

CHAPTER 3: SOCIAL ASSISTANCE: A SOUTH AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a perspective on the present South African social assistance situation. This, however, cannot be done without a view of the historical development of social assistance in South Africa because important historic forces shaped the present system and social policies regarding social assistance.

The political forces behind the provision of social assistance in South Africa are unique to this country and differ from those in many developing countries (Case & Deaton, 1996:6). Attention will be given to these developments in South Africa in an attempt to view social assistance in the proper context. Attention will therefore first be given to the developments prior to 1994, before the first democratic elections took place in South Africa and then to post-1994 developments.

3.2 DEFINING SOCIAL SECURITY

According to Kaseke (2010:160), social security can take three major forms; namely social insurance, social assistance and universal benefits and South Africa's social security system revolves around social assistance and social insurance while the social security is complemented by private and voluntary arrangements. Pauw and Mncube (2007:5) state that social assistance is distinguished from contributory transfer programmes which are typically linked to employment and include private pension schemes, retirement plans and private unemployment benefits. According to Woolard, Harttgen and Klasen (2010:2) the South African social security system has two objectives. The first objective is to reduce poverty among people vulnerable to low-income such as the elderly, children and people with disabilities who cannot participate fully in the labour market. The second objective according to these writers is to increase investments in health, nutrition and education in order to increase human capital to

accelerate economic growth and development. It is therefore understandable that different interpretations are given by different authors when referring to social security.

Kaseke (2010:163) states that social assistance is an important instrument for poverty reduction and that South Africa uses social assistance to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups who are needy and without the means to support themselves. Although social security can take on different forms such as social insurance, social assistance and universal benefits the main focus of this chapter will be directed towards social assistance, because the entire research project only focuses on social assistance as administered SASSA.

3.3 HISTORICAL MILESTONES IN SOUTH AFRICA PRIOR TO 1994

Prior to 1652 people of Southern Africa who were unable to care for themselves as a result of old age, injury or illness were dependent on their families and communities for assistance. When the Dutch arrived in 1652 the picture did not really change but the Dutch Reformed Church gave assistance to settlers and unemployed sailors who were unable to provide for themselves. Until the end of the 18th century the church was the primary care provider to destitute settlers. The plight and challenges of the poor were simply not a priority of the British government during its occupation of the Cape. In accordance with British welfare law the focus of the government was on the prevention of poverty rather than on providing assistance to the needy. The Boer Republics did take responsibility for the welfare of the people, but properly administered welfare was never introduced. Large-scale urbanisation took place during the mid 19th century as a result of the discovery of gold and diamonds and most of the workers became completely dependent on their earnings. It was only by the beginning of the 20th century that employers started to assist their employees (Strydom, 2006:19).

According to Lund (2002:682), South African family structures have been deeply affected by centuries of colonial and then apartheid policy and these have had an effect on the role played by those who receive social pensions. White supremacy took strong root in South Africa and developed into a systematic and legalised discrimination

process shaping the economic, social and political structure of the whole country (Worden, 2000:74).

During the late 1800s and early 1900s inter-racial marriages declined, residential segregation increased, wages, voting rights of Whites and educational opportunities of White men all became superior to those of Coloured people (Lliffe, 1987:114). According to Feins (2005:84) rural poverty was greatly exacerbated by the South African War between 1899 and 1902.

Apart from the discriminatory manner in which social security was granted it was also fragmented in nature. Under the Union South African Act (Act No. 9 of 1909) poor relief was a provincial responsibility where each province had its own system (Lliffe, 1987:120). Case and Deaton (1996:3) state that in South Africa pensions were administered by a maze of regional authorities several of whose administrative capabilities were unlikely to have been better than those in many countries with lower per capita income.

After the unification of South Africa in 1910 the Union Government developed a social assistance policy. The department of Social Welfare was established in 1937 and the responsibility for providing social assistance was delegated to the different provinces (Strydom, 2006:19).

Reddy and Sokomani (2008:2) state that the period following the Union of South Africa in 1910 was the toughest and most discriminatory for the “non-whites” since child-care grants, unemployment and old age pensions were only for White and Coloured people. This superior and favourable position of Whites has cut across many spheres of life even the manner in which social security was administered at the time. The 1926 Pienaar Commission was of the opinion that pensions were unnecessary for Natives since they could rely on their Native custom which makes provision for maintaining dependent persons (Devereux, 2001:2). The writer further states that the government of that time feared it would become an economic burden on the state (Devereux, 2001:3). In addition, Lliffe (1987:136) says the Children’s Act (Act No 31 of 1937) made provision

for assistance to needy children but Africans rarely benefited. The government according to Lliffe (1987:136) explained in 1939:

Having regard to the fact that under Native Law it is the natural duty of the head of the kraal or guardian-at-law to support minors belonging to his kraal or under his care, and that the granting of maintenance by the state will properly be an evasion of the responsibility resting upon the Natives under their own customs, grants will not be made in the case of Native children residing in rural areas.

Devereux (2007:541) states that by the 1920s the “poor white problem” had entered policy discourse and Hertzog’s Pact Government began to introduce formal social welfare programmes. Although welfare initiatives such as health care, unemployment insurance, compensation for accidents and diseases contracted in the work place were introduced from the mid-1930s these initiatives according to Strydom (2006:20) were primarily aimed at improving the lives of Whites and to protect the interests of the employers. Feins (2005:143) states that the economic and political systems that have evolved since the mid-nineteenth century had been designed to further the sectional interest of white agriculture and mining.

Old-age pensions for indigent Whites and Coloured people were introduced in 1928 (Lliffe, 1987:120). It therefore seems as if there was a slow take-off to expand coverage. According to Devereux (2001:1) recommendations with regard to the Old Age Pensions Act (Act No. 22 of 1928) to provide old age-pensions established the right to old-age pensions for White and Coloured people or residents of the Union of South Africa aged 65 years and older. However, the Act had complex eligibility criteria and many district pension officials were appointed, *inter alia* to verify the eligibility of applications. One can image how low the coverage rate might have been as a result of the complex criteria. The Pact Government with General Hertzog as Prime Minister from 1924 till 1933 appealed to its Labour Party to introduce old-age pensions to cover Whites and at a lower rate, Coloureds (Feins, 2005:86). There was therefore still steep racial discrimination in terms of the coverage.

According to Dixon (1987:187), this Old-Age Pension Act (Act No. 22 of 1928) made provision for non-contributory pensions and the assistance given was on the principle of

exclusion rather than inclusion as a citizen right. Serious omissions about the Pension Act, according to Devereux (2007:541) were “natives”, Indians and all residents of Namibia. The 1928 Pension Act included complex eligibility criteria including a means test that took into consideration the applicant’s earnings from employment, farming and business as well as spouse’s income, other pensions and the value of the applicant’s property and investments. Amendments during 1930s lowered the qualifying age to 60 years for women, but retained it for 65 years for men (Devereux, 2007:541). One can therefore assume that these complex criteria rather excluded people than included them in pension coverage.

The Government established a Department of Social Welfare within the Department of Labour in 1933 and later in 1937 an autonomous Department of Social Welfare was established. Its function was to rehabilitate the socially unadjusted or poorly adjusted individual or families. The department also took over poor relief from the provinces except Kwa-Zulu Natal and ordered that every application must be thoroughly investigated, relief had to be given in kind and only to those wholly destitute and without close kin. The recipients had where possible to render some return services and the assistance was not to be made attractive (Liffe, 1987:120). It was also during 1937 that the first Unemployment Insurance Act came into being (Dixon, 1987:187). Even when an autonomous Department of Social Welfare was established that took over poor relief from the majority of provinces the poor relief seems still inadequate, because the main focus was only those without close kin and wholly destitute.

Devereux (2007:542) states that during the 1930s a decade characterised by rapid economic growth social and political change with rising poverty and vulnerability among many groups and people became more and more frustrated about the exclusion of “natives” from social pension benefits. The initial Blind Persons Act of 1936 (Act No. 11 of 1936) excluded Africans from the pensions. This Act was therefore discriminatory in terms of race. Thereafter, according to Dixon (1987:199) the Blind Persons Act of 1968 (Act No 26 of 1968) provided for the payment of pensions and allowances to registered blind people aged 19 years and older and the Disability Grant Act of 1968 provided for

the payment of disability grants to severely physically and mentally handicapped people over the age of 16 years. These Acts, however still discriminated against Africans.

A Social Security Commission was set up in 1943 under the Minister of Social Welfare, Jan Hofmeyer, to review the full range of social welfare services in South Africa including social pensions (Devereux, 2007:543). During 1944 this Social Security Committee proposed unemployment, invalidity and other benefits and White people, Coloured people, Asians and long-term African wage earners who elected to join were to receive only old age, blindness or invalidity pensions and certain minor benefits (Liffe, 1987:142). According to Devereux (2007:543) the 1928 Old Age Pensions Act (Act No 22 of 1928) was duly amended. However, Dixon (1987:187) states that during the Second World War (1939-1945) parliament rejected the national contributory social security system, but promulgated the first Workmen's Compensation Act. The Social Security Commission therefore brought about major changes to coverage levels and categories.

The 1944 Social Security Committee also proposed that Black employees employed in urban areas should receive the same benefits as other races, but this was never implemented because the government then subscribed to a policy of apartheid and differentiation between various races (Strydom, 2006:19). One may argue that the Social Security Commission did exceptionally well despite the political climate at the time of its operations. Case and Deaton (1996:6) claim that the initial extension of the social pension to the Coloured and Indian population was an attempt to make the three-chamber parliament politically palatable. As much as that might be the case the mere fact that extensions to other groups of people were done is commendable. It was at least a starting point for further expansion.

The Native population was sub-divided into three (3) categories, namely those who resided in cities, those who resided in towns and rural residents and each category received a different maximum pension pay-out. Until 1948 rural Natives remained ineligible for the social pension unless they could prove that they had no land, that they had lived in an urban area for more than five (5) years and that their immediate family

did not live in a rural area. Natives were only allowed to enter urban areas which were the White man's creation on condition that they were prepared to minister to the needs of the White people and that they should depart when they ceased to serve the White people. It was only in 1965 that the differentiated payment rates for Natives in urban, town and rural areas were abolished, but mainly because the then government feared an increase in Black urbanization and the undermining of the influx control policy (Devereux, 2001:3).

Devereux (2007:544) states that by 1947 the Native Affairs Department estimated that 367,000 Africans were eligible for social pensions, but only 197 000 (57%) actually received them. This is clearly indicative of the fact that although legislation and policy made them qualify, enough had not been done to ensure that all eligible people were on the system. The writer further states that in 1957 the Commissioner of Pensions expressed concerns that the number of social pensions was rising at a disturbing rate and that the provision of pensions undermined the sense of independence of citizens (Devereux, 2001:2). This might illustrate the unwillingness of the government of the day to serve all people equally. In 1958 the administration of Coloured welfare was transferred to the Department of Coloured Affairs while the administration of Black people became the Department of Bantu Affairs in 1960 (Strydom, 2006:19). The Minister of Social Welfare and Pensions speaking during the parliamentary debate on the Second Reading of the South African's Pension Law Amendment Bill in 1965 said:

That both Coloured and Indians live at very much lower levels than the White men and their income is also on a smaller scale. The Minister further argued that raising the payments of non-Whites towards the level of White people would create disincentives to work and a kind of benefit trap. The aim of this grant-in-aid is not to entice people who can still work away from the labour market in that the pension offered to them is too high. It will give rise to work-shyness and the labour market will be detrimentally affected (Devereux, 2001:4).

Opposition parties and welfare organizations consistently challenged the then government's discriminatory payment system and argued that it was hardly fair to expect people to have to live on half the pension or less payable to those of White pensioners. The public discourse around social pensions in particular complaints about

the inadequacy of the pensions and the discriminatory nature thereof against non-White people together with the concern that social pensions would create dependency on the government persisted in parliamentary debates for some time although nothing significant changed about it (Devereux, 2001:6). It basically implied that the government was not prepared to bring about the necessary social change the people so desperately wanted.

According to Beinart (2001:172), when examining the economic and political change in the 1960s and 1970s the mid-1970s should be kept in mind as a turning point. In substantiation the writer states that South Africa was very much part of the post-Second World War globalization of multi-national investment with its efficient communication and financial sector, the lively Johannesburg stock exchange, a well-educated local white management and professional class as well as relatively cheap labour. However, the gap between the social pension payments continued to shrink during the 1970s and 1980s mainly by raising the rate for African people faster than the pension payment rate for White people (Devereux, 2001:6). Reforms began in the late 1970s and were speeded up considerably after the unbanning of the ANC.

According to Dixon (1987:210), the government traditionally made provision for social relief in the form of vouchers for food and minimal financial assistance. The writer further states that during September 1985 a system of special social relief was introduced as an emergency measure to provide financial aid for six months to people who were retrenched, but only white and coloured people benefited from this provision. There was therefore still steep racial discrimination in terms of coverage.

According to Dixon (1987:192), during 1984/1985 the total sum of R1 155 358 000 was allocated to expenditure on welfare services and most of the amount was disbursed on non-contributory social security, in fact R 559 740 000 was set aside for the provision of means-tested old-age pensions. Dixon (1987:196) further states that the qualifying age of men was 65 years and for women 60 years and it was expected from non-citizens to provide a three-year residency test. Gender discrimination was therefore still prevalent with regard to the provisioning of old-age grants.

According to Woolard *et al.* (2010:12) the 1992 Social Assistance Act finally did away with all discriminatory provisions. According to Deaton (1997:200) during 1993 the government paid monthly social pensions to age-qualified men and women whose individual income fell below a cut-off and the payment was R370. The writer states that such sums of money being paid as pensions was a historical accident, because the money was never enough to sustain beneficiaries and to eradicate poverty.

3.4 HISTORICAL MILESTONES IN SOUTH AFRICA AFTER 1994

Radical changes occurred after 1994 in South Africa. The social security system that the ANC government inherited when it came into power in 1994 was a fairly complex and expensive system (Strydom, 2006:19). In addition, Woolard *et al.* (2010:13) state that the incoming anti-apartheid government had to confront a highly inequitable inheritance. Surely it was not an easy task to deal with these imbalances. A new political system began in South Africa in 1994. Negotiations, elections and reconstruction released exciting energies as old institutions and practices were reconsidered and fresh models invented (Beinart, 2001:173). However, Reddy and Sokomani (2008:10) state that excitement and jubilation were quickly tempered by the realisation that strategies needed to be developed to deal with the past inequalities. It had to call for dedicated and capable people who could put shoulder to the wheel and begin to pave a new way of doing things.

3.4.1 The Lund Committee

With reference to social assistance it implies that certain reforms were necessary including rights issues, policy and administrative reforms. Subsequently, the Lund Committee was set up in 1996 to review the social security options for children and families as part of the new government's commitment to poverty reduction, but obviously within the limits imposed by its commitment to fiscal discipline. The child support grant - a means-tested flat rate benefit that started at R100 for a maximum of six children resulted from this review (Kabeer, 2008:111). Triegaardt and Patel (2005:130) state that the Lund Committee noted that the assumption underpinning the

State Maintenance Grant were based on a traditional notion of the structure and form of the family, namely the nuclear family whereas many different forms of family structures exist in South Africa such as single-parent families and women-headed households. One could therefore understand the reasons behind the policy changes in respect of the child support grant.

New changes started to follow. Reddy and Sokomani (2008:21) claim that this technical committee was appointed based on possible cost projections of 20 billion Rand to reduce racial inequalities in the delivery of the state maintenance grants - now better known as the child support grant. Some of the recommendations of this committee include the following: a flat-rate child support grant, the care dependency grant and foster care grant should not be taken away and a strong strategic position on HIV/AIDS should be developed. However, on reflections on the Lund Committee's work, Lund (2008:x) states that it was painful to withdraw the state maintenance grant from some 400 000 women and children in order to reach millions more who were even poorer. Lund (2008:78) further states that the child support grant was designed specifically to shift racially biased welfare spending towards children in very poor households and toward rural areas. In concordance, Lund, Noble, Barnes and Wright (2008:8) also state that the severe inequalities in the state maintenance grant with only a few of the poorest African women benefited necessitated the paradigm shift.

Although Triegaardt and Patel (2005:131) state that it was a political controversial step and that the new government was severely criticised for taking benefits away from poor single parents together with the fact that the new child support grant would have a limited impact on poverty - looking back now the researcher is from the opinion that the child support grant is well accepted among South Africans with lesser critique. The benefits of the child support grant are being widely recognised (Triegaardt & Patel, 2005:131).

3.4.2 The Chikane Commission

The Chikane Commission was appointed in 1996 to review the entire social security system. Recommendations made by the Chikane Commission according to Reddy and Sokomani (2008:18) included the following: that a national organized social security system should be established, a national human resource strategy needed to be developed, management systems should be standardized and integrated, a communication plan should be developed, no contract should be awarded for fingerprint identification systems, legislation and rules should be simplified, a uniform approach to the payment of disability grants should be addressed, a proper costing system should be developed and a specific budget had to be developed for the administration of social security at national and provincial levels. It seems as if the Chikane Commission had thought outside the box because they recommended important issues. This was surely a development in the right directions.

However, these writers state that the then Social Welfare Minister, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, raised serious challenges with the implementation of the Chikane Commission's recommendations. These challenges included the fact that high costs were involved in the establishment of a national social security system and that constitutional difficulties might arise. One recommendation that was eventually implemented though with disastrous consequences was the outsourcing of the payment of social grants to private companies when SASSA was established (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008:20). In substantiation these writers claim that despite the privatisation of the payment service problems such as long queues, lack of shelter, water and sanitation at some pay-points still exist, while the paymaster arrives late at pay-points with pay machines breaking down. One could also imagine the cost implications involved in outsourcing the payment contract especially in terms of the handling fees involved per social grant transaction. These challenges were part of the reasons why SASSA was initially established.

3.4.3 The White Paper for Social Welfare

The White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997 is an important policy document that was developed to move from the previous era of fragmented social welfare to a new developmental paradigm. The main focus was therefore to change a fragmented system with different provincial systems into one system and to change from a system of entitlement and receiving of hand-outs to a developmental stage where people take ownership and are part of their own development. The White Paper commits itself to provide social grants for eligible people (Haarmann, 2000:21). Reddy and Sokomani (2008:13) claim that the 1997 White Paper for Social Welfare was the first policy mechanism in which developmental aspects of the social security were evoked and it paved the way for wide spread legislation reforms. However, a paradigm shift towards a developmental direction calls for an integrated and coordinated service delivery approach where resources from different role players are pulled together. Lund (2008:13) states that the White Paper laid out a new direction towards development-orientated work, but it committed also to the continuation of social assistance as one route to poverty alleviation.

3.4.4 The Taylor Committee

The Department of Welfare and Social Development was forced to review the social security system during 1999 because of extreme weaknesses in the administration and management of the social grant system together with numerous litigations and negative publicity. Subsequently, a Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security (the Taylor Committee) was established during 2000. The Taylor Committee published its report in 2002. Although not all the recommendations were adopted by Cabinet it certainly has played a major role in the shaping of the current social assistance system. According to Reddy and Sokomani (2008:23) the Taylor Committee on Comprehensive Social Security for South Africa in 2000 was the last committee response to deal with the inequalities in the social security system. This committee included members from civil society and the labour unions. The main recommendation of the Taylor Committee was the introduction of a basic income grant (BIG) with the

abolition of the means-test. However, according to these writers the Taylor Committee was sidelined and repressed within government circles because the recommendations were seen as a threat to macro-economic strategy (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008:25). As a result to date the means-test is still applicable and there is no basic income grant for all.

In addition to the Taylor Committee a task team was also appointed in 2000 to review the Social Assistance Act (Act No. 59 of 1992). Areas according to Reddy and Sokomani (2008:27) that were reviewed include the following: the availability of medical practitioners for disability assessments, especially in rural areas; the expensive and duplicative nature of the disability assessments; the non-uniformity and highly subjective assessment procedures and corruption and bribery during disability assessments. Major improvements have been made in terms of medical assessments. Currently, there is a harmonised medical assessment tool which all medical practitioners use for medical assessments in SASSA. In addition to that is there also a memorandum of understanding between SASSA and the Department of Health that governs the working relationship between the two departments with specific reference to medical practitioners doing medical assessments for SASSA. Lastly, there is a flat minimum remuneration rate that medical practitioners get for the assessments done. With reference to fraud and corruption of disability grants it is a standing practice that medical practitioners are no longer in possession of medical assessment forms. SASSA in general rather make medical assessment appointments on behalf of applicants at the nearest clinic and bring the medical assessment forms to the medical practitioners at the time of the assessment and then take them back to the office for processing.

3.5 THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SASSA

SASSA was established on the 01st of April 2006 with the sole responsibility to manage, administer and pay of social assistance grants. The establishment resulted from a recommendation made by the Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive Social System of Social Security for South Africa (Taylor Committee). One could view SASSA as the end result of the work done by all the different committees and commissions. Since its inception the main focus was on the establishment and the strengthening of

the core business (grant administration). SASSA's design, mandate, legislative framework, different grant types and the qualifying criteria will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

3.6 OTHER IMPORTANT GRANT-RELATED CHANGES

Triegaardt and Patel (2005:130) state that the State Maintenance Grant did not comply with the equality provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (No. 200 of 1996) at the time when the new democratic government came into power. This was because the State Maintenance Grant was accessed mainly by coloureds, Indians and a small percentage of white people more especially white single parents. One of the major changes therefore relates to the State Maintenance Grant. The child support grant introduced in 1998 replaced the state maintenance grant. The child support grant was initially restricted to children under the age of 7 years but subsequently extended to children under the age of 18 years. However, this extension was implemented progressively. An important feature of the child support grant was to link eligibility with the primary care giver and not necessarily with the biological mother thus recognising that care might be given by someone other than the biological parent (Kabeer, 2008:111). Before SASSA implemented policy which extended social assistance coverage to children up to the age of 18 years, Van Rensburg and Horsten (2004:52) state that the exclusion of children up to the age of 18 years was an infringement on their constitutional rights to social assistance, human dignity, life and equality. According to Pauw and Mncube (2007:9) the introduction of the child support grant marked a major policy shift in government as it signalled the government's intention to support children living in poverty and in poor households particularly in rural areas who had been excluded from social assistance programmes in the past. By 1999 the total number of social pensioners had reached 1.8 million of which only 16% were whites and 90% African (Devereux, 2007:547). This is clearly evident that alignments in terms of race had taken effect.

There was also a rapid increase in the uptake of the temporary disability grant (TDG) prior to 2001 while the increase in the permanent disability grant (PDG) occurring after 2001 when it coincided with an apparent reduction in the severity of the conditions for which these grants were to be awarded. By December 2005 a total of 10.6 million people including approximately 7 million children were benefiting directly from the various grant types. Grant beneficiaries represent 22% of the South African population. Various reasons contributed to this huge intake. The intake was facilitated by government with contributions from civil society, the improvement of systems for grant administration, the dissemination of grant information to potential beneficiaries as well as the change in eligibility (Steel, 2006:4). The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the child (CRC Committee) encouraged the South African Government during January 2000 to take effective steps to ensure the continuation of support programmes for economically disadvantaged families. They were also concerned about the inadequate monitoring and evaluation of foster care placement programmes (Van Rensburg & Horsten, 2004:55).

By April 2010, 14 million people out of a population of 49 million were benefiting from social assistance grants. Of these 2.5 million were receiving old age pensions, 1.3 million were receiving disability grants, 9.4 children were benefiting from child support grants and 570 000 children were benefiting from foster care grants (Woolard *et al.*, 2010:9).

3.7 CONCLUSION

Colonialism, a political ideology of apartheid with steep discrimination based on race, gender and disability, the discovery of gold and diamonds and consequent urbanisation can be viewed as a trigger from which social assistance started off. Reddy and Sokomani (2008:12) state that the system with all its limitations caused deep tensions with the constitutional right to social security and its progressive realisation. It started as a fragmented system. One could imagine that merging and unifying 14 separate social assistance systems which had existed under the apartheid regime was not an easy exercise. Each of these 14 separate systems had its own management and information

systems, rules and procedures allowing for easily exploitable profitable loopholes. Further to that the administrative difficulties in the grant administration processes due to the inadequate and outdated Social Pension System (SOCPEN) were massive stumbling blocks (Reddy & Sokomani, 2008:15).

The work done by The Lund Committee, the Chikane Commission and the Taylor Committee after 1994 should be seen as important work in the new dispensation that has shaped the development of social assistance in South Africa. The development of the White Paper for Social Welfare should also be seen as one of the most important policy documents that have shifted the attention towards a developmental approach in service delivery with a clear emphasis on social security as a whole.

However, South Africa as part of the broader social protection framework has the potential to create a more inclusive society because of its redistributive capacity (Kaseke, 2010:166). According to Woolard *et al.* (2010:1) social assistance in South Africa is a very effective policy instrument to fight poverty and to improve education and health especially of children living in poor households. However, SASSA would never be able to push back the frontiers of poverty on its own and it calls for all other government departments, non-government organisations and the private sector to pull resources together in a collective and integrated fashion to be effective in fighting poverty. There is a dire need to link social grant beneficiaries to other economic activities and programmes in their communities and SASSA just cannot do it on its own.

Woolard *et al.* (2010:1) state that a social security system provides an important safety net for the long-term poor population and for the mitigation of economic shocks. It might be true, but social security is outside the catchment area of SASSA currently. The only pillar on which SASSA currently functions is social assistance. Social assistance grants can provide transfers for the most vulnerable population groups such as older people, disabled people and children. However whether SASSA should only focus on social assistance and not on social security remains a question to be answered. Given the current challenges within SASSA in terms of infrastructure, severe staff shortage, austerity measures, a history of financial mismanagement and the operational

challenges related to the administration and disbursement of grants it would be advisable to concentrate on one aspect - social assistance and to do all possible to strive towards service excellence in that one area. Social assistance has certainly come a long way to where it is currently in South Africa. Once all challenges currently being experienced in SASSA have been dealt with effectively, SASSA would be able to become one of the most important catalysts in the government sphere to eradicate poverty.