectoral collaboration; and the social development departments and their non-governmental partners in different provinces having varying capacity to implement the transformation vision”.

Some of the additional challenges identified through the literature review regarding lack of successful implementation of social protection interventions are, among others, that the implementation of pro-poor strategies is slow despite the fact that the government introduced the Basic Income Grant (BIG); there is a lack of social inclusion (gender and ethnic groups, for example); lack of institutional

resources to implement social welfare and social security interventions; lack of awareness regarding how the economic development strategy affects its integration into social protection interventions; inadequate monitoring of the social security and social assistance processes; and insufficient accountability measures.

In addition, Kidd *et al.* (2018:4) highlight that “people with disabilities, and, women with disabled children are especially vulnerable to becoming single parents because of the stigma around disability and, in addition, may face exclusion from social and economic activities that could offer support”. While the gap is closing, disabled children are less likely to attend school than non-disabled children, which has significant implications for their rates of literacy. Only 63.9% of young people with severe functional limitations (age 12–17) were attending school compared to 96.1% of young people without disabilities, putting them at a disadvantage as they enter the labour market (Kidd *et al.* 2018:4).

In order to address these challenges and improve the social protection interventions, this article suggests considering the following:

- Policies need to be socially inclusive; accommodating gender, ethnic groups, social welfare practitioners, and social development workers.
- Policies need to accommodate people with disabilities and parents of disabled children to avoid social exclusion.
- Relevant institutions (SASSA, DSD) need to prepare a project plan considering all resources (funds, human resources, institutional capacity, coordination of tasks, communication plan, and monitoring and evaluation measures).
- Institutional personnel and stakeholders need to have an understanding of the implementation of statutory, regulatory, and policy frameworks.
- There is a need to attract and retain social workers and auxiliary social workers, and offering them better employment and career opportunities.
- Institutions and stakeholders need to develop partnerships with funding organisations and donor agencies for financial assistance.
- In a country-specific context, a forum such as the National Platform for Social Protection needs to be established to assist stakeholders to develop engagement on issues surrounding social protection.
- Lessons can be learned from international and regional best practices to develop inter-governmental and inter-stakeholder platforms to promote engagement on social protection-related issues, and interventions to be applied in country-specific contexts.

CONCLUSION

This article suggests that there is a need to conduct further research on aspects such as the historical, social, economic, and political factors that affect

SDG One; the integration of social protection interventions with other sectors (education, health, agriculture, etc.); the role of various role players, stakeholders, institutions, and communities to promote social protection; and the fiscal, technological, and policy feasibility of promoting social protection interventions – to name a few. The article offers recommendations based on the available literature and information reviewed; however, it is still considered limited in its approach due to the following limitation: the desktop study relied heavily on the information available via internet sources. In this regard, it was realised that not all African countries have a well-functioning government website to draw information from regarding their ministries responsible for social protection. Lack of information available on government websites, internet pages, and country-specific databases for social protection, restricted the author to conduct a comparative analysis at regional level. The article therefore is considered as an effort to raise a debate and awareness regarding social protection in the South African context, with an aim to conduct future research covering West, North, Central and East African regions, thereby developing a comparative database of country-specific public policies, adding further contribution to the field of social development.

REFERENCES

- Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf). 2016. *Social Protection in Africa: Overview for Policymakers*. Pretoria: ASSAf.
- Auriacombe, J. Christelle. 2016. Towards the construction of unobtrusive research techniques: critical considerations when conducting a literature analysis. *Administratio Publica*. 9(4):1–19.
- Babbie, E. 2010. *The Practice of Social Research*. California, USA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Banerjee, A.V. and Duflo, E. 2007. The Economic lives of the poor. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*. 21(1):141–167.
- Bastagli, F., Hagen-Zanker, J. Harman, L., Barca, V., Sturge, G., Schmidt, T. and Pellerano, L. 2016. *Cash Transfers: What Does the Evidence Say? A Rigorous Review of Programme Impact and of the Role of Design and Implementation Features*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Bowen, G.A. 2009. Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*. 9:27–40.
- Brand South Africa.Com. 2019. An Inclusive and Responsive Social Protection System. Available at: <https://www.brandsouthafrica.com> (Accessed on 18 December 2019).
- Chawdhury, A. 2019. Social Protection for Shared Prosperity and Inclusive Growth. Available at: <http://www.un.org> (Accessed on 14 October 2019).
- Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). 2014. Medium Term Strategic Framework: 2014–2019. Pretoria: DPME.

- Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME). 2019. Twenty Year Review South Africa 1994–2014. Pretoria: DPME.
- eNCA. 2017. Thirty million South Africans Living in Poverty. Available at: <https://www.enca.com> (Accessed on 17 March 2020).
- European Union (EU). 2019. What is Social Protection? Available at: <https://gsdrc.org> (Accessed on 21 December 2019).
- Flick, U. 2014. *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Gondo, M. 2014. Pro-poor Strategy: A Myth or Reality? Available at: <https://www.theindependent.co.zw> (Accessed on 8 May 2019).
- Hanorati, M., Gentilini, U. and Yemtsov, R.G. 2015. *The State of Social Safety Nets*. Washington: DC: World Bank.
- Haurovi, M. 2019. Enhancing the provision of fiscally funded social assistance in South Africa: statutory and regulatory insights. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*. 5(2):697–712.
- Holmes, R. and Lwanga Ntale, C. 2012. *Social Protection in Africa: A Review of Social Protection Issues in Research: Policy and Programming Trends and Key Governance Issues in Social Protection*. London: Overseas Development Institute.
- Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). 2019. Navigating the Government's Development Path. Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za> (Accessed on 10 May 2019).
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). 2014. World Social Protection Report 2014/15. Geneva: ILO.
- International Labour Organisation (ILO). 2019. SDG Note: Social Protection. Geneva: ILO.
- Joel, C. and Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. 2019. An analysis of risk management within the Department of Trade and Industry. *Journal of Contemporary Management*. 16:1–19.
- Kidd, S., Wapling, L., Bailey-Athias, D. and Tran, A. 2018. *Social Protection and Disability in South Africa*. United Kingdom: Development Pathways Limited.
- Lötter, H. 2007. Defining Poverty as Distinctively Human. Available at: <https://www.researchgate.net> (Accessed on 23 February 2020).
- Ludi, E. and Bird, K. 2007. Brief No 1-Understanding Poverty. Available at: <https://www.odi.org> (Accessed on 25 February 2020).
- Machethe, C.L. 2004. Agriculture and Poverty in South Africa: Can Agriculture Reduce Poverty? Paper presented at the Overcoming Underdevelopment Conference held in Pretoria, 28–29 October 2004.
- Merriam, S.B. 2009. *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publications.
- Morea, Donato and Marino Balzarini. 2018. Financial sustainability of a public-private partnership for an agricultural development project in Sub-saharan Africa. *Agricultural Economics (Czech Republic)*. 64(9):389–398.
- My Wage.co.za. 2019. Social Security in South Africa. Available at: <https://webcache.googleusercontent.com> (Accessed on 23 November 2019).
- National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF). 2017. The National Development Plan (NDP) and the Developmental State. Available at: <http://www.nstf.org.za> (Accessed on 22 March 2020).

- Nhlapo, T.M.S. 2019. Human Resource Development Strategy for Gender Equality within the Department of Correctional Services. Unpublished Thesis. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Nyikadzino, T. 2019. The Devolution of Governmental Powers and Responsibilities in Post-Independent Zimbabwe. Unpublished Thesis. Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg.
- Olowu, G., Olasehinde-Williams, G.O. and Bein, M.A. 2019. Does financial and agriculture sector development reduce unemployment rates? Evidence from Southern African countries. *Agricultural Economics (Czech Republic)*. 65(5):223–231.
- Omilola, B. and Kaniki, S. 2014. *Social Protection in Africa: A Review of Potential Contribution and Impact on Poverty Reduction*. South Africa: UNDP.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). 2019. Promoting Pro-Poor Growth: Employment. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org> (Accessed on 16 May 2019).
- Patel, N. 2019. Figure of the Week: Understanding Poverty in Africa. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu> (Accessed on 18 July 2019).
- Plagerson, S. and Ulriksen, M.S. 2019. The Right to Social Security in South Africa. Available at: <https://www.fhr.org.za> (Accessed on 3 August 2019).
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1996. *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 1997. *White Paper for Social Welfare (WPSW)*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2018. South Africa Year Book 2017/18: Social Development. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Republic of South Africa (RSA). 2020. *National Development Plan*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Research Methodology in Education (RME). 2018. An Introduction to Document Analysis. Available at: <https://lled500.trubox.ca> (Accessed on 16 June 2019).
- Skosana, N.G. 2016. Social Protection in South Africa: A Quest for an Appropriate Dispensation Through a Minimum Employment Guarantee Scheme. Unpublished Master Dissertation. Cape Town: University of Cape Town.
- Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2017. Poverty Trends in South Africa: An Examination of Absolute Poverty Between 2006 and 2015. Pretoria: Stats SA.
- The Conversation. 2020. Social protection Responses to the COVID-19 Lockdown in South Africa. Available at: <https://theconversation.com> (Accessed on 2 May 2020).
- Trading Economics. 2019. South Africa Youth Unemployment Rate. Available at: <https://tradingeconomics.com> (Accessed on 12 December 2019).
- United Nations (UN). 2019. SDG Goal 1: End Poverty in All Its Forms Everywhere. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty> (Accessed on 6 May 2019).
- United Nations. 2019. Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development A/RES/70/1. Available at: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org> (Accessed on 5 May 2019).
- United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: Disability. 2019. #Envision2030: 17 Goals to Transform the World for Persons with Disabilities. Available at: <https://www.un.org> (Accessed on 5 January 2020).

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2019. Sustainable Development Goals. Available at: <https://www.undp.org> (Accessed on 8 December 2019).
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 2019. The State of Social Assistance in Africa. New York: UNDP.
- University of Southern California. 2018. Humanities Research Strategies: Conceptual Analysis. Available at: <https://libguides.usc.edu> (Accessed on 17 June 2019).
- Van der Byl, C. 2019. *Background Paper: Social Protection*. Pretoria: DPME.
- Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. 2014. Gender equality in poverty reduction strategies for sustainable development: the case of South African local government. *Journal of Social Development in Africa*. 29(2):105–134.
- Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. 2017. Workplace spirituality for improved productivity: a gendered perspective. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*. 9(2):143–156.
- Vyas-Doorgapersad, S. 2019. Gender equality for achieving sustainable development goal one (no poverty) in South African municipalities. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanity Studies*. 11(1):84–98.
- World Hunger Education Service (WHES). 2019. Africa Hunger and Poverty Facts. Available at: <https://www.worldhunger.org> (Accessed on 17 April 2019).

AUTHOR'S CONTACT DETAILS

Prof Shikha Vyas-Doorgapersad

School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy
College of Business and Economics
University of Johannesburg
Auckland Park
South Africa
Cell: 072 463 8685
Email: svyas-doorgapersad@uj.ac.za