



UNIVERSITY of the
WESTERN CAPE

**STRENGTHENING THE SOCIAL CONTRACT BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND
SOCIAL GRANT RECIPIENTS: A CASE STUDY OF THE OLDER PERSON'S
GRANT AND THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT IN THE CAPE WINELANDS AND
OVERBERG DISTRICTS**

By

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the social grant recipients in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts who took the time and effort to take part in this study. You have welcomed me into your homes and shared your personal stories with the utmost kindness and patience.

Thank you!



DECLARATION

I declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Strengthening the social contract between government and social grant recipients: A case study of the older person's grant and the child support grant in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts* is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university. All the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references.

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ABSTRACT

Since the birth of democracy in 1994, the South African government has struggled to substantially address the social and economic inequality as well as widespread poverty produced by the apartheid system. Social assistance, particularly in the form of direct cash transfers, is one of the instruments used by the current government to alleviate poverty and economic vulnerability because it enables households to access cash or increase expenditure on material and non-material resources such as food, clothes, education, and health care. Social assistance is a powerful tool to build communities and strengthen their involvement in the overall democratic process. This gives effect to the Bill of Rights in the Constitution, which guarantees everyone in South Africa the right to access social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance. This right, together with the relevant legislation, places a responsibility on government to be accountable for the administration and delivery of social grants.

This study investigates the experiences and perceptions of the recipients of the Older Person's Grant (OPG) and the Child Support Grant (CSG) towards the social grant system in South Africa. It uses social contract theory as an analytical framework to explore whether the government is delivering on its constitutional obligation. The research focuses on the perspectives of recipients who are receiving the OPG and the CSG. The researcher undertook an in-depth study in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts in the Western Cape Province. This study adopted a qualitative methodological approach to investigate how grant recipients from different racial identities within the aforementioned districts understand the relationship between government and citizens in relation to social assistance. It also explores how the relationship between the government and social grant recipients can be sustained and strengthened in the future.

The study acknowledges the benefits of the grants and the fact that the provision of social grants contributes to upholding human dignity, promoting equality and social justice through the redistribution of income. It affirms the existence of a social contract in South Africa. However, the overall experiences on the ground reveal that there is often a disconnect between the aims and intentions of the social grant system and how it is actually administered and delivered. The right to social assistance can be undermined by operational and administrative challenges during the application and collection process of the social grants under investigation. Long

waiting periods, lack of information, difficulties in accessing service and pay points, and the often-undignified encounters with some South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) officials are some of the factors that compromise the state–citizen relationship. The delay from government, especially SASSA and by extension that of the Department of Social Development (DSD), to address the aforementioned bureaucratic challenges and barriers within the social grant system has weakened the social contract between the state and beneficiaries. A key concern is the monetary cost associated with accessing social assistance benefits, since the closure of the traditional pay points has reduced the value of the grants. In the context of high unemployment and rising food prices, recipients complained about the inadequate value of the grants, especially the small amount allocated to the CSG and challenged its value and ability to guarantee adequate standards of living. All these factors have had a negative impact on the lives of many poor and vulnerable recipients who are reliant mainly on social grants to put ‘bread and butter’ on the table.

Importantly then, for the South African government to strengthen its constitutional commitment to recipients (as primary rights holders), there is an urgent need to ensure effective and efficient administration and delivery of social grants. This will sustain the social contract between the South African government and grant beneficiaries, including the taxpayers who fund the system.

KEYWORDS

Social security, social assistance, social grants, social contract, socio-economic rights, Older Person’s Grant, Child Support Grant, government, South Africa

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS



ACHPR:	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACRWC:	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADB:	Asian Development Bank
ADC:	Aid to Dependent Children
ANC:	African National Congress
ATM:	Automated teller machine
BIG:	Basic Income Grant
CCTs:	Conditional Cash Transfers
CPS:	Cash Paymaster Services
CSG:	Child Support Grant
CSO:	Civil society organisation
DSD:	Department of Social Development
DWPD:	Department of Welfare and Population Development
EPWP:	Expanded Public Works Programme
GEAR:	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
GEPF:	Government Employees Pension Fund
GHS:	General Household Survey
ICESCR:	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ILO:	International Labour Organization
LEAP:	Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty
LP:	Labour Party
MTEF:	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NDP:	National Development Plan
NGO:	Non-governmental organisation
NP:	National Party
NPC:	National Planning Commission
NRF:	National Research Foundation
OPG:	Older Person's Grant
RDP:	Reconstruction and Development Programme

SADC:	Southern African Development Community
SAPO:	South African Post Office
SARS:	South African Revenue Service
SASSA:	South African Social Security Agency
SCOPA:	Standing Committee on Public Accounts
SMG:	State Maintenance Grant
SPII:	Studies of Poverty and Inequality Institute
SRD:	Social Relief of Distress (grant)
SRM:	Social Risk Management
UCTs:	Unconditional Cash Transfers
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UEPS:	Universal Electronic Payment System
UK:	United Kingdom
UNCRC:	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNICEF:	United Nations Children's Fund
USA:	United States of America
WRDC:	Witzenberg Rural Development Centre



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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The historical racial discrimination from the apartheid era is one of the key causes of structural inequalities that many black South Africans experience to this day in a democratic South Africa. The racial bias of South Africa's policies (i.e., economic, education, housing, and welfare) during apartheid have severely disadvantaged large segments of the population in terms of their ability to lift themselves out of poverty. This has created a situation whereby a large segment of the population is reliant on social grants in South Africa to survive due to structural inequality. This thesis investigates the experiences and perceptions of the recipients of the Older Person's Grant (OPG) and the Child Support Grant (CSG) toward the social grant system. In particular, it considers how these experiences and perceptions have influenced their relationship with the state who is the primary distributor of social assistance in South Africa.

Post-apartheid South Africa is characterised by high levels of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Since the birth of democracy in 1994, the South African government has struggled to substantially address the social and economic inequality inherited from the apartheid regime. While some progress has been made in addressing inequality, previously disadvantaged groups continue to experience poverty more severely.¹ As Kaseke (2013) argues, poverty in South Africa has a racial dimension and is more pronounced among the black population, given the legacy of colonialism and apartheid. The post-apartheid South African government introduced a number of social security programmes in response to this reality, with the objective of the programmes to alleviate poverty and inequality in poorer sections of society.

When the social pension was first introduced in South Africa in 1928 only "white" and "coloured" citizens or residents of the Union of South Africa aged 65 years or older could receive it. Following the recommendation of the Hofmeyr Commission in 1943, all race groups were incorporated into the social security system. The Commission recommended extending

¹ Prior to 1994, all South Africans were classified into four race groups, namely: White, African, Coloured, and Indian. Current practice differentiates between "white" and "black" South Africans, the latter being subdivided into "coloureds", "Indians", and "Africans". This study follows the terminology of the day, without implying endorsement (Devereux, 2007, p. 541).

eligibility for the old-age pension to Indians and natives (subsequently referred to as Africans) and to provide social assistance to other vulnerable groups, such as “pensions” for the blind, people with disabilities, and the elderly (Devereux, 2007, p. 543). However, inequality on the basis of race remained due to the level of the grants where in 1947, the maximum pension for whites were five times that of Africans and half the amount for Coloured and Indian pensioners (Bhorat, 1995, p. 597).

Social protection programmes in democratic South Africa are universally applied and include social assistance grants, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP),² various fee waivers for health care, schooling, and utilities (Hall & Woolard, 2014, p. 349). These programmes are legislated and enshrined in the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), which makes provision for social assistance for people with inadequate income and who live in poverty. Section 27 (1) of the Constitution protects the right of everyone to access social security and appropriate social assistance if they are unable to support themselves or their dependants. Social protection is therefore a socio-economic right in South Africa that should be prioritised and realised by the South African government.

The South African White Paper on Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) explains that social welfare policies and programmes that provide for cash transfers, social relief, and developmental services ensure that people have adequate economic and social protection during times of unemployment, ill-health, maternity leave, child rearing, widowhood, disability, and old age (RSA, 1997, p. 5). This would contribute to human resource development by enabling impoverished households to provide adequate care for their members, especially children and those who are vulnerable. Several studies have shown that the provision of social grants in South Africa have reduced the gap between the rich and the poor (Van der Berg et al., 2010; Leibbrandt et al., 2011; Phaahla, 2015). In essence, social grants have over the years reduced the severity of poverty and inequality for the poorest and most vulnerable in South African society. Indeed, it could be argued that income inequality and poverty, as well as inter-racial disparities, would have been far worse without the fiscal distribution of state-funded social assistance.

² The Expanded Public Works Programme has been implemented since 2004 and aims to create productive employment opportunities for the unskilled unemployed (Hall & Woolard, 2014, p. 350).

1.1.2 Impact of social grants in South Africa

According to the World Bank, about 70% of outlays on social grants go to the poorest half of the population in South Africa and consequently, reduced the poverty of those living on less than \$2.50 day (World Bank, 2014, p. 35). In 2013, for instance, the CSG together with other social grants erased more than two-thirds of South Africa's food poverty gap (Samson et al., 2016, p. 306). As explained by Hall and Woolard (2014, p. 350) social grants have proven to be a reliable source of income that contributes to breaking the intergenerational transmission of poverty. To a large extent social grants help recipients to access material and non-material resources crucial to their day-to-day survival.

The number of social grant recipients in South Africa across all categories currently stands at 19 million people (National Treasury, 2022). In 2022, just over 3.8 million people received social pensions (National Treasury, 2022, p. 340) compared to 3.1 million in June 2015 (SASSA, 2015) and 2.8 million in December 2012 (SASSA, 2012). In addition, over 12 million children, or 63% of all children in South Africa, received a CSG in 2018 (Patel et al., 2019; SASSA, 2019; SASSA, 2022). These cash transfers target particularly vulnerable parts of the population – people with disabilities, children, foster children, people who need care, and the elderly. The CSG and the OPG are currently administered as an unconditional cash transfer and requires nothing from the recipients as far as the use of the funds are concerned.

A study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in collaboration with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) and the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) (2012) found that receipt of the CSG promotes early childhood development, improves educational outcomes, and contributes to better nutrition and health (Hall & Woolard, 2014). The OPG has also shown to have a significant positive impact on poverty reduction, especially in rural areas. As Tangwe and Gutura (2013) explain, these pensioners become the primary caregivers in the household and they act as breadwinners by looking after their unemployed children, orphans, grandchildren, and other relatives. This grant assists in the provision of food, payment of school fees, transport, rent, and water as well as the purchase of electricity and other necessities (Tangwe & Gutura 2013, p. 627). However, as the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Studies of Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) argues, the current allocation of social grants does not provide adequate social protection to all South Africans living in poverty, nor is it sufficient to lift the vast majority of the poor out of poverty.

1.1.3 Administration of social grants in South Africa

In April 2004, the government formed the South African Social Security Agency (hereafter referred to as SASSA) to administer social assistance in the form of cash grants on behalf of the DSD. The SASSA was created to promote efficiency and effectiveness in the administration and payment of grants to improve social assistance service delivery. This was mainly done to improve co-ordination and raising administrative standards.

Prior to the establishment of SASSA, the social assistance functions were located within the DSD nationally and provincially. However, provincial departments are autonomous and the national department could not institute administrative uniformity within the provinces. The establishment of SASSA thus called for the merging of different provincial departments into one independent statutory body. One of the main functions of SASSA, according to Reddy and Sokomani (2008, p. 32), was to establish a compliance and fraud mechanism to ensure the integrity of the social security system. The agency outsourced the distribution of grants to a private company in 2012 with that contract having ended in 2018. The outsourcing of grants is discussed in more detail in Chapter Four. SASSA now adopts a hybrid model where the South African Post Office (SAPO), commercial banks, and retailers distribute social grants to beneficiaries. In recent developments, the migration to SAPO has continued to experience challenges, with the NGO, Black Sash reporting that in several areas thousands of people have been unable to collect the full value of their grants in cash at SAPO offices, automated teller machines (ATMs), and retailers. The experience of grant recipients in accessing their grants via the hybrid model is a key area for consideration when viewing the experiences and perceptions of the OPG and CSG in the context of this study.

1.2 Overview of the conceptual and theoretical approach

Triegaardt (2005a, p. 249) argues that there is agreement among developed and developing nations that social security programmes are important for poverty prevention. These programmes ensure a basic minimum standard of living for people and contribute to achieving a more equitable income distribution in society. This is in line with the International Labour Organization (ILO) that recommends a minimum social protection floor as an approach required to prevent or alleviate poverty, vulnerability, and social exclusion (ILO, 2012). The Social Security Minimum Standards Convention of 1952 established the nine branches of social security, which include unemployment, sickness, old age, maternity benefit, and

disability. Accordingly, all these principles outlined in the Convention will apply to governments when they decide to build a social protection floor.

Social security, also known as social protection comprises of two categories, namely contributory and non-contributory (social assistance) programmes.

- Contributory programmes, also referred to as social insurance, are accessed via formal employment and focuses on financial and monetary contributions (Slater, 2011, p. 251).
- Non-contributory programmes, however, do not require any form of financial contribution from the beneficiary (Slater, 2011, p. 251).

For the latter, financial benefits are generally provided to targeted groups of people whom the state identifies as vulnerable to income deficiency or deficits. This is known as social assistance or state welfare. Social grants are a non-contributory programme in South Africa where contributions are funded via the national fiscus and government revenue (Browne, 2015, p. 6). For the purposes of this study, the term social security is used as it aligns with the South African terminology in legislation and also focuses on the state-led dimension of social protection, which includes non-contributory financial assistance via social grants.

From the above, it can be argued that social security is an administrative function of the state. The overall administration of social security programmes is guided by the legislative frameworks of South Africa. Section 195 of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) states that the administration, through which social assistance is rendered, must be governed by democratic values and principles such as promoting and maintaining high standards of professional ethics, and the efficient, economic, and effective use of resources.

The dominant discourse around social security in democratic states like South Africa usually focuses on the state as key provider of social assistance and the constitutional obligation towards its citizens in this respect. The analytical “lens” and viewpoint for this study is that citizens (or in this case, grant recipients) are more than just “beneficiaries” of state assistance; grant recipients are also right holders. In essence, this means that grant recipients are not merely passive users of public services; they are active holders of fundamental basic human rights that need to be respected and protected by the state.³

³ These provisions are outlined in the Constitution of South Africa (RSA, 1996) and related enabling legislation such as the South African Social Security Act, the Social Assistance Act, the White Paper for Social Welfare, and the Public Service Act.

This study views social security from the perspective that the state is the primary duty bearer of social assistance (as is the norm across the world). However, more is required to empower grant recipients in South Africa, and this is best achieved through a rights-based social contract between the government and its citizens. Importantly, a rights-based social contract approach can empower passive recipients to become entitled claimants of social assistance and other social rights. This approach not only recognises the right to social protection, but it holds government (duty bearer) accountable for effective delivery of citizen-driven social protection policies (Devereux, 2013, p. 13).

Hickey (2011, p. 6) explains that social security can be viewed as a social contract between the government and its citizens. Being the supreme law of the land in South Africa, the Constitution is regarded as the “social contract”. It is the contract between those in leadership positions and the citizenry and therefore, it is more than just a document as it embodies the wishes and aspirations of the country (Mwita, 2011, p. 7). It is therefore important that the state, as the key provider of social assistance, defends and upholds its constitutional commitment. The state must ensure effective, efficient, and ethical administration of social grants. Effective service delivery of social assistance will ultimately reinforce the social contract that legitimises and strengthens the role of the state (Jacobs et al., 2010, p. 24).

It is important to note that the South African Constitution also protects other human rights, such as dignity. Human dignity features prominently within the South African Constitution. It reads: “The Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: (a) human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms” (RSA, 1996). It is therefore pertinent that the dignity of citizens – or in this case grant recipients – are protected and respected in the service delivery of social grants. Social security therefore provides material support to maintain human dignity but can also undermine it (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011a, p. 53).

The South African social security system is therefore underpinned by a social contract between the government and its citizens, including legislation that guarantees enforceable claims and holds government accountable for delivery (Devereux, 2012, p. 419). Likewise, scholars like Neves et al. (2009, pp. 2-4) argue that cash transfers in South Africa “not only are an effective redistribution mechanism, thereby tempering social unrest, they symbolically serve as an important part of the renewed social compact between citizens and state”. Hence, the modern

social contract refers to the constitutional obligation of the South African state to provide appropriate social protection services. As is the case with various other human rights conferred by the Bill of Rights, the state should take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realization of the right to social assistance (Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012).

Many studies have argued that cash transfers are a temporary solution to poverty (transient poverty) while the long-term issue of chronic poverty is not addressed. The goal of the social assistance programme is to build human capacity, which allows recipients to be active agents of their own social and economic development rather than passive citizens of dispersed state benefits. Hence, social assistance programmes ought to promote a more sustainable improvement in living standards.⁴ In other words, social assistance such as the cash-transfer system should not be seen as arbitrary charity by the state, but as a right each citizen has by virtue of being human. Devereux (2011) shares a similar viewpoint and argues that social security programmes need to respect the dignity of claimants and empower them to become active citizens rather than passive beneficiaries. Here, both Ferguson (2015) and Devereux (2011) highlight that social security programmes (such as the cash transfers) are not only about protecting poor and vulnerable people, but they are also powerful tools to build communities and strengthen their involvement in a democratic society.

For this study, I have adopted the approach that social assistance is not just a state-led initiative, but that social assistance should also be citizen-driven (Devereux, 2013, p. 419). This approach to social security brings about a more holistic interpretation, which led to the choice of adopting the “social contract” theory (also drawing from the rights-based approach) as part of this study’s theoretical framework.

1.2.1 Social contract theory

The social contract theory holds that “agreed-upon social arrangements [that] provide basic security and access to basic necessities for individuals in modern, industrial societies” (Lind, 2007, p. 1). Lind (2007) further explains that citizens who are party to these agreements

⁴ For instance, Devereux (2002) distinguishes between how cash transfers impact on “livelihood protection” and “livelihood promotion”. Livelihood protection leads to the maintenance of minimum living standards and allows for smoothing of consumption, whereas livelihood promotion allows for a longer-term and more sustainable improvement in living standards.

explicitly or implicitly accept obligations (such as paying taxes) in return for the protection afforded by the state such as providing a minimum standard of wellbeing (or welfare).⁵ The aforementioned are also referred to as “social goods or individual goods that the collective society has decided every citizen needs to have” (Lind, 2007). Social security, in that sense, forms part of the “social contract goods”, which in the South African context, is mandated by the South African Constitution and makes provision for every citizen to access appropriate social assistance at any time as a fundamental right, throughout their life cycle.

In the classification of rights, social protection would typically be classified as a social right. Janoski (1998, p. 32) defines social rights as “public interventions into private spheres to support citizens’ claims to economic and social existence”. Janoski further explains that the nature of social rights is that they provide protection in times of vulnerability. In that sense, “beneficiaries of social rights are often in a position of dependence upon others to provide financially or in-kind transfers, services and care” (1998, p. 43). This notion of social rights, also viewed as distributive rights (such as money payments), forms part of the social contract between government and citizens. As Ulriksen and Plageron (2014, p. 756) argue, “every human being, simply by virtue of human being, is a holder of rights and governments have the responsibility to respect, promote and fulfil such rights”.

The notion of distributive rights originates from the social contract and is strengthened by the human rights framework that obliges states to provide minimum living standards for all citizens. As Sepúlveda and Nyst (2012, p. 18) argue, it is the state’s constitutional obligation to secure an adequate standard of living through basic subsistence, essential primary health care, basic shelter and housing, and basic forms of education – elements which together comprise a social protection floor, for all members of society. For instance, article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) compels member states to secure a “minimum livelihood for their citizens including the right to social security” in the event of unemployment, sickness, or disability (United Nations, 1948).

As Hickey (2007, p. 9) explains, the notion of a social contract can relocate social protection within a project of redistributive justice that is arguably required to underpin a long-term challenge of chronic poverty. This is associated with the work of John Rawls (2001, p. 129)

⁵ These include health care, unemployment insurance or benefits, educational assistance programmes, social protection, and so on.

who maintains that citizens are entitled to a “social minimum” where citizens are able to enjoy at least a minimally decent standard of living. This social minimum, which is closely associated with social assistance, can ensure the economic and political inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

From a rights-based perspective, individuals are rights-holders who can make legitimate claims. States and actors who render state functions are duty bearers that are responsible and can be held accountable for their acts or omissions (Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012, p. 18). To focus on citizen rights and entitlements gives rise to obligations on the part of the state. In other words, the state is accountable for the protection and promotion of socio-economic rights. The “right holders and duty bearers” approach thus helps to identify who is entitled to make rightful claims to economic subsistence and who has the duty to act, and in turn, empower those who have legitimate claims to rights by virtue of their citizenship. This approach further regulates the exercise of power and ensures that those who wield power are answerable to those who do not (Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012).

Linked to this, is the concept of accountability. Citizens have the right to hold government accountable if they fail to fulfil their function in terms of social protection. According to Sepúlveda & Nyst (2012, p. 18), accountability has the potential to empower people living in poverty and facilitate their visibility, ensuring that they are at the centre of public debates and policy formulation. Furthermore, accountability ensures that people are not seen as passive beneficiaries, but as right holders who can exercise their entitlements by holding responsible those behind such policies. Accountability goes hand in hand with transparency. In that vein, social protection systems need to be easy to understand and the rules governing the grants must have clear eligibility criteria so no-one fails to apply, if eligible. Also, the system needs to be transparent with access to information of the programme to avoid potential corruption, clientelism, or maladministration.

Grant holders are sometimes portrayed as living on handouts, that they are “welfare dependants” and “freeloaders” as opposed to hard-working people. However, scholars have argued this goes against the notion of dignity that human right norms seek to protect (Bender et al., 2013; de Haan, 2014). Government-run welfare systems, such as in South Africa, are ideally underpinned by a claims-based social contract that is grounded in citizen rights and accountability (Devereux & Lund, 2010). In that sense, the social contract compels governments to be responsive to citizens’ needs and to deliver public goods and services to

strengthen its legitimacy among citizens. As Locke maintains, when the state does not provide for these needs, its relevance and legitimacy are undermined (Luiz, 2014, p. 31).

Securing social grants is a necessary action but does not guarantee that government is fulfilling its constitutional obligations in terms of accountability, responsiveness, and the promotion of human rights and dignity in administering the grants. In that vein, delivering social grants do not always guarantee the promotion of social protection, especially if social assistance is delivered under conditions that do not embody recipients' rights to dignity and to hold the government accountable. This perspective allows this study to move beyond the provision of grants, and opens up avenues to explore grant recipients' experiences and perceptions that tie into a larger discussion around the its role in strengthening the social contract.

1.3 Outline of research problem

As indicated above, social grants have a far-reaching impact on the wellbeing of households that were previously disadvantaged and discriminated against in South Africa. The percentage of households that received at least one grant increased from 29.9% in 2003 to 45.5% in 2015 (StatsSA, 2016). These direct cash transfers provide short- to medium-term relief in terms of food and non-food items, which in turn mitigate the worst forms of inequality and poverty for the most vulnerable in South African society. For millions of South Africans, their monthly social grants are the difference between survival and starvation. Flowing from this viewpoint, many poor and vulnerable groups such as pensioners, people with disabilities, and children, are more reliant on the state for social relief and assistance. Within this context, it is important that social services are rendered effectively, efficiently and to professional, ethical standards. It is therefore critical that the social services department maintains the dignity of grant beneficiaries.

The delivery of social assistance within the context of the OPG and CSG social grants is faced with several practical challenges. These include tangible and intangible factors that have an impact on the experiences and perceptions of grant recipients. These range from the inception phase, where a grant recipient applies to receive a CSG or OPG grant, moving across the entire process to the end phase, where a beneficiary withdraws their monthly grant payment. Moving from the inception to the end phase and how beneficiaries experience and perceive the process, as it relates to their lived experiences, have very real implications for the social contract. These multiple factors play a role in better understanding the CSG and the OPG grant recipients' overall experience of the social contract. By giving voice to their experiences, this study

implicitly amplifies the lived experience of poor and vulnerable groups who find themselves more and more reliant on the state for social relief and assistance. Within a context of declining service standards and callous attitudes to those who find themselves underprivileged or dependent on the system, it has the potential to weaken the social contract.

The state as duty bearer has a responsibility to grant recipients as rights-holders, which entails maintaining appropriate service standards and ensuring that through the process of claiming their grants every month, strengthens the implicit social contract between them. Unfortunately, although the government has articulated service standards under the *Batho Pele* (“People First”) principles, these are not maintained. In many cases, the delivery of social assistance does not comply with the democratic values outlined by the legislative frameworks that govern social protection. It is therefore necessary to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system in South Africa as well as to explore and understand the day-to-day experiences of recipients at payment and service points.

Another crucial aspect related to the distribution of social grants that needs to be considered is its monetary value. Currently the CSG is R480 and the OPG is R1,980 (below 75 years) or R2,000 (above 75 years), which is insufficient to provide for all the needs of beneficiaries. This viewpoint considers the transformative nature of the grant and if it has the potential to lift people out of poverty. The value of the grant therefore has an impact on beneficiaries’ views of the grant, which in turn impacts their view of the social contract between them and the state. If the grant relegates its beneficiaries to a system where they become welfare-dependent with few other options, it has the potential to undermine the state-citizen relationship and strain the social contract. The monetary aspect associated with the CSG and the OPG is therefore an important area to consider.

1.4 Objectives and research questions

Given the complex issues outlined above, the overall objective of this research study is to assess whether the government is delivering on its constitutional social contract with all South Africans, from the perspective of social grant recipients.

The sub-objectives are:

- to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system in South Africa;
- to explore the day-to-day experiences of recipients at payment and service points;

- to explore the impact of changes to the grant payment system on recipients;
- to better understand the perceptions of different racial groups/identities towards social grants and the state;
- to explore how the relationship between government and social grant recipients can be strengthened;
- to connect the perceptions and experiences of grant recipients to future social policy implications in South Africa.

This research study aims to answer the central research question, which is: “What are the experiences and perceptions of OPG and CSG recipients of the social grant system in South Africa?”

The following sub-questions assist in answering the research question:

- How do grant recipients understand the relationship between the state and citizens? What does this relationship mean in terms of social grants?
- How do grant recipients perceive social grants? Who provides these grants and why? Do social grants help/assist recipients and how?
- Are there any challenges to access social grants?
- How has the relationship between the state and grant recipients evolved over time? Do grant recipients view social grants as an entitlement (legal obligation), or a moral obligation (charity), or a reward for party-political affiliation?
- Are the services rendered to grant recipients people-centred?
- How does race play itself out in individual/group perceptions of social grants and the state?

1.5 Rationale of the study

The question of whether the South African government is fulfilling its constitutional obligations towards grant recipients is an important one. As outlined in the problem statement, the South African social grant system is faced with problems and challenges that span the entire process, from applying to access a social grant, to receiving it. These impact on the perceptions and experiences that grant beneficiaries of the OPG and CSG have towards the state. In turn, these have a fundamental impact on the social contract, with the potential to illuminate how government can strengthen the social contract through enhancing the delivery of social grants.

This study aimed to explore the importance of social protection programmes within this context, in particular the crucial role of social grants in addressing poverty and inequality among previously disadvantaged groups in South Africa. More specifically, this study aimed to go beyond these traditional viewpoints and investigate the experiences and perceptions of the OPG and CSG recipients of the social grant system in South Africa. It sought to investigate how grant recipients of different racial identities understand the social contract between them and the state. As established earlier in this Chapter, South Africans not classified as white have been relegated to a lower social status in the pre-democratic dispensation which not only impacted their political standing, but also had a significant impact on their socio-economic rights and entitlements. The rationale for incorporating a racial dimension to the study is premised on the fact that South Africa's welfare policies pre-1994 were a key instrument to discriminate against Africans, coloureds and other groups who were classified as non-white. Accordingly, racial groups (African, coloureds, Indians and Whites) under the apartheid regime all had different lived experiences concerning the state as the 'provider' of welfare benefits. A more detailed discussion about the 'racialised' social contract which was built over a long period of institutionalised discrimination and oppression of the black majority is provided in Chapter Three. While the exclusionary welfare system is something of the past, many 'so-called' non-white recipients are still confronted with the legacies of apartheid. South Africans classified as non-whites, especially the African population, were restricted to mainly rural areas with limited access to the state, public services and provision such as social grants. The idea of 'separate development' also known as spatial segregation affected the economic and social mobility of many black people. Against this historical lens, this study thus explored how the issue of race played itself out, i.e. how race may influence the individual and/or group lived experiences of grant recipients towards the social contract in a post-apartheid context. These are areas that are overlooked and poorly documented within the discourse of grant recipients accessing their social grants.

Social grants in relation to cash transfers are promoted internationally as an important poverty alleviation tool, both globally and in post-apartheid South Africa. A key debate regarding cash transfers is its potential for long-term strengthening of the state - citizen relationship, where grant recipients have the potential to become active citizens rather than passive beneficiaries of state assistance (Granlund, 2022, p. 2). There is a growing interest in the ways cash transfers can potentially shape state - citizen relations. One of the motivations for providing social assistance through cash transfers is to alleviate the effects of poverty. However, there is an

argument to be made if these transfers can be transformative as well; in other words, to provide opportunities for beneficiaries to “graduate” out of poverty. A key factor impacting this is how grant recipients understand and view receiving their grant as it shapes and forms state - citizen relations. This becomes increasingly important when viewing its role in how beneficiaries view the grant as potentially transformative.

The administration and delivery of social grants should be viewed as equally significant as its actual monetary provision. It is not enough to simply provide a cash transfer, but how this is conducted and implemented also matters. For example, the constant problems that grant recipients have been experiencing through the hybrid model have an effect on beneficiaries’ experiences and perceptions. Social assistance is a fundamental right that needs to be respected and competently fulfilled. There is therefore an urgent need to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the current social grant system, within the context of grant beneficiaries’ claims as rights holders to the government as duty bearer. Claiming these social rights are important, not only because they are legally binding in South Africa, but because these rights enable recipients to gain access to material and non-material resources that should improve their lives. This will not only increase their wellbeing, but also promote active citizenry in the overall democratic process.

1.6 Overview of research design and methodology

This study adopted a case study research design and a qualitative methodological approach. The research data was primarily derived from primary sources but also incorporated quantitative data to strengthen the findings in the analytical chapters. A qualitative approach was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of Older Person’s Grant and Child Support Grant recipients in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts in the Western Cape Province. A key focus was to explore how these perceptions and experiences influence the state-citizen relationship (i.e., social contract) between the government and grant recipients. The quantitative data derived from secondary sources from the Black Sash Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) survey results for the period 2015 - 2017 provided valuable secondary data. The monitoring involved collecting data at SASSA facility sites and also door-to-door interviews capturing citizens’ experiences of SASSA administration and service delivery.

The Cape Winelands District (CWD) consists of five municipal areas, namely: Witzenberg, Drakenstein, Stellenbosch, Breede Valley, and Langeberg. The study focused on five towns from three different municipal areas, namely:

- Ceres, situated in Witzenberg Municipality
- Klapmuts and Stellenbosch, located in the Stellenbosch Municipality
- Robertson and Montagu, situated in the Langeberg Municipality

In addition, Villiersdorp, situated within the Overberg District, was selected. The researcher collected primary data through (i) semi-structured interviews; (ii) focus group discussions; and (iii) simple observation. The researcher conducted 19 focus groups and 16 interviews with social grant recipients of the OPG and the CSG. Recipients were from different racial identities – Africans, coloureds and whites and were predominantly located in towns with both urban and rural characteristics. Additionally, the researcher conducted interviews with key informants, such as the Black Sash organisation, community-based organisations, and politicians who served on the Social Development Portfolio within both the National and the Provincial Legislature.

1.7 Chapter outline

Chapter One: Orientation and outline of study

Chapter One provides a synopsis of the study by setting out the introduction, background, research problem, study objectives, and theoretical framing of the study. The chapter also locates the study within the international context. Finally, it provides an overview of the study's research design and methodological framework.

Chapter Two: Locating social protection and social assistance in social contract theory

Chapter Two outlines and discusses the theoretical framework that underpins this study. This primarily includes the social contract theory, but also draws on rights-based and social justice approaches. This section provides a conceptual overview of social protection with a specific emphasis on social assistance through cash transfers. It further outlines the theoretical framing of the study, which mainly includes social contract theory, but also draws on social justice and rights-based theoretical approaches. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the role and purposes of social security by considering three prominent, but also partly overlapping, conceptual frameworks. This is followed by a historical overview of the origins of social

security that dates back to the early 1900s in Germany, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA). The last section discusses the social contract as a theoretical basis for social security, explaining that the state has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable, have the opportunity to access the basic necessities of life.

Chapter Three: Social security and social contract unpacked in the South African context

This chapter deals with the history and legislative framework of social security in South Africa. It starts with the historical context of social security in South Africa and describes the colonial and apartheid forms of social security. The aim of this overview is to demonstrate that there was institutional discrimination based on race that created an unequal and fragmented social assistance programme under apartheid South Africa. In doing so, it lays an appropriate foundation to understand the motivations associated with the post-apartheid social security framework. Key areas explored under a democratic South Africa's framework, include the 1996 Constitution, the 1997 White Paper on Social Welfare, the Report of the Lund Committee, and the Committee of Inquiry into Comprehensive Social Security (also referred to as the Taylor Committee). These are the key informants that went into the development and implementation of a post-apartheid social assistance programme.

Chapter Four: South Africa's social security system in a democratic society

The chapter provides an overview of the structure of post-apartheid South Africa's social security system. It explains the social grant system, details the various grants provided, and focuses specifically on the OPG and the CSG as the country's key non-contributory social grants. Furthermore, it presents an overview of the impact of South Africa's social grants to better understand their redistributive and transformative effects in lifting people out of poverty and generally improving their lives. This is followed by an exploration of the successes, challenges, and perceptions of the OPG and the CSG. The chapter concludes with an investigation into the administration of social grants in South Africa, specifically considering the formation of SASSA and the outsourcing of grant payments via the hybrid model.

Chapter Five: Research design and methodology

This chapter maps out the research design and the methodological framework used to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. In particular, it provides a detailed description of the focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and simple observation techniques utilised. This chapter

also focuses on the non-probability sampling strategies adopted to select participants, while also describing the data analysis approach. It concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations of this study.

Chapter Six: Key findings and analysis of the Older Person's Grant

This chapter provides an overview of the key findings and analysis of the OPG in relation to the beneficiaries' understanding and experiences of the social grant system in South Africa. Some key themes explored, include the state as provider and distributor of social grants, to explore OPG recipients' views of the grant. This is followed by a discussion of the role of the grant in fostering a sense of citizenship and recognition by the state. Other areas explored in the chapter are grant recipients' engagement with the state, the role of distance, dignity, and inclusion, accountability, and trust, as well as the buying power of the OPG.

Chapter Seven: Key findings and analysis of the Child Support Grant

This chapter presents the key findings of CSG recipients in relation to their understanding and experiences of the social grant system in South Africa. Key areas investigated, include the monetary value of the grant and an assessment if it is sufficient to cater for all recipients' needs. This is followed by a discussion of administrative barriers in accessing the CSG and the role of dignity and respect in administering the grant. The chapter concludes with an exploration of the likelihood of the grant being transformative – if the CSG provides adequate access to material and non-material needs and the related debate on welfare dependency.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion and summary of key findings

This chapter outlines future policy implications for social assistance in South Africa, with a specific focus on the administration and delivery of cash transfers, such as the CSG and the OPG. This chapter also outlines the contributions of the study in relation to knowledge building and theory. This chapter concludes with recommendations on how the government can improve its relationship with social grant recipients and in turn strengthen its social contract through the administration and delivery of social assistance to poor and vulnerable groups.

1.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter provided the background and South African context to the social grant system. This set the scene for an overview of the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the consideration of social security and the social contract as key concepts and the theory

underpinning this study. Thereafter, it outlined the research problem, followed by an overview of the objectives, research question, and the rationale for the study. Next, it explained the research design and methodology, followed by an outline of the thesis chapters.



CHAPTER TWO: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL SECURITY

2.1 Overview

In times of economic and social distress, citizens look to the state to protect them from economic hardships and financial stress caused by multiple factors like chronic poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and related factors. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the role and purpose of social security by considering three prominent, but also partly overlapping, conceptual frameworks. This is followed by a historical overview of the origins of social security, which dates back to the early 1900s in Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. In this section, the chapter also describes how the Western European models of social security was exported to African countries. The last section discusses the social contract as a theoretical basis for social security, explaining that the state has a legal and moral obligation to ensure that citizens, especially the poor and vulnerable, have the opportunity to access the basic necessities of life.

2.2 Social security: Key concepts and approaches

The term social security has been widely used internationally and in South Africa. The South African government adopted the term social security in its 1996 Constitution and also in other enabling legislative documents. While social security is a well-established term and has been widely used in international literature, this study acknowledges that in recent years the term *social protection* has been used more frequently. This is because many scholars have predominantly associated social security with short-term benefits extended as early as the 1800s at the time of industrialisation and urbanisation (Leisering, 2021; van der Berg, 1997). Social security back then was implemented as a set of cash transfers that originated from formal sector employment. Accordingly, the term social security was primarily linked to occupational retirement benefits of individuals who form part of the formal labour force. This system also included unemployment insurance to mitigate unemployment risks and health insurance for people who could afford private health care (van der Berg, 1997, p. 484). This approach to social security is commonly known as a contributory programme that is co-funded by employees and employers, such as an employer pension scheme. Over the years though, the scope of social security has evolved into a much broader concept and encompasses other

instruments, such as the non-contributory public-funded social assistance and social welfare services.

The definition of “social security” differs among authors, as does the definition of “social protection”. Reviewing the literature shows that social protection is used as a broad, overarching concept that transcends the income maintenance functions of social security, namely social insurance, and social assistance (discussed later in this chapter). In addition, social protection is viewed as a method that incorporates other social benefits that may include non-state programmes led by civil society organisations often supported by international donors (Garcia & Gruat, 2003; Midgley, 2013; Patel, 2015). Non-state, or external donor-driven social protection initiatives have become popular in Sub-Saharan African countries such as Ethiopia, Malawi, and Somalia (Kapingidza, 2018, p. 61).

For the purpose of this research study, the term social security is used instead of social protection for two important reasons: firstly, using the term social security ensures that there is consistency with the legislative frameworks adopted in South Africa since 1994. Secondly, and as mentioned in Chapter One, the study is predominantly framed around state-led social assistance – a pillar of South Africa’s social security framework – in the form of social grants (i.e., state cash transfers), which is an income maintenance initiative to fight poverty and vulnerability. Accordingly, the term social security is deemed appropriate within the context of this study because South Africa does not have any donor-funded social welfare programmes.

A review of the literature shows that no standardised definition exists to describe the concept of social security. This is because social security is often used interchangeably with social protection where scholars have presented different – but also related – conceptual views and explanations. Due to this, the study draws on literature that refers to social security as social protection. The incorporation of the social protection literature is important because recent studies based on the South African context have used social protection as their preferred term. Therefore, the two terms will be used interchangeably *only* where it is applicable, that is, where authors used it in a similar fashion to describe how governments around the world have implemented public and private funded programmes to assist poor and vulnerable groups in society.

2.2.1 Understanding social security

Over the years, several definitions of social security have been put forward by international development institutions and agencies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB), International Labour Organization (ILO), and the World Bank. Each of these international actors have forwarded their own objectives and strategies for social security, often based on the ideology or philosophy of the organisation (Brunori & O'Reilly, 2010; Govender, 2011; Haarmann, 2000).

Table 1: Definitions of social security

	Definitions of social security
ILO (1984)	...the protection which society provides for its members, through a series of public measures, against the economic and social distress that otherwise would be caused by the stoppage or substantial reduction of earnings resulting from sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age and death; the provision of medical care; and the provision of subsidies for families with children.
ILO (1999)	The provision of benefits to households and individuals through public or collective arrangements to protect against low or declining living standards.
World Bank (2004)	A collection of measures to improve or protect human capital, ranging from labour market interventions, publicly mandated unemployment or old-age insurance to targeted income support. Social protection interventions assist individuals, households, and communities to better manage the income risks that leave people vulnerable.
ADB (2003)	The set of policies and programmes designed to reduce poverty and vulnerability by promoting efficient labour markets, diminishing people's exposure to risks, and enhancing their capacity to protect themselves against hazards and interruption/loss of income.
African Union (2008)	It encompasses a range of public actions carried out by the state and others that address risk, vulnerability, discrimination, and chronic poverty.
SADC (2022)	This refers to public and private, or to mixed public and private measures, designed to protect individuals and families against income insecurity caused by contingencies such as unemployment, employment injury, maternity, sickness, invalidity, old age, and death. The main objectives of social security are: (a) to maintain income, (b) to provide health care, and (c) to provide benefits to families.

As demonstrated above there is a wide array of possible social security definitions. Social security continues to be conceptualised by development agencies mainly in terms of public responses to combat poverty and vulnerability within a particular group of people. Their approach to social security is often criticised as being too narrowly defined. In an attempt to challenge the narrow preconceptions of social security, leading scholars in the field have also provided their conceptual understanding of social security. In this regard, Devereux and

Sabates-Wheeler (2004) shared their definition of social security that guided their research in developing countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Their conceptualisation is unique in the sense that it first captures the key objectives of social security; and secondly, it elaborates on the two dominant mechanisms or instruments that deliver social security. This research study found this definition to be the most suitable, for purposes of this study. Not only does it focus on economic outcomes (e.g., income for poverty reduction) but it also considers social and political benefits, such as promoting the rights of the poor and often marginalised.

In their paper titled *Transformative Social Protection*, Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004, p. 9) provide the following explanations:

Social protection describes all public and private initiatives that provide income or consumption transfers to the poor, protect the vulnerable against livelihood risks and enhance the social status and rights of the marginalised; with the overall objective of reducing the economic and social vulnerability of poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups.

Social protection is the set of all initiatives, both formal and informal, that provide: social assistance to extremely poor individuals and households; social services to groups who need special care or would otherwise be denied access to basic services; social insurance to protect people against the risks and consequences of livelihood shocks; and social equity to protect people against social risks such as discrimination or abuse.

The above definitions demonstrate how the scope of social security has evolved over the years. It highlights the multifaceted objectives of social security programmes as opposed to the old social insurance agenda of the late 1980s and early 1990s. At the time, newly industrialised countries adopted a very narrow approach and equated social security to a “safety net” function that can be defined as “some form of income insurance to help people through short-term stress and calamities” (World Bank, 1990). Safety nets were put in place for immediate and short-term emergency measures, such as a farmer being destitute as a result of a natural disaster. In addition, safety nets were instituted for the “deserving poor”, such as widows and orphans, or people with disabilities (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). With the distinction between the “deserving poor” and “underserving poor” (Titmuss, 1973) came the idea that the deserving poor were justifiably entitled to receive help from the state because being in such a situation was something beyond their control. However, the negative effects of industrialisation and the Great Depression (discussed later in this chapter), changed people’s perceptions towards the

poor and destitute and it was more widely accepted that the state should respond to social risks in society (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 42).

Social security is now broadly viewed as tackling multiple socio-economic issues, such as deprivation, income insecurity, inequalities, and vulnerability. The domain of social security is poverty alleviation, reduction, prevention, social compensation, and income distribution (Patel, 2015, p. 162). Social security thus refers to a wide range of strategies to assist individuals who are unable to support themselves or their dependants during economic hardships and financial stress during various stages of their lives. It is concerned with the provision of resources when people's income has been interrupted or terminated due to sickness, unemployment, disability, retirement, or the death of the household's primary wage earner (Patel et al., 2013, p. 4). As a result, social security is often described as the "umbrella" term for any contributory- or non-contributory-based assistance that a government provides or facilitates to ensure that people meet their basic needs at all times, i.e., throughout their life-course. As Taylor and Triegaardt (2018, p. 101) explain, social security measures cover the entire life cycle of an individual from conception, for example, by ensuring a pregnant mother has adequate nutrition, up to old age.

Accordingly, social security exists to protect people against economic hardships that are likely to occur through a sudden change in circumstances. As explained by Barrientos et al. (2005, p. 4), social security is a means of providing short-term assistance to individuals and households to cope with shocks, while they are temporarily finding new opportunities that will enable them to improve their situation. However, social security can also address long-term, persistent poverty and vulnerabilities of certain socio-economic groups who struggle to provide for themselves – orphans, widows, and people with disabilities, to name a few. Social security is clearly an important element in the redistribution of economic resources with the aim to ensure that people are able to meet their basic consumption needs.

The idea of social security refers to "public actions taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society" (Norton et al., 2001, p. 7). From this description, social security provisions are extended to poor and vulnerable people to support their immediate survival, while also restoring and strengthening their livelihoods. As Spicker (1993, pp.105-106) argues, people should not have to sell their possessions and live in destitution or even deprive themselves of basic necessities just because they have become old, disabled, or unemployed. It is important that those who are deemed poor and destitute feel secure and a sense of economic inclusion.

Importantly, social security has the potential to address non-economic issues. In other words, social security is no longer only geared towards income maintenance, but can also promote personal development, social integration, political stability, and human rights objectives (Shepherd et al., 2004, p. 2). Accordingly, social security can have powerful benefits in terms of contributing to people's long-term wellbeing and supporting broader societal goals of equity, social justice, human dignity, and empowerment (ILO, 2019; Norton et al., 2001). In theory then, social security is not only concerned with economic benefits, i.e., targeted income and consumption transfers, but also aims to achieve the realization of socio-economic and cultural rights.

This coincides with the writings of Devereux who has strongly advocated for social security that looks beyond safety nets, but rather that seeks to address social vulnerabilities caused by structural inequalities and inadequate rights (Devereux, 2001; 2006). Following this logic, social security initiatives should enhance the social status and rights of socially excluded and marginalised people (Devereux, 2006, p. 1) with a particular emphasis on strengthening the relationship between state and citizens. The diverse nature and scope of social security are demonstrated in the conceptual frameworks discussed below. These conceptual underpinnings provide a clear guideline of what social security can and should strive to achieve in practice.

2.2.2 Social security frameworks

Based on the above, it is clear that social security serves several functions from poverty alleviation to promoting social and economic rights. This can broadly be summarised based on the work of Indian economist Sanjiv Guhan (1994) who conceptualises social security into three dimensions, namely: (i) protective, (ii) preventive, and (iii) promotive. In Guhan's perspective:

The role of social security policies in developing countries must, consequently, be extended not only to that of a "safety net", but, more importantly, to "prevention" against increases in deprivation and the "promotion" of better chances of individual development (Guhan, 1994, cited in Justino, 2003, p. 7).

The protection component is composed of policies that protect a minimum level of welfare for people who are in difficulty. Prevention is granted by policies that prevent vulnerable individuals from going below acceptable welfare standards, and finally, policies aimed at reducing individuals' vulnerability in the future form the promotion component of social security (Ellis et al., 2009, cited in Brunori & O'Reilly, 2010, p. 6). In this sense, these proposed

components represent a choice of how wide or narrow (or specific) the domain social security policies should be (Brunori & O'Reilly, 2010). It combines the narrow approaches, that is, the short-term safety net measures with broader approaches of social security that seek to enhance individuals' existing capabilities and resources that can improve their overall wellbeing and promote self-reliance.

In contrast to Guhan, the World Bank proposes the Social Risk Management (SRM) framework that combines three different purposes or functions of social security in a non-hierarchical order with overlap. The framework consists of (i) prevention, (ii) coping and (iii) mitigation (Kumitz, 2013; UNICEF, 2008). Prevention strategies are introduced before a risk occurs. These can be policies, strategies, and programmes that have the potential to foresee the occurrence of the risk or shock. For example, introducing policies that focus on reducing risks in the labour market such as unemployment or low wages due to inappropriate skills or poorly functioning labour markets (Holzmann & Jorgensen, 2000, p. 14). The mitigation strategy, conversely, is reactive to the already-occurred risk or the inevitable possibility thereof and includes programmes intended to minimise its impact and possibly prevent its recurrence through insurance mechanisms (Moonga, 2015, p. 28). Coping, the last category of the SRM model, also deals with the consequences of possible shock ex post; in other words, "after-shock" measures to minimise damage or loss. These include means-tested cash transfers and public works programmes (Brunori & O'Reilly, 2010).

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2007) propose a third prominent framework, which is largely built on the model developed by Guhan, but also overlaps with the SRM components. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler add a fourth dimension called transformative social security. The transformative framework thus categorised social security interventions under (i) protective, (ii) preventive, (iii) promotive, and (iv) transformative. This framework adds a transformative element and means that, when thinking of social security, one should:

... no longer be focused on how to design a policy so that various groups face less risk in a given context but on how to transform this context to minimize risk for a range of vulnerable groups (Sabates-Wheeler & Devereux, 2007, p. 24).

In the South African context, the National Planning Commission (NPC) adopted the above "functions" and "objectives" for social security in their National Development Plan (NDP)

Vision 2030. A summary of the transformative model, proposed by Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler is presented below.

First, protective measures are the most basic “narrowly targeted safety net in the conventional sense” that aim to provide relief from poverty and deprivation through the form of social assistance instruments (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 10). In 2007, in their paper entitled *Social Protection for Transformation*, they renamed protective measures as provision. Protective or provision measures are usually in the form of cash transfers, disability allowances, and other in-kind transfers with the objective to alleviate poverty and vulnerability. These “targeted resource transfers” are especially for those who are “chronically poor” and “are unable to work and earn their livelihood” (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 10). There are also several protective social services such as orphanages, old-age homes, and care facilities for people with mental disabilities. The source of funding is mainly a government subsidy through tax but can also include NGOs and individuals.

The second objective is prevention, which is widely understood to refer to formal and informal social insurance instruments (Sabates-Wheeler & Roelen, 2011, p. 181) that prevent people from falling into deeper poverty. Preventive measures are usually funded by contributions from people themselves, for instance, burial cover, health insurance, unemployment benefits, and private pensions. This is similar to the SRM’s prevention component where individuals can take proactive measures to prevent or lessen their probability to be poor in the future (Jorgensen & Siegel, 2019, p. 29). The preventive function can also tackle food insecurity. For instance, Cook and Frank (2008, cited in Hoefler & Curry, 2011, p. 62) indicate that one of the goals of government-run social security-related programmes is to prevent food insecurity, thus positively influencing growth and health for those who participate. The funding of preventive interventions is normally tripartite, involving the state, employers, and employees (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 10).

The third component, namely promotive, is geared towards enhancing real incomes and capabilities, which is achieved through a range of livelihood-enhancing programmes targeted at households and individuals (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 10). Promotive measures include “school feeding schemes that encourage attendance, public works schemes that create community assets, and ‘conditional cash transfers’ that require beneficiaries to send their children to schools and clinics” (Devereux, 2006, p. 1). The promotive approach to social

security enables the poor and vulnerable in a given society to enhance their wellbeing and that of future generations. As Neves et al. (2009, p. 32) argue, promotive social security assists the impoverished and vulnerable to avoid narrow, short-term focused survival strategies. It enables access to resources such as health and educational services, which allow the poor to make investments in their future.

Lastly, social security can be potentially transformative and centred around social justice and social inclusion, among others. The transformative approach “extends social protection to arenas such as equity, empowerment and economic, social and cultural rights, rather than confining the scope of social protection to targeted income and consumption transfers” (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004, p. 3). In other words, it aims to address concerns of oppression and exclusion, and to reduce vulnerability by transforming the socio-legal context within which livelihoods are constructed (Devereux, 2006, p. 2). This approach to social security thus focuses on addressing the vulnerabilities of individuals (e.g., people with disabilities and HIV) and tackling issues of gender equality, stigmatisation, and generational inequality. This area, it can be argued, focuses to a degree on tackling systemic challenges faced by the vulnerable and poor.

The first two instruments (protective and preventive) are essentially “old-style” safety-net measures and is a narrowly defined approach to social security. In other words, it is merely providing forms of social assistance and insurance to help alleviate a consumption or income deficit (Sabates-Wheeler & Roelen, 2011, p. 181). However, the latter two components (promotive and transformative) demonstrate that social security has a broader objective, which is not to merely provide monetary resources that allow people to buy food and other basic necessities. If well implemented, social security measures, as illustrated above, can support multiple objectives across the four dimensions noted by Devereux.

The idea is that social security would strengthen the asset base of the poor, which in turn affords them a degree of financial independence. Social security measures would therefore ideally facilitate poor and vulnerable households to move, or graduate, to independent sustainable livelihoods (Sabates-Wheeler & Roelen, 2011, p. 181). The graduation process is when beneficiaries have the opportunity to move out of poverty (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2015). The narrow understanding of graduation assumes that the provision of social security will enable beneficiaries to reach a point when they no longer need poor-relief schemes.

However, graduation has been conceptualised as a holistic package that includes “regular cash transfers, productive assets, access to savings facilities, livelihood training and coaching” (Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler 2015, p. 1).

Regarding South Africa, there have been ongoing debates around the appropriateness of the graduation model. Neves (2014, cited in de Satgé et al., 2014, p. 5), argues that key recipients such as minors, older persons, and those with disabilities, “are unlikely to ever graduate and cannot be reasonably be expected to do so” in an economic and social setting such as South Africa. Subsequently, there are often different and competing perceptions of what social security means, entails, and should achieve in the South African context. For instance, South Africa’s welfare system has often been cited and commended for its positive impacts on poverty reduction, and to a lesser extent poverty prevention. This clearly shows how the narrow and more targeted approach of social security is still predominantly applied in South Africa. This is while other objectives (e.g., promotive and transformative) are seen as secondary or non-existent in some cases.

More generally, the core functions of social security have focused on ameliorating poverty rather than enabling a genuine socio-economic transformation. It delivers a nominal level of assistance to the poorest and most vulnerable people, without challenging structural drivers of poverty and inequality in that society (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2015, p. 4). This argument is supported by current trends noting that social security initiatives have not fully translated into meaningful outcomes such as the graduation out of a cycle of intergenerational poverty.

While the transformative approach to social security remains a distant ambition in terms of policy and outcomes, it is imperative for the attainment of social justice in the long run. This is in accord with Neves et al. (2009, p. 35) who argue that social security (in the form of cash transfers) “not only combats exclusion at societal level, but also can positively shape inter-household and intra-household resource allocation and dynamics”. The transformative approach will therefore enable cash-transfer recipients to become active, self-reliant agents of their social and economic development rather than passive beneficiaries of dispersed state benefits.

2.2.3 Operational definitions of social security

In general, there are two prominent ways to extend social security. The first one is through social insurance and the second way is to extend coverage through public-funded, tax-financed, non-contributory schemes, that is, social assistance. The focus of this section is to operationalise and define social security based on these two components.⁶

2.2.3.1 Social insurance

There are numerous approaches available for structuring and operating social insurance programmes. In the traditional sense, the first is social insurance that predominantly aims to protect employees and their dependants against risks that could disrupt their income-earning capacity. Over time, a need developed for social policy to respond to individuals in the informal and self-employed sectors as well. Social insurance, which is the more traditional understanding of social security, is included in various ILO standards. The Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), identifies nine areas for social insurance, namely: medical care, as well as benefits in case of sickness, unemployment, old age, employment injury, family circumstances, maternity, invalidity, and widowhood (Conway et al., 2000, p. 26). This definition is based on a contingency approach that implies that social security has the task to provide protection against life-cycle contingencies that cause reduction or loss of earnings (Haarmann, 2000, p. 25). However, non-compulsory insurance schemes can be linked to preventive measures, which allows individuals to mitigate potential risks and reduce the threat of falling into poverty.

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Code on Social Security of 2007 offers the following definition:

Social insurance is a form of social security designed to protect income earners and their families against a reduction or loss of income as a result of exposure to risks. Social insurance is contributory with contributions being paid by employers, employees, self-employed persons, or other contributors.

In that sense, social insurance involves individuals pooling resources by paying contributions to the state or a private provider so that, if they suffer shock or permanent change in their

⁶ Although the social protection system has several aspects, the prominent ones are social assistance and social insurance (Ferreira & Robalino, 2010).

circumstances, they are able to receive financial support (Kumitz, 2013, p. 22). Social insurance can be either statutory or voluntary. Statutory insurance pertains to compulsory insurance schemes that groups of people are legally required to have; for example, permanent workers that have a mandatory pension fund to cover occupational injuries. In this regard, both the employer and the employee make contributions towards these schemes to protect the worker from contingencies that cause reduction or loss of income. In contrast, people can also enter into voluntary private insurance arrangements, such as medical schemes, retirement annuities, and disability cover. In this sense, social insurance schemes are linked to “protective and preventive measures” where people are required to make regular payments towards schemes that cover maternity, old-age, unemployment, sickness, and accidents (Barrientos, 2010; Hochfeld, 2015).

2.2.3.2 Social assistance

Social assistance is a non-contributory form of social security. A key objective is to alleviate poverty through, among other things, the provision of minimum income support. As Barrientos (2010, p. 10) argues, social assistance aims to ensure minimum levels of consumption that protect poor households from the worst effects of deprivation.⁷ In other words, social assistance exists to help people when they are unable to help themselves or their families due to low or inadequate income. This type of assistance focuses on citizens who are not part of the formal economy or who are not gainfully employed.

Social assistance has been customarily defined as direct, regular, and predictable cash or in-kind (e.g., food) resources provided to certain categories of individuals who are poor and vulnerable (Arnold et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2000; Howell, 2001; Norton et al., 2001). It is usually financed by the state (through taxation) and provided on the basis of a means test or income test. However, social assistance can also involve universal benefit schemes, which are also state-funded but without any means or income test (Howell, 2001, p. 159). Normally, beneficiaries of social assistance are not covered by any other form of social security.

Cash transfers are generally seen as among the main instruments for delivering social assistance. They are also considered as the most efficient and effective form of social assistance (Hochfeld, 2015, p. 4). Not only do they provide households with the means to satisfy their

⁷ Deprivation is defined by low income or in terms of other dimensions of poverty (e.g., social or nutritional status) (Norton et al., 2001, p. 10).

basic consumption needs, they also protect the family from falling into poverty when there is an end to their income (Govender, 2011, p. 59). The majority of the cash transfer programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa are unconditional. With Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCTs) the beneficiary can decide how to spend the income. Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) are given with the requirement that the beneficiary meets certain conditions – often related to human capital development – such as visiting a health clinic or ensuring children go to school (Browne, 2015, p. 6).

Social assistance can also include a wide spectrum of social benefits targeted at the poor and vulnerable. These include the provision of free school meals, public works programmes, and access to public services, such as health and housing.

2.3 Political and economic origins of social security

Polanyi (1944) provides a historical description of the emergence of the market economy as a competitor to the traditional economy. He shows how, prior to the great transformation brought about by industrialisation, people based their economies on reciprocity and redistribution across personal and communal relationships. In the traditional economy, people could produce their own food to meet their families' needs. However, the Industrial Revolution and capitalist development broke down traditional support systems such as the extended family, small rural community, and feudal arrangements (van der Berg, 1997, p. 483). Industrialisation led to the factory system, which triggered rural-to-urban migration, when large numbers of workers migrated to the cities in search of work in the factories. Resultantly, labour power previously devoted to growing food for the family and rural community was redirected to producing profits for employers (Devereux, 2013, p. 14). The industrial age thus made it increasingly difficult for individuals to take care of themselves (Polanyi, 1944) because they became more reliant on the market for employment to purchase goods that will meet their needs. However, the market economy did not always function well or operate at full employment and instead generated insecurities that needed state and social interventions.⁸

This became more pronounced during the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939 where stock markets across the industrialised world (Western Europe and the United States) crashed, which

⁸ Chitonge and Mazibuko (2018, p. 44) argue that “full employment” is a rare phenomenon, and when it occurs, an economy rarely remains at full employment for any considerable period of time; employment levels are therefore always in a state of flux.

resulted in mass unemployment and poverty (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018 p. 42). The labour market could not absorb millions of people who needed work, and consequently reduced material security for the employed and their families. Pressure was placed on governments to provide new systems of income maintenance and support within this context. As Devereux (2013, p. 15) points out, responsibility for guaranteeing subsistence to individuals and families who could not support themselves shifted away from relatives and neighbours and became the responsibility of the market and the state. As such, social security systems were devised as a policy response to address the consequences of industrialisation and consequently, to provide financial relief to individuals and families who struggled to meet their basic needs.

With the rise of the market economy, the scope of social security was still narrowly understood and implemented. In the early 1880s, for example, social security was mainly associated with income maintenance programmes for individuals in formal employment who made regular monthly contributions. Adults with labour capacity had contributory-based social security for periods when they were not working, such as unemployment insurance, retirement pensions, and paid maternity and sick leave (Devereux, 2013, p.15). The earliest forms of social security thus only targeted a small group of people and was predominantly linked to full-time wage-earners. Although social assistance did exist, it was essentially residual and instituted for limited numbers still not adequately protected against certain contingencies (van der Berg, 2007, p. 483). Today, some countries still have social security systems with a predominant workers' insurance character.

The contributory form of social security was initially implemented in Imperial Germany in 1881 when Chancellor Otto von Bismarck initiated the health insurance scheme in 1883, followed by the accident insurance bill in 1884, and old-age and disability insurance schemes adopted in 1889 (Börner & Eigmüller, 2018; Martin & Weaver, 2005; Stefan, 2015).⁹ Germany's early adoption of social insurance programmes has been linked to its rapid industrialisation in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Because these statutory insurance schemes were mostly income-related, a large segment of Germany's population was excluded from claiming any social security benefits (Delsen et al., 2000; Scheubel, 2013). Insurance benefits were mainly based on a contractual agreement between employees and their employer, and in the case of

⁹ Various social problems were treated in European countries before Bismarck's social legislation, beginning with the sixteenth century (Stefan, 2015, p. 25). However, Germany became the first nation in the world to adopt an old-age social insurance programme, designed by Otto von Bismarck (ILO, 2009).

old-age and disability insurance, the state would contribute a modest subsidy (Delsen et al., 2000, p. 2). As Devereux (2013, p. 15) explains, dependants who could not work, such as children, older persons, and people living with disabilities needed state-funded (non-contributory) social welfare if their private support systems were inadequate.

Bismarck's social security model had a powerful influence in Europe and even in the United States. In 1919, the United Kingdom (previously referred to as Great Britain) enacted statutory social insurance schemes. Many of its social security features resembled the German concept of social security (Cumming, 1983). The United Kingdom developed an insurance programme where the "right to benefit" was strongly connected to previous contributions of individuals who had been regularly employed. There was a strong resistance against "free state social benefits" and the idea that "an individual had to help himself by his own efforts" was viewed as the most appropriate alternative (Delsen et al., 2000, pp. 2-3). The idea of extending non-contributory social security to non-salaried populations was considered both prohibitively expensive and likely to reinforce a "culture of poverty" (Merrien, 2013).

The scope of social security in the United Kingdom soon changed after the Beveridge Report 30 years later in 1948 that recommended a national, flat-rate insurance system that would guarantee a minimum standard of living "below which no-one should be allowed to fall" (Devereux, 2013, p. 15). By the late 1940s, many European countries borrowed their social security ideas from both the Bismarck model (employees' insurances) and the Beveridge model (national universal insurances).

A significant period of industrialisation and urbanisation also preceded the advent of social insurance programmes in the United States of America. In the USA, prior to the Great Depression, if a person failed to meet their basic needs, the responsibility to secure them fell squarely on their family (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 42). However, the Great Depression of the 1930s is a historical period where the world entered into a huge economic decline that left many Americans unemployed. A large section of the American workforce was thus vulnerable and needed assistance from the state to deal with the economic shocks and uncertainty. As a response, President Franklin D. Roosevelt promoted the idea that the government was responsible for the wellbeing of its citizens and introduced many new social programmes (Midgley, 1997, p. 78), under the banner of the "New Deal". The Great Depression was thus viewed as a catalyst for the creation of the Social Security Program in the USA (Martin & Weaver, 2005, p. 1).

The USA followed a similar ideological trend with reference to the Social Security Act signed into law by Roosevelt in 1935. This Act provided for unemployment insurance, old-age insurance, and means-tested welfare programmes such as the Aid to Dependent Children Program (ADC)¹⁰ (Martin & Weaver 2005; Moffitt, 2015). Some of the social security provisions outlined in the Act of 1935, notably the means-tested programmes, could offer immediate relief to families to deal with the economic crisis of that era (Martin & Weaver, 2005, p. 1). For example, mothers whose husbands had become disabled were supported by the 1935 Social Security Act through the creation of the ADC Program, because the Act had no provision for support for people with disabilities in general (Moffitt, 2015, p. 731). More than two decades later, in 1956, the US Congress added a programme for individuals with disabilities, called the Social Security Disability Insurance (or SSDI) Program (Moffitt, 2015). In 1965, there was an additional growth in social security with the creation of two health insurance programmes targeted at older individuals (Medicare) and lower-income families who needed medical assistance (Medicaid) (Martin & Weaver 2005; Moffitt 2015). Similar to Germany and Great Britain, social security provisions in the USA have expanded through a series of amendments to the Social Security Act of 1935.

After the second half of the nineteenth century many European countries adopted social security programmes as part of their overall strategy to ensure citizens a certain minimum (basic) social welfare. The historical evolution of the European welfare state laid the foundation for the conceptual and operational ideas that shaped the trajectory of social security around the world.¹¹ As a result of colonialism, many African countries began to copy European social security policies and initiatives.¹² The work of Cooper (1996), for example points out, during the 1940's colonial powers became more and more engaged in the social welfare policies of their African colonies as a way to legitimate the colonial project. This was at the backdrop of not only internal pressure from massive workers' strikes within the colonies, especially after the post-war period, but also external pressure from international organizations, particularly the ILO (Schmitt, 2020, pp.141-142). As a means of stabilizing the colonial workforce, the ILO strongly encouraged colonial powers to incorporate social security initiatives into labour policies of their colonies

¹⁰ Later its name was changed to Aid to Families with Dependent Children, or AFDC, as it is currently known (Moffitt, 2015).

¹¹ Like many other concepts, the conceptual and operational foundations of social security is quite Eurocentric in nature.

¹² As Devereux (2013, p. 13) mentions, social protection in Africa today is woven from several strands of pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial histories.

with the aim to promote the standard of living of the world's poorest (Cooper, 1996, p. 218). Consequently, most formal social security systems in colonial Africa were established following the Second World War. The earliest social security systems were introduced in North Africa (notably Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia) and Sub-Saharan Africa (primarily South Africa). Also, social security programmes were reluctantly and very slowly introduced during the colonial and even post-colonial period in Africa. Many African governments argued that social security is too expensive, especially if they involve regular cash transfers (Devereux & Kapingidza, 2020). Regular (e.g. monthly) cash payments to poor and vulnerable people would require a long-term social contract with citizens. Consequently, most African countries did not introduce social security programmes until after they gained independence from the colonial European countries that controlled them (Bailey & Turner, 2002, p. 107).

Similar to the European case, the earliest forms of social security provision in Africa were usually limited to formal (public and private sector) workers in urban centres. The majority of the population, such as rural smallholder farmers, the self-employed, and informal-sector workers, were left uncovered (Bailey & Turner, 2002; Devereux, 2013). Looking back, it is evident that it was always a challenge, even for the wealthiest countries like the UK, US and Australia, to extend social security to everyone.¹³ For poor, under-resourced African countries, the gradual extension of social insurance benefits was even more challenging. That is because social insurance was originally applied to industrialised economies where the formal sector was predominant, that were culturally homogeneous, and where poverty was viewed as transitional (Marc et al., 1995, p. 11).

Due to the industrialised economic structure of Europe and the USA, the majority of people had contractual employment and could make regular social security contributions. As such, only a minority lived in poverty and was dependent on state welfare (Devereux, 2013, p. 15). The African context, however, was very different. At the time when the European model was imported across Africa, the urban and industrial transitions had not yet happened in several African countries. As such, the majority had no access to formal employment and had very limited financial means to make any contributions towards a social insurance scheme. As

¹³ Interestingly, the work of Katznelson (2005), for example, shows that many African Americans were denied access to welfare benefits under the Social Security Act of 1935. Consequently, the welfare interventions racialised the US population and, in particular, institutionalised hierarchical racial relations. The racialisation of social welfare benefits was also institutionalised in South Africa, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

Devereux (2013) further explains, most Africans lived in rural areas where they depended on farming for a living, and subsequently, were situated outside the formal sector. On this basis, social insurance remained structurally limited in African countries due to the large share of informal workers. Africans were more thus “vulnerable” to economic hardships and required more public-funded non-contributory programmes compared to the industrialised Europe and the USA.¹⁴

Seekings (2012) explains social security provisions in southern Africa were mainly in the form of social assistance. South Africa, a former British colony, introduced “social pensions” and other non-contributory programmes for vulnerable groups – people with disabilities and children who were facing socio-economic difficulties and in dire need of state interventions were the primary beneficiaries. According to Seekings (2012, p. 15) this strategy is most effective when poverty is primarily experienced by people who are unable to work due to age or a disability and who are not being supported by those who can and do work. This approach to social assistance was in particular prominent in some British colonies and dominions, which included South Africa.

Indeed, the developments in (mostly western) Europe shaped the evolution of formal social security systems not only in South Africa, but also other neighbouring African countries. South Africa’s social security was imported during the colonial period from European models which in the early stages of adoption largely evolved around the protection of specific minorities. After the colonial project, South Africa retained its colonial-era social security design, for instance, even the post-apartheid CSG and OPG are locally adapted variants of European social welfare regimes. The expansion of South Africa’s social security provisions under the colonial and post-colonial governments is unpacked and discussed in the following chapter.

The historical perspective above illustrates how the typology of social security has evolved and transformed over time to accommodate the change in political, social, and economic contexts around the world. As discussed in the subsequent sections, developed and emerging countries initiated social security programmes to legitimise their political power, strengthen their relationships with citizens, and of course, to build a stable state and society.

¹⁴ The work of Lutz Leisering highlights the distinct differences between the global North and global South in terms of social security. He explains that social insurance is more prominent in more industrialised countries (global North), while social assistance is more prevalent in less industrialised nations, i.e. the global South (Leisering, 2021, p. 413).

2.4 Theoretical framework

As noted in Chapter One, this study uses the social contract theory to explain the relationship between state and citizens with regards to social security. The previous section explained the evolution of social security and its composite elements. Social security is a key component of the social contract and was necessary to provide the conceptual underpinnings that allow for a discussion on the social contract. The next section discusses some of the most eminent proponents of the social contract theory, from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and from contemporary times.

2.4.1 *Why social contract theory?*

The notion around the establishment of a social contract has been particularly popular among those who examine the politics of social protection (Hickey, 2011, p. 4). The social contract theory is central to the study because firstly, it establishes the legitimacy of authority of the state over the people. Secondly the social contract describes the duties of the state and the rights and duties of citizens. The social contract became popular as a means of explaining the origin of state and government, and importantly, outlining the state's key obligations towards citizens. This is because the social contract theory is built on the notion that individuals created the state, a common authority, with the expectation that the state would provide them with basic security and provide access to basic necessities that will advance their overall wellbeing (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 37).

There is a growing body of literature that considers social security to be a government's duty and a citizen's right (Hudson, 2016, p. 7). For instance, Fombad (2013) argues that social security should be considered a right and entitlement and basic responsibility of government. There is thus an obligation on states to "recognise, guarantee, and protect" the right to social security for its citizens (2013, p. 7). It is in this sense that social security is a fundamental component of a social contract. Many states endorsed the idea of the social contract through the establishment of constitutions that form the legal basis of the rights of citizens and the responsibilities of the state. Many African countries, including South Africa, have also signed and ratified various international treaties concerning the right to social security (Devereux, 2017; Fombad, 2013; Taylor & Triegaardt, 2018).

The social contract between the state and its citizens is deeply embedded in both national and universal legislation – the legal framing of rights and duties of states. As Devereux and White argue: social assistance can be a citizen’s right that is based on the social contract between citizen and state, when funded by government and guaranteed through legislation (2010, p. 68). The state has the moral and legal responsibility to ensure that citizens can claim and enforce their entitlement to social security. Based on this, it is important to explore the nature of the social contract because ultimately, the legal agreements compel and shape how the government performs its duties and, in this regard, also for citizens to claim this as a right.

2.4.2 What is a social contract?

The idea of the social contract developed in Western thought by political philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean Jacques Rousseau during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Hickey, 2011; Lind, 2007; Luiz, 2014). From a review of the literature on the social contract, it is clear that the aforementioned thinkers developed different philosophical approaches to the formation of a common political authority (i.e., a sovereign body) and how it paved the way for a social contract. Their philosophy was based on the idea that a person’s moral and political obligations are dependent upon a contract or agreement among them to form a political community (Hobbes, 1651; Locke, 1689; Rousseau, 1762). These theorists thus used the social contract to demonstrate the value of forming a government on the grounds of political obligation, whereby individuals entered into a voluntary agreement through which an organised society, or a state, is brought into existence (Heywood, 2013, pp. 61-62).

For both Hobbes and Locke, the state was established by individuals who recognised that only a common sovereign power could safeguard them from the insecurity, disorder, and brutality of the state of nature.¹⁵ The understanding was that, with a state, social order and civilised existence would be guaranteed and liberties would be protected. The state was thus seen as a “neutral arbiter”, “empire”, and “referee”, capable of protecting each individual under its authority (Heywood, 2013, p. 61). In this view, the state would act in the interest of all members of society and therefore represent the common good and public interests. Although Hobbes,

¹⁵ A state of nature is a society that is devoid of political authority and of formal (legal) checks on the individual. The state of nature is also linked to the concept of anarchy, which means “without rule” or “no overarching power that can enforce common rules” (Heywood, 2013, p. 61).

Locke, and Rousseau agreed that establishing a common sovereign body is necessary, they had conflicting ideas about what the role and functions of the state would entail and importantly, the responsibilities it would have towards individuals.

Hobbes developed the concept of a social contract, whereby people surrender certain liberties in favour of order and consequently, advocated for a powerful state. In his book *Leviathan* (1651), Hobbes argues that within an absolute and unlimited state, power would not be challenged or questioned; individuals entering into the contract irrevocably transfer their rights to the commonwealth or the persons in charge of it (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 22). Locke, on the other hand, argues for a “weak” or “limited” state whose role is restricted to defending the “natural rights” or “God-given individual rights”, namely: life, liberty, and property. In his work, Locke thus makes a clear distinction between the responsibilities of the state (maintaining domestic order and protecting property) and the responsibilities of individual citizens (Heywood, 2013; O’Neil, 2010). Locke was very cautious about giving too much power to the state. He argues that the state may threaten natural rights as easily as it may uphold them. In this view, citizens must enjoy some protection against the state, which Locke believed could be delivered only through the mechanism of a constitutional and representative government (Heywood, 2013, p. 61).

Rousseau, in agreement with Hobbes and Locke, maintained that the purpose of establishing a collective authority is to extend the freedoms that individuals enjoy. However, Rousseau was aware of the dangers of absolute power (as argued by Locke) and therefore maintained that the people are the repository of their common authority – the general will (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 23). Individuals who enter into this contract, do not transfer nor forfeit their natural rights to anybody, as argued by Hobbes (1651). The rights inherent in the individual as a member of the “sum of forces” created constitute the “general will” (Rousseau, cited in Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 22). Individual citizens’ rights are thus inalienable and cannot be taken away by the state (O’Neil, 2010) but merely be protected by the state. Therefore, the concept of the state is based on the idea of popular sovereignty, where the will of the people gives power and direction to the state.

The laws implemented by the state should thus express the general will and enhance the freedoms and wellbeing of the members of society. If this obligation (of the state) is violated, then the legitimacy of the collective authority does not hold (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 21). If the government ceases to fulfil its mandate to the people, its laws would have no

legitimacy and the government can be voted out of power. Accordingly, the existence of the state and other public entities is justifiable only to the extent that they fulfil the terms of the contract, which in this general form is to ensure the preservation of order, the citizens' lives, and the enjoyment of basic liberties (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 23).

Prior to the formation of the state around the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, individuals organised and ordered themselves politically in different ways. Sovereign power rested with different political units or entities such as kings, queens, and emperors at the universal level, while feudal lords and other authorities ruled at the local level (Ringmar, 2017, pp. 9-10). The modern state thus became the dominant form of political authority because of its various bureaucratic interventions, such as the establishment of public institutions like the military, police, courts, and infrastructure for the building of roads and collection of taxes. The state also provided for the collective welfare of its population. Individuals accepted obligations such as paying taxes in return for the protection afforded by the state which included providing a minimum standard of wellbeing (Luiz, 2014, p. 28). Of course, the notion of the social contract is much more complex, but the basic principle that the state is created to serve people who are its creators and reason for existence is applicable even today (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 23).

2.5 Social contract in practice

To operationalise the social contract in terms of social security, the next section discusses five key aspects that contextualise the state–citizen relationship. These aspects are: (i) the state as redistributor of public goods, (ii) citizenship and social rights, (iii) inclusion and adequate coverage, (iv) justiciability and accountability, and (v) respect and dignity.

2.5.1 The state as redistributor of public goods

The realization of the social contract relies on the ability of the state to respond to the needs of citizens.¹⁶ For example, the social welfare legislation in South Africa, especially in the post-apartheid era, has consistently maintained that the state would be failing its duty if it did not have programmes to aid the many citizens who find themselves in situations where they cannot

¹⁶ Over the years the role of the state has become quite prominent in the social protection discourse. Whereas the early modern state was an instrument for dispensing justice (see Hobbes), the later modern state has acquired unprecedented power over the lives of citizens (McGovern, 2007, p. 34).

meet their basic needs. Since the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the government has increasingly become aware of its “social duty” (van Eeden & de Necker, 2000, p. 5). Therefore, economics is at the heart of delivering these public goods for a state, and a flourishing economy naturally makes it fiscally possible. As such, it helps to consider social security specifically as a public good.

The writings of Lind (2007, p. 1) indicate that individual goods secured by the social contract are not only classic public goods, such as national defence and sanitation. Social contract goods, as Lind calls them, are individual goods that the collective society has decided every citizen needs to have (Lind, 2007, p. 1). These might include health care, unemployment insurance or benefits, education, social assistance, and so on. The nature of the social contract can also be different from state to state or government to government, depending on its political and social arrangement. For example, in some countries the abovementioned public goods may or may not be provided directly by the government. A case in point are countries such as Malawi and Zambia, where donors have influenced and sponsored social protection initiatives like food schemes and cash transfers (Devereux, 2010, pp. 12-13). The South African social security system is government-led, which has been advocated as an effective way to strengthen the relationship between the state and citizens.¹⁷

Current literature shows that social security has been described as representing a state - citizen contract. As Hudson (2016, p.7) notes, the relationship that can be built between state and citizens through social assistance can also serve to strengthen trust in government. It is therefore important that states ensure that eligible citizens can continue to apply and claim for social security benefits. In theory then, the provision of social security benefits can legitimise and strengthen the role of the state in terms of poverty reduction and improving people’s standard of living.

As noted earlier, many countries have implemented a social security system to alleviate poverty and inequality by redistributing state resources between the rich and the poor. One of the most popular approaches to redistribute economic resources has been through social assistance, notably via cash transfers or social grants. The provision of social assistance benefits is

¹⁷ Social protection programmes in other Southern African countries such as Botswana and Namibia are also government-led and financed out of domestic fiscal resources (Devereux, 2010, p. 12).

important to ensure the basic survival of citizens, which in turn contributes to social and political stability (Harvey, 2009; Shepherd et al., 2004).

Over the past years, there has been a steady growth of direct cash transfers (to the poor) across the global South, which includes both middle- and low-income countries. Social grants are becoming more prominent in countries that are faced with increasingly large populations that have no access to wage labour, which is vital for the livelihood of many individuals (Ferguson, 2015). Indeed, in a context of scarce economic resources and opportunities, the state should provide a “safety net” that will empower people to become active members in their households and society at large.

The state holds the economic resources to deliver welfare programmes and in doing so, has the power to transform the lives of citizens. This in essence constitutes the social contract where citizens have agreed to contribute towards state revenue (primarily through taxation) to provide a subsistence income to people without any means of support. Chapter Three shows that the South African government spends billions of Rands each financial year to provide social welfare programmes to millions of people. In that sense, the South African government’s tax and spending behaviour has been quite progressive (taking from the rich to give to the poor) as a commitment towards redistribution of wealth.

There is a growing body of literature that connects social assistance with (re)distributive rights. The notion of distributive rights originates from the social contract and is strengthened by the human rights framework that obliges states to provide minimum living standards for all citizens. Hickey (2007, p. 9) explains that the notion of a social contract can relocate social protection within a project of redistributive justice that is arguably required to support a long-term challenge of chronic poverty.¹⁸ This is associated with the work of John Rawls (1971) who, in his book *A Theory of Justice*, asserts that citizens are entitled to a “social minimum” where citizens can enjoy at least a minimally decent standard of living. He argues that “the social minimum is to be guaranteed by the government either by family allowances and special payments for sickness and unemployment, or more systematically by such devices as a graded income supplement” (1971, p. 243). The social minimum is intended to ensure that “the least advantaged feel they are a part of political society” (Rawls, 2001, p. 129). This social minimum

¹⁸ Redistributive justice is the transfer of property and wealth ownership by direct political influence. Redistributive justice includes taxation designed to move wealth from one group to another, land reform, and other means to promote equality of result over equality of opportunity.

is closely associated with social assistance that has the potential to promote economic and political inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

In this regard, governments have legally binding obligations to secure an adequate standard of living through basic subsistence, essential primary health care, basic shelter and housing, and basic forms of education – elements that together comprise a social protection floor – for all members of society (Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012, p. 18).¹⁹ This generally exists when political and social institutions are arranged to ensure a (re)distribution of public goods and services that contribute to fairness and equality in society. Following this perspective, social assistance is therefore a “public good” and “redistributive mechanism” that forms part of a social contract between citizens and state. In an unequal country such as South Africa, the redistribution of wealth through social welfare programmes has had far-reaching (positive) impacts on the livelihoods of many individuals and households (see Chapter Three).

More recently, James Ferguson (2015), in his book *Give a Man a Fish: Reflections on the New Politics of Distribution* considers social assistance, in the form of cash transfers, as a way that distribution appears in contemporary societies. Ferguson is explicitly concerned with the distribution of ‘direct cash to the poor’ in a particular context of neoliberalism and where livelihoods based on wage labour are eroding. Ferguson (2015, pp.11-12) points out that cash transfers ensures the social reproduction of those that are excluded from the labour market. Accordingly, Ferguson strongly argues that the distribution of cash transfers may be an exemplar of a way of distributing a ‘common, rightful share’ of the nation’s wealth to people who are mostly excluded from the formal sector and have increasingly slim prospects of ever entering the labour market at all (ibid).

Importantly, Ferguson maintains that it would be wrong to assume that only workers and their dependents have the right to share in the nation’s wealth distribution (Ferguson, 2015 cited in Torkelson, 2022). The right to social assistance thus belongs to everyone living in society. This viewpoint is supported by the writings of Ballard (2013, p. 9) which recognises that the poor do not bear complete responsibility for their poverty, and distributional systems facilitated by the state are required to achieve social justice and human rights. Cash transfers, especially from the lens of wealth distribution, has become an instrumental to build a stronger social contract

¹⁹ For instance, article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) compels member states to secure a “minimum livelihood for their citizens including the right to social security” in the event of unemployment, sickness, or disability (United Nations, 1948).

between government and citizens (Ferguson, 2015). To imagine social assistance as sharing in the nation's wealth, could possibly change the notion that social payments are *only* aid, assistance, gifts, or charity from the state.

As noted in the subsequent chapters, the attitudes towards social payments have not always been positive. The discourse of 'deserving and undeserving' poor has dominated the welfare debates for decades (see Seekings, 2019; Kidd, 2017; Seekings, 2007; Munger, 2003). Despite South Africa's constitutional mandate that everyone is entitled to claim appropriate social assistance, welfare participation is still largely stigmatized. Grant beneficiaries are sometimes portrayed as living on handouts and viewed as "welfare dependants" and "freeloaders" as opposed to hardworking people, such as taxpayers, for instance. Torkelson (2022, p. 48), for example, explains that there's a common discourse that a deserving welfare recipient is 'legitimately' unemployed (due to age or ability), while an underserving recipient is 'illegitimately' unemployed (due to age and ability). Accordingly, people who are seen as 'undeserving' are held responsible for their individual poverty, even in the context of high unemployment (Torkelson, 2022).

The aforementioned ideas towards social assistance influence how welfare programmes are perceived, and by extension, how individuals who are recipients of these programmes are treated within society. Negative discourses also compromise the constitutional ideals of the social contract. Not only does it go against the nature of the social contract, it also goes directly against the idea of dignity that human right norms seek to protect (Bender et al., 2013; de Haan, 2014). When viewed through the lens of states and citizens, the latter are viewed as rightful owners of state wealth (as argued by Ferguson) and social protection is seen as a mechanism for the distribution of resources (Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2017, p. 10). Cash transfers provide a visible and immediate economic transfer that reaches the poorest people, providing them with a stake in the economy that supports social and political cohesion, offsetting the costs of necessary economic reforms.

2.5.2 Citizenship and social rights

There is a growing body of literature that connects social security with citizenship and social rights (see, for example, Devereux, 2011; Fombad, 2013; Sabates-Wheeler et al., 2017). Citizenship entails certain civil, political, and social rights or privileges that are enshrined in a state's founding document also referred to as a constitution. Eyben and Ladbury (2006, p. 5)

define a citizen as “someone with rights, aspirations and responsibilities to others in the community and the state”. State-funded security mechanisms have traditionally been initiated in response to national governments’ recognition of their responsibility to fulfil obligations for the realization of social and economic rights.

In the classification of rights, social protection would typically be classified as a social right. Janoski (1998, p. 32) defines social rights as “public interventions into private spheres to support citizens’ claims to economic and social existence”. Social rights (e.g., to education, health care, housing, social assistance) provide much-needed protection in times of vulnerability. The beneficiaries of social rights are often in a position of dependence upon others to provide financial support (cash or in-kind transfers), other social services, and care (Janoski, 1998).

This notion of social rights, also viewed as distributive rights (such as money payments), forms part of the social contract between government and citizens. As Ulriksen and Plageron (2014, p. 756) argue, “every human being, simply by virtue of human being, is a holder of rights and governments have the responsibility to respect, promote and fulfil such rights”. Luiz (2014, p. 28) asserts that a social contract defines the rights and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the political process that is necessary for the effective and legitimate functioning of the state. From a rights-based perspective, individuals are rights-holders who can make legitimate claims, and states and other actors are duty bearers that are responsible and can be held accountable for their acts or omissions in providing these rights (Sepúlveda & Nyst, 2012; Ulriksen & Plageron, 2014).

The focus on citizen rights and entitlements gives rise to obligations on the part of the state – that the state is accountable for the protection and promotion of social rights. Sepúlveda & Nyst (2012, p. 20) maintain that the “right-holders and duty bearers” approach helps to identify who is entitled to make claims and who has a duty to act, and in turn, empowering those who have legitimate claims to rights. Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler (2004) observe that social security benefits can enhance the social status and rights of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups. In particular, the provision of cash transfers is a testament of the state’s commitment towards social cohesion, state building and citizen empowerment. Social assistance is therefore closely linked to citizenship and the obligations of the state to its people.

2.5.3 Inclusion and adequate coverage

As previously mentioned, another objective of social security is economic and social inclusion. Social security creates an opportunity to extend citizenship to poor and marginalised groups by allowing them to claim social assistance as their human right. The issue of inclusion or exclusion has often been cited to raise criticism against the selection criteria or targeting approach of social security programmes, especially programmes that require an income or assets test to be deemed eligible. The reality is that, due to constrained fiscal resources, not all South Africans can claim social security benefits. Consequently, the current system of means-tested targeting offers the potential for exclusion in practice (Hudson, 2016, p. 16). While the means test can be a good way to ensure that those in greatest need of assistance are reached, it can also create negative feelings of exclusion in those who are rejected. Research has shown that the implementation of a means test has the potential to undermine inclusive citizens' rights, and in turn, weaken the relationship (the social contract) between the government and the excluded (Hudson, 2016, p. 11; Leisering & Barrientos, 2013).

Social transfers are often inadequate or insufficient in amount or duration to guarantee income security. This can lead to citizens feeling excluded from the economy, as they do not have adequate "buying power" to purchase basic items for day-to-day survival. This points to possible weaknesses in adopting solely cash transfers as a means of social assistance.

2.5.4 Justiciability and accountability

There is an overlapping relationship between rights, public goods, and the politics of accountability. Each is intimately related to the other in a dynamic way (Newell & Wheeler, 2006). Citizens have a right to access public goods (social security) and a justiciable right to hold government accountable if they fail to deliver.

Rights are just one, albeit very important, means by which citizens can seek accountability, from those who exercise power over them. Citizenship, then, is also understood in relation to processes of demanding accountability from public institutions. Making accountability demands on the state is a way of expressing citizenship. Indeed, there are important linkages between social security as a right, accountability, and citizenship. To make accountable claims, there must be an implicit assumption about the roles and responsibilities of the state, as well as the rights and entitlements of citizens (Newell & Wheeler, 2006, p. 29).

Alongside the legal framing of social security as a right, the state should be held accountable in its responsibility to provide and deliver social security to citizens (Hudson, 2016, p. 11). As noted earlier, states are primarily accountable for respecting and protecting the rights of those within their jurisdiction. The same thus applies to social security that has been recognised as a basic human right by international and regional human rights law. It is therefore important that adequate accountability mechanisms are designed and implemented to hold institutions, public officials, and other duty bearers to account for any abuses of authority and violations of basic rights. Judicial mechanisms have been key avenues in which to pursue legal redress and remedy for rights violations (United Nations, 2013). As such, judicial mechanisms have a key role to play in strengthening the rights-based social contract between state and citizens.

Scholars have emphasised the importance of justiciability in ensuring responsibility and accountability from the state as the primary duty bearer of social security (Fombad, 2013; Piron 2004). A justiciable right to social security means that when this right is violated, the right holder can take their claim before an independent and impartial body (i.e., the judiciary), and if the claim is upheld, be granted a remedy, which can then be enforced. It is important that justiciable rights are supported through a legal framework (i.e., constitution and related legislation) that ultimately provides the foundation on which the contract between state and citizen is built. As Piron (2004, pp. 6-7) argues: for citizenship to be built on justiciability there must be a legal emphasis on the responsibility of the state to deliver social security laws, the ability of the courts to enforce this right, and efficient systems through which citizens can make claims. To ensure justiciability then, the necessary mechanisms to enforce and monitor the right to social security should thus be in place (Devereux, 2011, p. 419).

Furthermore, it is important to consider how effective the mechanisms are through which the right to social security can be protected and enforced. This includes appeals against application decisions and claims regarding the discontinuation of a grant (Devereux, 2011, p. 422). As Devereux asserts, government-funded schemes have the potential to support the state–citizen relationship when supported by a constitutional framework and effective accountability mechanisms. With reference to South Africa, he argues that, “the combination of (1) constitutional provision, (2) a bill of rights, (3) legislation, and (4) an appeals process, amounts to a social contract on social protection” (Devereux, 2010, p. 15). Chapter Three delves deeper into this aspect by considering justiciability through an analysis of the current policy documents on social security in South Africa.

Existing literature on accountability suggests there are two key dimensions to effective accountability mechanisms. Schedler et al. (1999) notes that accountability implies both a measure of answerability (providing an account of actions taken) and enforceability (punishment or sanctions for poor or illegal performance). In other words, citizens have the right to make claims and demand a response from government (i.e., answerability), and at the same time, government should hold public officials²⁰ responsible for any misconduct (i.e., enforceability). There is thus a continuing obligation of public officials to act in accordance with national legislation and be able to explain and justify their conduct in public.

In the South African context, there has been an increase of corruption, fraud, and mismanagement in the social security system (Foley & Swilling, 2018; Reddy & Sokomani, 2008). Political and ministerial accountability has been enforced through parliament, that has the authority to call executive powers to account. Civil society groups in South Africa have been at the forefront to claim and demand answerability and enforceability through the judiciary. Claiming and enforcing accountability is thus a process, where both answerability and enforceability can be achieved through ongoing engagements between citizens and institutions (Newell & Wheeler, 2006, p. 7).

In this vein, grant recipients have the right to hold government accountable for any corrupt activities within the social grant system. As Devereux and Lund (2010) argue, government-owned welfare systems (like in South Africa) are ideally underpinned by a claims-based social contract that is grounded in citizen rights and accountability. In that sense, the social contract compels governments to be responsive to citizens' needs and to deliver public goods and services to strengthen its legitimacy among citizens.

Furthermore, accountability goes hand in hand with transparency. Social security systems need to be easy to understand and the rules governing the provisions must have clear eligibility criteria so that no-one fails to apply if they are eligible. Also, the system needs to be transparent with access to information to avoid potential corruption, clientelism, or maladministration. As we delve further into the research, it will be demonstrated that this is not always the case for grant recipients in South Africa.

²⁰ The term public official encompasses government officials and political office bearers.

2.5.5 Respect and dignity

It is pertinent that the dignity of citizens – or in this case grants recipients – is protected and respected in the delivery of social grants. As argued by Hochfeld and Plagerson (2011a, p. 53), social protection provides material assistance in ways that uphold human dignity, but can also undermine it. Similarly, Wright (2015, pp. 444 - 445) argues that there are tensions and/or contradictions between ‘dignity as principle’ and the lived experiences of beneficiaries, i.e. ‘dignity in practice’. The aforementioned studies resonate well with the emerging findings in Chapters Six and Seven where it became evident that these two notions of dignity can seem disconnected. Many CSG and OPG recipients felt that their sense of dignity was not protected, respected and valued at all times. Accordingly, dignity and respect became key aspects of the study, especially from a social contract perspective. The normative understanding of dignity relates to a person’s feelings of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-respect that should be valued and honoured regardless of social status (Pelser, 2015; Steinmann, 2016). Dignity can also be considered as “respect for the autonomy of each person, and the right of everyone not to be devalued as a human being or treated in a degrading or humiliating manner” (Chaskalson, 2002, p.137).

It is important to remember that human dignity features very prominently within the South African Constitution. It reads: “[t]he Republic of South Africa is one, sovereign, democratic state founded on the following values: human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms” (RSA, 1996). Section 10 of the Constitution further outlines “everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected” (RSA, 1996). Of course, having formal legislative frameworks of human rights is no guarantee that these rights will be upheld. Although the Constitution and literature on social security practices emphasise the importance of dignity, there is not a clear definition or roadmap for translating the concept into practice. Consequently, the complex nature and ambiguity around the concept of (human) dignity could be a potential weakness to the social contract between citizens and government. Hudson (2016, p. 11) maintains that a lack of respect to recipients, and the lack of commitment to upholding the principle of dignity, by government officials can weaken the state-citizen relationship. Especially if you consider that dignity is enshrined and inherently part of the Constitution, with government responsible for upholding this constitutional ideal.

2.6 Concluding remarks

Based on the above, it is clear that the degree to which social security can contribute to strengthening the social contract between state and citizens depends upon many factors. The realization of the social contract between the state and citizens relies on its ability to respond to citizens' overall needs that transcend income support. Importantly, the rights-based framing of security, although an important foundation, does not necessarily guarantee a strong state–citizen relationship. Yes, securing social security is a necessary step, but this does not guarantee that government is fulfilling its constitutional obligations in terms of accountability, responsiveness and the promotion of human rights and dignity. In that vein, how social security is implemented, delivered, and monitored is extremely important to maintain and strengthen the social contract.

In conclusion then, is important to note that the social contract theory offers a viable and credible lens or approach to describe the duty of the state towards citizens with regards to social security. Placing social security within the lens of the social contract implies not only an obligation towards poverty eradication, but also a set of morals or principles that guide the administration of such a system. This “lens” provides the framing upon which the delivery of the OPG and the CSG can be viewed against, effectively allowing the juxtaposition of the ideal type against implementation in practice.

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CHAPTER THREE: SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL CONTRACT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1 Overview

The preceding chapter provided a theoretical and conceptual framework that underpins this study. Exploring important concepts such as social security, social assistance, citizenship, and human rights and viewing these through the theoretical lens of social contract theory provides a foundation to explore social security in the South African context. Importantly, how South Africa has implemented social security programmes and the specific form that they take is a sturdy framework towards a practical understanding of South Africa's social contract. This chapter starts with the historical context of social security in South Africa. It describes how the colonial and apartheid forms of social security were essential building blocks for social security in a democratic South Africa. The second part of the chapter provides an overview of key legislative developments that have created the current form of social security in South Africa. It explores the South African Constitutional Framework for Social Security, the White Paper on Social Welfare, the Lund Committee Report, as well as the report of the Committee of Inquiry into Comprehensive Social Security. Holistically, these legislative developments have profoundly impacted the shape, form, and ideational underpinnings of South Africa's social security package, which by extension, gives us a framework to understand South Africa's social contract.

3.2 Historical overview of social security in South Africa

The state-financed social security system dates back to the formation of the Union of South Africa, established in 1910. However, before that period, it is important to provide a contextual overview of Britain's direct colonial involvement in South Africa that lasted from 1795 until 1910. British colonialism redefined and revolutionised how power, race relations, and labour patterns were structured in South Africa. Over the course of this period, British rule was incremental, and its expansion from the Cape to the rest of South Africa was militaristic in nature and motivated by securing property, agricultural land, and mineral extraction (Terreblanche, 2002, pp. 179-183). The expansion of British colonial rule disrupted local indigenous populations such as the Khoisan and Afrikaner Boer republics, in favour of Britain's interests. Also, to promote these interests, racial classifications were systematically embedded in the governance practices of the state authority. Over the 115 years of British rule,

it embedded its economic, political, and legal systems, as well as British culture and ideologies in South Africa. The important factor to consider when viewing Britain's rule, is that they had shaped the country's economic and governance architecture in such a way that it closely resembled the structure of European nations.

From 1890 to 1924, South Africa experienced an economic and political revolution. During this period, various political units controlled by the British, Afrikaners, and independent African tribes were united into the Union of South Africa under the effective control of whites. This period can be characterised as state building, where whites consolidated political domination and institutionalised racially-based socio-economic and labour structures were institutionalised. Following the Anglo-Boer war (1899 - 1902), a system of white political domination endured and gained effective "control" over African labour that entrenched racial segregation. Against this backdrop of colonialist expansionism, social security systems and frameworks evolved in South Africa, with very different approaches to social assistance and support based on racial categorisation and discrimination (Patel, 2015, p. 45). As demonstrated later in the chapter, these concepts had a powerful effect on the eventual development of social welfare programmes and policies (Patel, 2015, p. 45).

3.2.1 The Pact Government

One of the most important developments in South Africa from 1924 to 1933 was the formation of the Pact Government. This was a coalition between the National Party (NP) headed by General J.B.M. Hertzog, based in poor rural areas, and the Labour Party (LP) whose political support was largely among skilled urban workers (Seekings, 2021, p. 198). The newly formed coalition government strongly emphasised the need for greater state intervention in the protection of white workers, and particularly those who were unemployed and poor. The electoral victory of the NP and LP in 1924 strengthened the legitimacy of the white-oriented state founded in 1910 (Terreblanche, 2002, p. 272). It became the first Afrikaner nationalist government in South Africa and was determined to (re)solve the "poor white" problem (Bottomley, 2012, p. 99). The literature shows that there was a deep fear of "moral decay" among the partners of the Pact government; in particular, they saw white poverty as a threat to the moral and spiritual values of the white population in South Africa (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2019, p. 145). Even though the African and coloured population made up the majority of the poor in South Africa, the Pact government increased state intervention in favour of white families and to the disadvantage of black South Africans. Economic and political policies were

therefore primarily defined and shaped by white privileges. The Pact government ensured institutionalised minimum public benefits for all whites regardless of their class position (O'Meara, 1996, p. 471).

Shortly after its electoral victory, the Pact government created the Department of Labour and instituted strategies to protect white people from any competition from black people. The labour laws introduced by the Afrikaner nationalist government were extremely racialised. Its “civilised labour” policy ensured that white individuals were paid more than black individuals to foster a “civilised” standard of living for white families (Bottomley, 2012, p. 99). In addition, the Pact government strengthened the racial hierarchy and deepened racial segregation by instructing parastatals, especially the railways and postal services, to provide employment to white unskilled workers. Non-whites, especially those classified as Africans were forced to give up their occupations to accommodate poor whites (Plaatje, 2007, p. 28). Employers who had a whites-only hiring policy were favoured for state contracts (Bottomley, 2012; Terreblanche, 2002), which made it difficult for black (skilled and unskilled) workers to compete in that environment.

The above-mentioned solutions to the so-called “white poverty problem” had profound and lasting implications for black poverty and inequality in South Africa. The black members of the population were entirely frozen out of the political and economic system. For example, between 1924 and 1933 the number of unskilled white workers rose from 9.5% to 39.3% of the labour force, while the number of unskilled black workers fell from 75% to 49% (Bottomley, 2012, p. 100). The literature further shows that by the 1950s, employment opportunities for white individuals were created in postal services, the police and defence forces, prisons, and local and provincial governments (ibid). In the event where different racial groups were working for the same employer, economic participation was not on equal terms. For instance, black and white people with the same qualifications were paid different wages for performing the same job, especially in the public sector (Seekings & Nattrass, 2005, p. 2). This also meant that white people could not have black managers, which confined black people to low-skilled and low-paid jobs. The economic and political system was designed so that those who were racially classified as white had a higher standard of living compared to other racial groups who were seen as inferior.

The exclusion of black people from the labour force was not because black people lacked the competence to participate in the system, but precisely because the government feared that they

would be “competent” and pose a threat to white prosperity and supremacy. Another striking example is that of the education of black people. The apartheid government extended lower-quality “Bantu education” to people of colour to limit their economic participation. This was also to ensure that blacks could perform only certain menial and manual tasks (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 21). Accordingly, the lives of individuals who were classified as ‘non-white’ were devalued to a low social status, where they were oppressed at all spheres controlled by the state. As Seekings and Nattrass argue, white “civilised” standards of living could only be sustained “through the systematic discrimination against the majority” (Seekings & Nattrass, cited in Bundy, 2016, p. 53). In essence, the Pact government perpetuated a racially oppressive system similar to their colonisers.

While coloured people’s rights dramatically deteriorated vis-à-vis those of whites under the Pact government, this population group was nevertheless in a relatively advantageous position (politically, socially, and economically) in relation to black Africans. For instance, Terreblanche (2002, p. 267) emphasises how the coloured population was exempted from certain legislation governing urban segregation, such as influx control and pass laws in the 1930s. In terms of state assistance, when the social pension system was introduced in South Africa in 1928, only people who were classified as white and coloured (or who were residents of the Union of South Africa), aged 65 years or older could receive it.²¹ However, this strategy was also racially motivated. The Pact government’s inclusion of coloured pensioners was an explicit response to fears of the perceived *swartgevaar*²² (black threat) and therefore attempted to secure political support from the coloured population (Bundy, 2016; Seekings, 2007), thus driving a wedge between the ‘so-called’ non-white people.

The white population’s dependency on social pensions remained relatively small (compared to the coloured population) as occupational retirement insurance covered the majority of the white population. In 1936 and 1937, the same racial groups – whites and Coloureds – benefitted from the introduction of a disability grant, which evolved out of the pensions for blind persons (Bhorat, 1995; van der Berg, 1997). However, the disability grant was also racially skewed towards white domination. Benefits went mainly to white beneficiaries and to a lesser extent

²¹ Social pensions were also focused on the urban areas, biased towards organisations linked to the Dutch Reformed Church, and actively promoted the ideal of nuclear families (Lund, 1992; Webster & Fakier, 2010).

²² *Swartgevaar* (literally, black danger) was a term used during apartheid to refer to the perceived security threat of the majority black African population to the white South African government and the white minority population.

to coloured recipients. Those who were classified as Indian and African were entirely excluded from receiving any social assistance from the state. The Pienaar Commission, instituted in 1926, declared that social pensions were unnecessary for “Natives” (also referred to as Black Africans) since they could rely on their “native custom” and “cultural norms and values” to take care of themselves (Devereux, 2001; Liffé, 1987; Lund, 2009). This exclusionary practice was also implemented on the grounds that native people lived mainly in rural areas where their basic needs were met through farming and traditional food-sharing habits (Ahadzie et al., 2006). Indian people were also marginalised and were denied economic and political freedoms. Seekings (2007, p. 390) writes that Indian people were prohibited to compete with white traders and had restricted land ownership. Resultantly, those who were classified as African and Indian were disenfranchised with very little voice in terms of the economy and politics of the day.

This had an immensely negative impact on their rights and entitlements to social security. Africans were predominantly unemployed or underemployed with no access to social insurance benefits. Ironically, while this group was the poorest, they could not share in the benefits of the old-age pension. The poorest section of society was therefore excluded from accessing social assistance in the form of social grants. The Pact government governed for only nine years, but it left a legacy of systematic exploitation and exclusion through various legislative measures. They were obsessed with entrenching white political power and used labour repressive measures and other policies to ensure that the African population, in particular, was systematically excluded from the social contract between state and citizens. The social contract was thus inherently racialised, and theorised and implemented based on a contract between a white government and its white beneficiaries.

3.2.2 The Smuts and apartheid government

The situation was re-examined in 1944 when the Social Pensions Act of 1928 was amended. The pre-apartheid government under Field Marshal Jan Smuts modestly extended the state pension to “urban Africans” on the condition that they could prove that they had lived in an urban area for five of the seven preceding years. Another eligibility requirement was that “urbanised natives” had not been allocated land in a native area or had immediate family who lived in a rural area (Devereux, 2007, p. 534). Africans who lived in urban settings were included in the social contract in terms of social assistance. During this period, rural Africans remained ineligible for the pension unless they were landless. When the NP government came into power in 1948 it further entrenched racialised political and economic policies. Under the

apartheid government, social pension coverage was extended to non-urbanised Africans as well, but again, it was provided at a much lower rate compared to whites and other population groups. The justification was that natives should receive lower rates because they paid lower taxes and had a lower standard of living (Devereux, 2007, p. 543). The social pension scheme was to some extent “deracialised” with the inclusion of the African population but was also designed to maintain the status quo. Although there was some resistance against the discrimination against the African population, the NP government was not prepared to impose more taxes on the white population and was also concerned that the African population will become a financial burden. Accordingly, the state welfare expenditure for whites represented an important economic and political stabiliser to secure and maintain white support (Patel, 2015, p. 49).

In 1950, the apartheid government created the Department of Bantu Administration and the Department of Coloured Affairs, to administer social security for individuals classified as African and Coloured respectively (Brockerhoff, 2013, p. 21). By 1958, a decade into the apartheid era, the distribution of social grants was still racially skewed towards whites. Africans made up 60% of the social old-age pensioners, although they received only 19% of the old-age pension spending (van der Berg, 1997, p. 489), while Coloured and Indian pensioners were paid half as much as whites (Bhorat, 1995, p. 597). In 1961, the apartheid government created the Department of Indian Affairs to deal with the Indian population in South Africa. The establishment of these departments thus allowed the apartheid regime to develop a social security system of significantly different standards of coverage for different racial groups (Brockerhoff, 2013, p. 21).

The racial discrimination towards black recipients was further reinforced through administrative delays, corruption, and system inefficiency. These constraints were more evident in rural areas where the majority of African people resided. Accordingly, the social contract in terms of social security that primarily stems from colonial and apartheid legislation came with many conditionalities for Africans compared to that of coloureds and Indians. The racialised social welfare policies (discriminatory social contract) hindered the black population to fully claim and fully enjoy the benefits made available by the apartheid state.

In essence, South Africa’s social security system has its roots in apartheid labour and welfare policies that were racially biased towards the benefits of the white population. For nearly 16

years, African people were not entitled to claim any social security benefits from the state. Consequently, denying Africans access to the means of production (i.e., employment) and social welfare benefits caused a structural cycle of poverty, inequality, and misery. African people remained poor, insecure, and experienced life from the perspective of a “struggle for survival” (Thompson, 1990, p. 207). The discriminatory state welfare programmes led to many African households relying on informal social security arrangements for their day-to-day survival. The informal arrangements that were established included savings clubs, burial societies, *stokvels*,²³ and food co-operatives, which fulfilled important forms of social and financial support. These independent social welfare activities initiated by the people have contributed to poverty alleviation within the African communities (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2019, p. 132). Interestingly, informal social security provisions in post-apartheid South Africa still exist, even though formal social security in the form of social assistance has been extended to all racial groups. This is because the lived experiences of many social grant recipients have shown that South Africa’s formal social security provision, especially in the form of social grants, has been largely inadequate to meet the most basic needs of the poor. Hence the proposal for a basic income grant (BIG) was put forward. This is discussed later in this chapter.

The story of the lived experiences of social grant recipients in a democratic dispensation cannot be told without understanding the institutional oppression and discrimination that “people of colour” encountered at every level of their existence. It is undeniable that institutionalised racism greatly attributed to the persistently high levels of poverty and inequalities among the majority of black households in South Africa today. The institutional fragmentation that apartheid imposed in relation to social welfare services, further divided an already divided nation. It is clear that political intent was always social and economic exclusion of the black population to further advance the social status and welfare of whites.

As a result, the social contract was not equally extended to everyone who lived within the borders of South Africa. Not all population groups had equal access, rights, and entitlements to the public services and resources of the state. The white government used social security as key political and policy tools to fulfil its social contract to the white population. As noted in

²³ The *stokvel* is an informal social security initiative that has been practiced for many years by the majority of black South Africans. A *stokvel* is considered as an investment scheme where members contribute a fixed amount of money on a weekly or monthly basis in attempts to respond to gaps in state-funded social security. Each member receives a lump sum pay-out in turn, at specified times in future (Matuku & Kaseke, 2014; Patel, 2015).

Chapter Two, a healthy social contract demands equal inclusion and coverage of social security benefits. Inclusiveness and fair opportunity to access social security are also important elements for a state–citizen relationship to work. However, the unequal and racially fragmented social welfare system under the white-dominated regimes was a critical limitation of the social contract as we know it today. At the time of the new political dispensation in South Africa, social grants were only available to a small percentage of the population – reaching only three million older persons, people with disabilities, parents, and children (Patel & Plagerson, 2016, p. 39). The political leaders were faced with a difficult task to redesign and renegotiate a social welfare system that would ultimately benefit the whole population rather than a selected few.

3.3 Building a new social contract

The fall of apartheid in 1994 and the rise of democracy paved the way for a renewed social contract between “equal” citizens and the newly elected government led by Nelson Mandela’s African National Congress (ANC). South Africa was in desperate need of a democratic social compact that will ensure inter-racial reconciliation as well as socio-economic upliftment and reconstruction. At first, the idea of a renewed social contract seemed rather elusive and unattainable, given the historical context of deep-rooted racial oppression, discrimination, and segregation. Although apartheid-era racial legislation was abolished, many South Africans continued to experience life according to the racial classifications of the apartheid era. There was unresolved tension between different racial groups mostly due to the vast economic disparities between the privileged and the unprivileged. As such, the legacy of apartheid was still alive as it was so deeply entrenched in all aspects of South African society.

The following section illustrates that while it was not an easy process, a new social contract was achieved through various legislative measures, in particular within the social security framework. Importantly, this section discusses how the renewed social contract paved the way for a new vision of what constitutes and defines social security in a globalised context.

3.3.1 Evolution of the constitutional framework for social security in South Africa

As democracy approached, the social security system required a fundamental reform to address past injustices of racial oppression and disadvantage. The social security system had to be “deracialised” and extended equally to all racial groups in terms of coverage and monetary value. The key objective was to develop a social security system that would ultimately ensure

equal protection, social justice, and improve the quality of life for all South Africans. The new system that was implemented in 1994 had the difficult task of alleviating extreme patterns of racialised poverty and inequality that the previous social security system failed to address (Lund, 2008; Taylor Committee, 2002).

The drafting of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) was an important historical turning point for democratic South Africa. This policy reform process presented the new government with a unique opportunity to develop a new constitutional framework grounded in the human rights approach concerned with the rights of all citizens and meeting the needs of people, particularly those who are disadvantaged (Patel, 2015; Taylor & Triegaardt, 2018). Aligned to universal human rights principles, the South African Constitution provides for a progressive Bill of Rights that protects the civil, political, and socio-economic rights of all people living in South Africa (RSA, 1996).²⁴ Socio-economic rights give people access to certain basic needs (resources, opportunities, and services) necessary for human beings to lead dignified lives (Khoza, 2007).

South Africa's Constitution is progressive and is one of the few in the world that expressly recognises socio-economic rights as justiciable rights. As Christiansen (2007, p. 322) argues, adjudication of such rights can only be carried out legitimately by the political branches of government, which also requires significant government resources. In South Africa, the power to enforce and adjudicate these rights vests in the courts. The public or an individual can thus approach the South African Constitutional Court in the event that their rights or entitlements have been violated. Within this perspective, the state has the duty to ensure that these rights are realized by all organs of the state in South Africa namely, the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.

Social security is one of several socio-economic rights guaranteed in the South African Constitution. Section 27 (1c) of the Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to access social security, including appropriate social assistance for those unable to support themselves or their dependants. Section 27 (2) states that “the state must take reasonable legislative and

²⁴ South Africa's rights-based approach has a historical base. In 1996, South Africa became a signatory to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The United Nations adopted the UDHR in 1948. For decades, social and economic rights were often regarded as “second class” rights. However, it was agreed that socio-economic rights would have the same status as civil and political rights within the South African Constitution.

other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of each of these rights”.²⁵ In addition, Section 7(2) requires the state to “respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights” (RSA, 1996).

As previously explained, at the core of developing a social contract between government and citizens is adopting legislation that gives directives to the state (as duty bearer) to protect the welfare of all people under its jurisdiction (rights-holders) against poverty and vulnerability (Ulriksen & Plageron, 2014). The Constitution, in particular the Bill of Rights, is therefore a good example of how the South African state has established a social contract with “everyone” regardless of age, gender, race, or religion, among others. In the context of social security, specific pieces of legislation, such as the Social Security Act of 2004 was crafted to operationalise the functions and services of the state to realize the right to access social security and appropriate social assistance.

The Constitution, together with other relevant legislation, therefore lays the foundation to the social contract between the South African state and citizens. Importantly, the social contract is mutually beneficial. It would also be in the government’s interest to progressively extend social security benefits (as experienced under the apartheid regime) that may ensure more public support for the ruling elite. This in turn could possibly further maintain the government’s political legitimacy and strengthen the social contract with members of society.

While the Constitution imposes obligations on all spheres of the state to uphold the right to social security, it does not delve into how this should be conceptually framed, legally enforced, and ultimately implemented in a democratic South Africa. As Trilsch (2009, p. 557) explains, the Constitution provides a general framework for socio-economic rights that is formulated entirely in abstract terms and which does not clarify the content of these rights. A case in point, is that the Constitution does not define what should be considered as “social security and appropriate social assistance” as stipulated in sub-sections 27 (1)(c) and (2) (RSA, 1996). It has been left to other enabling legislation, such as the White Paper of Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) and the courts to explore the meanings of these provisions for constitutional interpretation. To outline the evolution of the social contract in relation to the right to access social security, the subsequent sections draw on key policy documents and contributions made

²⁵ See section 27(1)(c) and section 27(2) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996).

by the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997) and reports of the Lund Committee (1997) and the Taylor Committee (2002).

3.3.2 White Paper for Social Welfare of 1997

The Department of Welfare and Population Development (DWPD), renamed as the Department of Social Development (DSD) in 1998, produced the White Paper for Social Welfare in South Africa that was adopted in 1997. The White Paper is based on a developmental approach towards social welfare and provides some clarity on what the restructuring of social welfare services, programmes, and social security in South Africa would look like. A central tenet of a developmental social welfare approach is the integration of social and economic development that can enhance the welfare of all in society (Patel, 2015, p. 103). A key aspect of the developmental approach is to embrace socio-economic rights, including the right to social assistance, embedded in the South African Constitution.

The White Paper for Social Welfare became the first overall social welfare policy under the new political dispensation. It specifies the broad policy areas and goals for social welfare services, social security provision, and other anti-poverty strategies available to people in need. It also includes a differentiation between social security and social assistance that did not exist before (Swart, 2006; Vally, 2016). Importantly, it reinforces the idea of social security as a constitutional right for all South Africans, prioritising those who were historically disadvantaged. The White Paper thus reconceptualises the social contract between the government and citizens in relation to social welfare. The enabling document introduces a social contract that is people-centred, inclusive, and progressively addresses core issues of hunger, malnutrition, and unemployment.

The White Paper drew from two ANC policy documents, namely the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) and National Social Welfare and Development Plan that contributed to the significant changes in how social welfare were to be understood and translated into policy in a democratic state (Taylor & Triegaardt, 2018, p. 20). Drawing from these frameworks, the White Paper articulates a transformative vision for social welfare that would act as a redistributive tool to assist people to move out of poverty. At the time, South Africa needed to develop its own definition of social security that considered the unique historical background as well as social and economic challenges (Taylor Committee, 2002). As mentioned earlier, transforming social welfare policy was necessary to break away from the

previous oppressive social security system that was built on the principle of racial differentiation.

The White Paper describes social security as “a wide range of public and private measures that provide cash or in-kind benefits or both” (DWPD, 1997, p. 47). The document explains that social security will intervene, firstly, if a person is – for various reasons – unable to avoid poverty; or secondly, if children have to be maintained. The White Paper also defines social security as “poverty alleviation, social compensation and income distribution”. Social security is based on four fundamental and interrelated pillars, namely: social insurance, social assistance, private savings, and social relief (DPWD, 1997).

The White Paper acknowledges that social security benefits can play an important stabilising role within a context of extreme poverty and inequality. As such, a social security system is part of the essential building blocks towards sustainable social and economic development that will benefit the whole population. By the same token, the document emphasises that social security plays an active redistribution role that could enhance the social status of the poor, create human capacities and self-reliance (DWPD, 1997).

To fulfil this vision, the White Paper also outlines government’s commitment towards a long-term objective of implementing an integrated and comprehensive social security system. It states that “[f]irstly, it will require comprehensive social assistance to those without other means of support, such as a general means-tested social assistance scheme and [s]econdly, it will require the restructuring of social insurance ...” (DPWD 1997, p. 51). The White Paper reinforces that a transformative, integrated, and comprehensive social security system is crucial to give effect to the constitutional right to social security (DPWP, 1997).

The welfare policy document emphasises that the target group is poor and vulnerable people. The aim is to address the alienation and the economic social marginalisation of vast sectors of society who are still living in abject poverty, are vulnerable and have special needs (DPWD, 1997). As such, the document states that social welfare expenditure will be directed to the “special needs” of individuals, largely the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities, who were structurally impeded from entering the labour market. Accordingly, the White Paper is committed towards the continuation of social assistance as one route to poverty alleviation, but also in the same vein, strongly encourages individual financial responsibility where possible. For example, the Department of Welfare’s flagship programme provides training for

unemployed women with children with the goal of reducing their dependence on grants (Lund, 2008; Seekings, 2016).²⁶ The ANC's former Minister of Welfare (April 1997 to April 1999), Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, praised the department's programme (Seekings, 2016) and advocated for the phasing out of benefits in favour of development programmes to train the poor to support themselves.

Notably, the White Paper considers social assistance as a support mechanism "of last resort" – citing the limited scope for alternative sources of financing (DPWP, 1997, pp. 55-56). This approach soon changed under the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) framework (adopted under former President Thabo Mbeki), that identified social grants as a key component of wealth redistribution. Under then Minister of Social Development, Zola Skweyiya, social grants became the principal programme that sought to account for the flaws/shortcomings of implementing neoliberal economic policies (Foley & Swilling, 2018, p. 7).

3.3.3 Report of the Lund Committee

The Lund Committee for Child and Family Support was established in 1996 to review the child maintenance system that was introduced in the 1930s to protect mainly white families who had children in need.

As noted earlier, the highly racialised social welfare system had a huge impact on the lives of children as well. Under the policy directive of the Children's Protection Act of 1913, the majority of child allowances were awarded to white children and very few were provided to African children. In fact, there was a period that no welfare support was extended to young African children who resided in rural areas (Kruger, 1992) who were arguably the most vulnerable segment of the South African population (Lund, 2008, p. 9). The Children's Protection Act of 1913 was amended in 1921 and replaced by the Children's Act of 1937, which extended its coverage to include more children of African descent. However, in the early 1990s, only 1% of the State Maintenance Grant (SMG) recipients were black despite the fact that black people constituted more than 80% of the population (Witworth & Wilkinson, 2013, p. 121).

²⁶ The Flagship Programme for Unemployed Women with Children aged between 0–5 years was launched in 1995.

There was therefore a gradual extension of the social contract in relation to social welfare benefits for children. However, the social contract was weak. Very few African women who were eligible to apply could access the grant on a regular basis (Lund, 2008; Seekings, 2016; Woolard et al., 2011). While the old-age pension and disability grants had already been deracialised by 1994, the SMG benefitted mainly racial minorities. This is another example of how the colonial and apartheid governments extended a “partial” social contract to South Africans who were classified as non-white. Their main objective was to systematically protect the interests of the white minority. The new government realised that an urgent institutional reform was needed to affect the constitutional right to social security and appropriate social assistance.

The Lund Committee, chaired by the university professor Francie Lund, was thus mandated by the Department of Welfare to explore policy alternatives in relation to social security for children and families in need on an equitable basis. Consequently, the Committee made it clear that the “old apartheid-era” state maintenance grant was not sustainable and inappropriate in the South African context. To reflect on just one limitation, Lund mentions that the distribution of SMG beneficiaries was racially unequal and assumed that the only children in need were those living with single mothers (Lund, 2008). Perhaps more concerning for the South African government was the severe financial implications that a deracialised SMG would have on state coffers going forward. The SMG was quite generous in the amount disbursed to each claimant and an extension to all eligible children had an estimated cost of 12 billion per year (Lund, 2008; Patel & Plagerson, 2016). With these practical challenges in mind, the Lund Committee recommended that SMG should be phased out over a five-year period and replaced with a flat-rate child-linked grant of a significantly reduced monetary value (Lund, 2008).

The Child Support Grant (CSG) was formally introduced in 1998 with the aim to reach millions of poor women and children and address the racial bias that existed in the old system. The implantation of the CSG thus represented one of the first successful attempts to integrate and improve an apartheid-era child maintenance grant with the key objective to make it equally accessible to all. Lund, in her book, reflects that the Committee favoured a universal grant – a benefit that would go to all South African children (Lund, 2008, vii). Universal access was a key motivation behind the Lund Committee’s investigation with the aim to broaden access. Unfortunately, the government faced severe fiscal constraints at the time and was moving

towards a conservative macro-economic policy (i.e., less public spending on welfare) (Lund, 2008; Seekings, 2016).

The Department of Welfare thus introduced a means test and the CSG was awarded to the primary caregivers of poor children under the age of seven years. Despite these attempts to broaden access to social assistance, this could be considered as undermining the social contract development between the newly elected government and mothers that cannot claim the CSG because the child is older than seven years. The limitations to the social contract were blamed on the limited financial resources at the state's disposal. Hence the right to access social security and appropriate social assistance could not be extended to "everyone". The Lund Committee was not oblivious to the obstacles facing social contract development in South Africa. The Committee made it clear that should the implementation of the CSG prove to be successful, it could be later expanded by raising the age limit of eligible children. Over the years there has been an incremental increase in the eligibility age to access this grant.

In early 2003 the government, under the leadership of former president Thabo Mbeki, announced that the CSG would be extended to include (income-eligible) children under the age of fourteen. This extension was to be phased in over three years and mandated through modifications to the Social Assistance Act (No. 59 of 1992) (Budlender & Woolard, 2006; Meintjes et al., 2003). Subsequent policy reforms extended the CSG to include sixteen-year-olds in 2011 and finally, based on the recommendation of the Committee of Inquiry into Comprehensive Social Security (also referred to as the Taylor Committee), the CSG was extended to all income-eligible children up to the age of eighteen (Patel & Plagerson, 2016; Woolard et al., 2011). The extension of the new age threshold meant that more children would benefit from the grant.

Before the policy amendment, van Rensburg and Horsten (2004, p. 52) argued 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. This was because the age limit of the CSG did not match the constitutional definition of children at the time.²⁷ Accordingly, the extension in age eligibility can be seen as another attempt of the government to progressively realize the right to appropriate social assistance to poor families with children in need.

²⁷ According to Section 28 (3) in the Bill of Rights, chapter 2 of the South African Constitution, child means a person under the age of eighteen years (RSA, 1996).

Establishing a social contract (that would benefit everyone) thus underwent a long process of policy formulation and reformulation since the dawn of democracy.

The Lund Committee played a key role in the policy formulation process and redesign of the social assistance system in South Africa. Together with the White Paper for Social Welfare, the Lund Committee facilitated a renewed social contract around the right to social assistance, particularly aimed at poor families with children. Basically, two important factors played out here, namely that democratic South Africa had to craft a social assistance system that could be scaled up relatively quickly as millions of South Africans who were previously excluded would now qualify for a cash transfer. The CSG, together with the Older Person's Grant (OPG), became the cornerstones of the current social assistance programme in South Africa.

3.3.4 Report of the Taylor Committee

Although South Africa made significant advances in addressing the inadequacies of the previous social security system, many problems and challenges have persisted. The government was aware that many eligible people were not aware of their constitutional right to social security, and subsequently, a large proportion of the poor remained excluded with little means of advancement (Taylor Committee, 2002, pp. 30-31). In March 2000, the government instituted a Committee of Inquiry into a Comprehensive System of Social Security, chaired by Professor Vivienne Taylor, to examine the shortcomings of the existing system and propose recommendations on social security policy reforms. The Taylor Committee was the last task team to deal with the inequalities in the social security system that was inherited under apartheid. Although many of its recommendations were never adopted by Cabinet, the Committee's work influenced national debates and played a major role in shaping the current social assistance system.

The Taylor Committee's proposal was to centralise the administration of social assistance and to create the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). In 2004, two years after the recommendations by the Taylor Commission, President Thabo Mbeki approved the South African Social Security Act. The Act regulates the administration of seven social grants: child support grant, older person's grant, disability grant, foster care grant, war veteran's grant, grant-in-aid, and care dependency grant. The Act is the founding legislation that provides for

the establishment of the SASSA as an agent to ensure efficient and effective management, administration, and payment of social assistance, i.e., cash transfers.²⁸

The Taylor Committee also revisited the concept of “social security” – an employment-centred concept that was inherited from the old British system. Importantly, the Committee noted that the concept of social security is outdated and does not speak to the new realities that developing countries like South Africa are facing in terms of poverty reduction and social and economic development. Taylor and Triegaardt (2018, p. 65) explain that social protection as a concept is broader than social security and is considered to provide basic necessities for people to function, which, by the same token, will enable them to contribute to the social and economic development of the country.

The redefining of an appropriate concept (of social security) for South Africa was important for the Committee to position itself within an international framework. It noted that the concept of social protection is more widely used internationally and also consistent with that of the United Nations (UN) Commission on Social Development which has mapped out a broad conceptualisation of social protection (Taylor Committee, 2002). In addition, the term social protection is widely used to describe international commitments to a social protection floor developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Patel, 2015, p. 163). The Committee decided to adopt the concept of social protection in their report that was submitted to the Department of Social Development in 2002. The Committee noted that:

Comprehensive social protection is broader than the traditional concept of social security, and incorporates developmental strategies and programmes designed to ensure, collectively, at least a minimum acceptable living standard for all citizens. It embraces the traditional measures of social insurance, social assistance and social services, but goes beyond that to focus on causality through an integrated policy approach including many of the developmental initiatives undertaken by the State (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 41).

The Taylor Committee therefore advocated for a “comprehensive social protection package” to provide the basic means for all South Africans to effectively participate and advance in social and economic life, and in turn to contribute to social and economic development. The social protection package would consist of measures addressing income poverty (social grants), capability poverty (health care, education, water and sanitation, transport, housing, access to

²⁸ South African Social Security Agency Act, section 2(3)(a).

jobs and skills), asset poverty (land, credit, and infrastructure) and special needs (disability and child support) (Taylor Committee, 2002, pp. 41-43). The term “social protection” has not been formally adopted in South Africa’s guiding legislation and for practical purposes some scholars have used the two terms interchangeably. Following the work of the Committee, the National Planning Commission (NPC) refers to “social protection” in its policy documents as a holistic strategy to address the legacies of apartheid (NPC, 2011; 2013).

The Taylor Committee also recommended the introduction of a Basic Income Grant (BIG) of R100 per month per citizen as a means of providing social security to all and alleviating poverty. The rationale behind this proposal was the fact that there are large proportions of the population that are not protected in any way. The Committee’s report revealed that there is no income support for children between the ages of seven and eighteen years as well as for adults between eighteen and fifty-nine years of age. While the ANC government incrementally extended coverage to children, able-bodied adults are effectively “excluded” from accessing social assistance. Notably, many in this age group are in income-insecure positions (Olivier, 2021; Taylor Committee, 2002). As such, the right to access social security was not fully extended to them unless they could prove disability or chronic illness that hamper their ability to work and earn an income.

The BIG would thus function as a mechanism to include the unemployed and those working in the informal economy in the social security system (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 61). This income, defined as “a general social assistance for all South Africans”, would be provided as an entitlement without a means test that will more readily reach the poorest people (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 61). The BIG would therefore be an unconditional cash transfer. The Committee strongly advocated that “a basic level of income ... has other developmental spin-offs related to enabling that person to participate more effectively in the economy” (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 42). The BIG Coalition (a coalition of trade unions, churches, and NGOs) represented the biggest supporters of the BIG and in many ways sustained public debates over universality in grants (Seekings, 2002, p. 20).

Moreover, several scholars strongly argued that the BIG or “solidarity grant” would be the best way possible of strengthening social solidarity and ensuring the constitutional right to social security to everyone and not a targeted few (see Standing & Samson, 2003). The key point was that a solidarity grant would be a progressive attempt to provide “all South Africans a minimum

income sufficient to meet basic needs” to ensure that no-one “should have to live below minimum acceptable standards” (DPWP, 1997). These objectives were pointed out in the White Paper of Social Welfare that commits the government to build an integrated and comprehensive social security system.

Many government officials were opposed to the idea of BIG due to the high financial costs involved. The proposal also received objection on the grounds of “promoting handouts” to people who were neither disabled nor sick. The government was of the opinion that BIG would create a culture of entitlement and preferred the provision of jobs through public works programmes where people would have dignity of work (Seekings, 2002, p. 22). The hostility to a BIG opened space for raising the CSG age limit age (from 7 to the age of 14) as a compromise (Seekings, 2016; Woolard et al., 2011). The government also decided to establish an Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) in 2004 to tackle unemployment and poverty. This occurred despite the fact that the Taylor Committee had rejected the idea of a public works programme to address the unemployment problem. The Committee argued that the EPWP does not offer long-term viable employment opportunities for the unskilled and structurally unemployed (Taylor Committee, 2002, p. 74). Although the recommendation was ignored, the Taylor Committee reopened the debate on broadening the scope and access to social assistance in South Africa.

The Taylor Report played a significant role in redefining the role of social security/protection within a regional and international context. It strongly suggested that the South African government amend its social security laws to comply with its relevant international obligations. This is important because the right to social security (guaranteed in the South African Constitution) derives from international law that recognises social security as a universal human right. Arguably, international human rights law must also be considered when exploring the right to social security from a social contract perspective. South Africa has indicated its intention to become a party to and to be legally bound by the obligations imposed by relevant international treaties (Hagemejer, 2021, pp. 52-53).

3.4 Social security and the global social contract

3.4.1 Role of international law in establishing the social contract on social security

The right to social security has been strongly grounded in international law as norms and standards. International law constitutes agreements among states, sometimes called “legal

instruments” that include treaties, covenants and conventions that are international contracts between states (Traisbach, 2017). A state’s obligation in realizing the right to social security can be influenced by the international instruments that seek to create norms and standards for social security policy in a given state. As mentioned in Chapter Two, many governments across the world have recognised social security as a fundamental human right that is embodied in their national constitutions. The state, as duty bearer, therefore has the prime and legal responsibility to fulfil its constitutional obligations to all people under its jurisdiction in terms of the socio-economic rights adopted. While many countries have signed and ratified both regional and international obligations with regard to social security, there are substantial gaps between ratification and the implementation of these instruments. As Devereux explains, in practice, global coverage of social security remains limited. It is estimated that only one in four people in the world, and less than one in ten on the African continent, have effectively realized the right to social security (Devereux, 2017, p. 11). On the international level, two key contributions include (i) Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) signed in 1948 and the (ii) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) adopted in 1966. These two frameworks were introduced to protect and promote the human rights of the global society, in particular vulnerable groups such as the elderly, women, children, and persons with disabilities.

Shortly after the Second World War, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UDHR, which plays a pivotal role in the establishment of social security policies in both global and regional contexts. The key objective of the UDHR was to provide a “common understanding” of the human rights and fundamental freedoms to which all human beings are inherently entitled to (Jansen van Rensburg & Lamarche, 2015). In terms of social security, Article 22 of the Universal Declaration specifies that “everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security”. In addition, Article 25(1) of the of the Universal Declaration recognises that everyone has the right to social security “in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age and other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his or her control”. The Declaration recognises that all vulnerable groups are deserving of assistance from the state. It can also be read as providing special protection for children as a vulnerable group. For instance, in Article 25, paragraph 2, mothers and children are given special recognition, as the Declaration guarantees their entitlement to “special care and assistance” irrespective whether the child was born in or out of wedlock. Within this context, the UDHR has provided an important foundation for the recognition of social security rights and many treaties that were

subsequently introduced have incorporated its guiding principles. While the declaration is not legally binding, it has occupied a special status among international human rights instruments, in particular the provision of social security (Fombad, 2013).

The right to social security is also recognised in the ICESCR. This is a binding covenant aimed to establish pragmatic mechanisms at national level for realising the human rights enshrined in the UDHR (Devereux, 2017, p. 16). As of November 2018, 169 states have ratified or acceded to the ICESCR. Ratification means that these countries are duty bound to implement its provisions into their domestic laws.²⁹ However, the absence of ratification does not mean that the provisions of the ICESCR do not apply to nations that have only signed it. It is required that countries who are signatories should also refrain from passing national legislation that might go against the goals and standards of the ICESCR (Basson, 2020, p. 851). The number of countries who have signed and ratified the ICESCR provides evidence of a global consensus with regard to the norms and standards of international human rights.

Article 9 of the binding framework stipulates that “states parties to the present Covenant recognise the right of everyone to social security, including social insurance”. Both non-contributory and contributory schemes are thus covered under the Covenant. Social security is therefore considered as an important human right with the primary objective to protect the welfare of all individuals who reside within the state. The provision of social assistance, in particular, plays a vital role in maintaining and improving the lives of people against poverty and vulnerability. Article 11 declares that “states parties should recognise the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family”. Jansen van Rensburg and Lamarche (2005, n.p.) argue that the right to an adequate standard of living can be interpreted to mean that a state must at the very least provide social assistance or any other social benefits in cash or kind to anyone who lacks the necessary resources to sustain themselves. In the South African context, the Constitution (RSA, 1996) unequivocally states that people who are unable to support themselves and their dependants have the right to access social assistance. It is clear that the South African state, through its own legislative measures, have duly incorporated the minimum norms and standards stipulated by the ICESCR.

²⁹ Section 27(2) of the ICESCR provides that each state ratifying the ICESCR becomes bound by its provisions three months after such ratification.

Under Article 2, paragraph 1, the ICESCR also asserts that state parties must progressively achieve the full realization of rights recognised in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including in particular, the adoption of legislative measures. The component of “progressive realisation and obligation” is also mentioned in the South African Constitution in terms social security provisions. According to Devereux (2017), progressive realization allows governments to become signatories of international commitments without being duty bound to deliver on these commitments immediately. This principle therefore acknowledges that some rights (such as social security) might be difficult to achieve when the country is subject to limited economic and technical resources. This means that member states cannot be expected to do what they cannot afford. In this vein, Article 2 of the ICESCR acknowledges that low-income states might need international aid to finance the costs of delivering social security benefits (Devereux, 2017, p. 16).

Besides the ICESCR, the International Labour Organization (ILO), one of the specialised agencies of the United Nations also played a prominent role in the promotion and realization of the right to social security around the world. Since its establishment in 1919, the organisation as adopted a number of protocols and recommendations relating to social security. As discussed in Chapter Two, the ILO through the Convention 102 of 1952 established minimum standards for the provision of the nine principal branches of social security. In 2012, the ILO also adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation that affirms that social security is a global human right and is an economic and social necessity for development and progress (Zamani & Evin, 2016, p. 50). In addition, the Recommendation recognises that social security is crucial for sustainable long-term growth and social inclusion (Dijkhoff, 2019, p. 353).³⁰

In essence, international law has had strong influence on the development of social security policies. The UDHR, the adoption of its sister treaty, ICESCR, and the ILO contributions are key drivers of social security systems and processes at international, regional, and national levels. However, international norms and standards are not always enough to achieve the desired outcome of providing social security to everyone who resides within the borders of a statutory state. While states might be committed to the provisions, the progressive achievement and realization thereof are dependent on their available resources, facilities, and capabilities.

³⁰ Recommendation 202 of 2012 is not a convention. Accordingly, it is not binding and does not need ratification from any ILO member state. However, the recommendations have an important task of setting guidelines for national policy and action (Jansen van Rensburg & Lamarche, 2005).

Devereux (2017, p. 30) explains that governments can benefit politically from introducing progressive social security policies in terms of electoral support. On the other hand, governments can also be apprehensive of the fiscal implications such policies might have. Progressive obligation towards social security also needs the moral and political will of governments in terms of legislation and implementation. As some scholars have pointed out, domestic political motivation is possibly the biggest driving factor in terms of the design, shape, and implementation of social security practices within a particular state (Seekings, 2007; Visser, 2004). Domestic politics and interests thus play a crucial role in strengthening social security programmes and benefits.

3.4.2 South Africa's adoption of international and regional law

From an international perspective, South Africa is a member of the United Nations and therefore has committed itself to the international human rights embodied in the UHDR. It also signed the ICESCR – the treaty that deals with socio-economic rights in 1994 under the leadership of Nelson Mandela. After a lengthy campaign by numerous stakeholders, South Africa ratified the ICESCR on 12 January 2015 under the Jacob Zuma administration. Upon ratification, South Africa became legally bound by the provisions in the ICESCR and has an obligation to domesticate the provisions therein. Simply put, the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP) need to ensure that national legislation and policies are aligned to the goals and standards of the Covenant. Furthermore, the ratification also requires that the South African judiciary align their jurisprudence with the obligations set out within the ICESCR. This subsequently implies that the right to social security is justiciable and has legal significance via the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996) with the support and functions of the courts of law.

From an African continental perspective, South Africa is also part of the African Union (AU) established in 2002 as a successor of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) instituted in May 1963. The ICESCR influenced the drafting and development of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (hereafter referred to as the African Charter), adopted in June 1981. The right to social security is not specifically acknowledged in the African Charter. However, certain elements of the right could be drawn from Article 18, which stipulates: "The state has the duty to assist the family [and] ... the aged and disabled shall also have the right to special measures of protection in keeping with their physical or moral needs". Recently – in

2022 – the AU mandated the African Commission to adopt a Protocol on Social Protection as a binding instrument. The Protocol, adopted in February 2022, urges governments to take the necessary steps and make more resources available to include even informal workers who might not be covered under the current social security packages. This was a major step forward that will not only strengthen a rights-based approach to social security, but also eradicate poverty and reduce vulnerability.

The Treaty of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) of 1992 is legally binding on all its members. South Africa is one of fifteen states that are members of the SADC. While the treaty commits member states to the protection of human rights and principles, there are no explicit references to social security in the Treaty. Nevertheless, the Treaty requires that member states coordinate and develop their social security systems and ensure that SADC citizens do not forfeit their social security benefits (Mpedi & Nyenti, 2015, p. 90). The SADC also adopted the Charter of Fundamental Social Rights in 2003, which provides comprehensive guidelines for the establishment of social security schemes in the region. According to Article 2, every worker is entitled to adequate social protection. Article 10 asserts that individuals without any means of support are entitled to adequate social assistance.

Accordingly, social security provisions in South Africa are based on the minimum requirements established by international and regional legislation. Since 1994, the country has made significant progress to provide meaningful protection to poor and vulnerable groups. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, in theory, South Africa's social security system is regarded as the most comprehensive in Africa. Unfortunately, there are still substantial gaps between ratification and implementation at the domestic level (Devereux, 2017, p. 11). For example, South Africa's social security remains compartmentalised to narrow categories, such as children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those in formal employment. Social assistance for the unemployed and poor is therefore limited if they fall outside of these categories.

Linked to this is the issue of undocumented foreign nationals who are not eligible to receive any social grants, either for themselves or for children in their care (Khan, 2020; Black Sash, 2010).³¹ Only documented foreign nationals who are either permanent residents or have been

³¹ A documented foreign national is someone who is living in South Africa and has documents recognised by the Department of Home Affairs allowing them to be in the country. They include permanent residents, refugees, asylum seekers and migrant workers. An undocumented foreign national

granted refugee status in South Africa are entitled to claim social security benefits. Consequently, undocumented foreign nationals often find themselves in extremely vulnerable situations with limited access to food, healthcare and housing (Millard, 2008; Mpedi & Smit, 2011). Undocumented foreigners mostly rely on ‘informal’ social security strategies in the absence of formal public provision (Avato et al., 2010). The limitations placed on undocumented foreign nationals to receive social assistance therefore contradict the principle that “everyone” has a right to social security, as stipulated in international and regional provisions that serve as best practices for signatory countries. Arguably, the restrictions imposed on undocumented non-citizens, who are often viewed as ‘illegal immigrants’, also violate the universal right to human dignity, which according to Khan (2020), is one of the weak aspects of South Africa’s social security system.

The aforementioned therefore suggests that a significant portion of the population - citizens and non-citizens - is still not covered by the social assistance programme that acts as the primary safety net in South Africa. As shown in this Chapter, the legislative foundations for a comprehensive social security system are in place. Due to the highly categorised nature of the grants it has unfortunately not transpired into the full realization of the right to social security for “everyone” living in South Africa. That being said, South Africa is not the only country that faces these issues and difficulties in working towards the objective of fully realizing social security entitlements. Devereux (2017, pp. 23-27) explains, that many African countries, such as Kenya, Lesotho, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have fallen short of extending the full (universal) social security entitlements to their citizens and non-citizens. This is despite these countries being signatories to several global and regional human rights instruments. Indeed, global and even regional initiatives and agreements on social security have had little direct influence on national-level policy-making (Seekings, 2020). Many governments across the world have been struggling to realize the right to adequate and meaningful social security provisions as envisioned in the UDHR, ICESCR, and other relevant frameworks.

3.5 Concluding remarks

This chapter provided a historical overview of how the social contract, in relation to social security, has evolved over time in South Africa. During the colonial and apartheid eras, South Africa narrowly provided welfare benefits to a limited segment of the population, excluding

might have documents (e.g. their own passport) which are not recognised by the South African Department of Home Affairs as giving them permission to be in the country (Black Sash, 2010, p. 52).

the majority of its people. The social security system during apartheid was based on systematic racial categorisation and segregation. As scholars have indicated, under apartheid, some non-white population groups, such as coloureds and Indians never received the same level of social benefits that the white population group received. For black Africans, these benefits were almost non-existent as they were confined to rural areas in the former homelands.

By the time that South Africa transitioned to a democracy, a significant proportion of the population was systemically excluded from participating in the formal economy and from welfare provision, including the provision of basic services. Accordingly, the government established a “new” social contract that was based on the inherent rights and dignity of every citizen in South Africa. This system was created through the development of a new constitution that enshrined the rights of all persons in South Africa, which was complemented by the development and adoption of policy frameworks to support these rights. Key policy documents and contributions to the policy process included the Constitution (RSA, 1996), the White Paper for Social Welfare (RSA, 1997), and the reports of the Lund Committee (Lund, 1997) and the Taylor Committee (Taylor, 2002). These policy frameworks and committees made significant strides in social security provision, which shaped the nature, scope, and content of the social contract in relation to social assistance in the post-apartheid era.

Specifically, the White Paper committed government to a long-term objective of implementing a comprehensive social security system. The Lund Committee facilitated a new social contract around the right to social assistance aimed at poor families with children. The Taylor Committee dealt with the administration of social assistance and recommended the establishment of a centralised administration system that took the practical form of SASSA. In addition, social security was redefined to incorporate international and regional perspectives, which included social security as a universal human right.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOUTH AFRICA'S SOCIAL SECURITY SYSTEM IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

4.1 Overview

The previous chapter delved into the historical context of social security globally, the apartheid system, and post-apartheid policy governing the current system in South Africa. It laid a foundation to explore how the social security system is structured in post-apartheid South Africa. This chapter provides an overview of its structure, and then focuses on the social grant system, the CSG, as well as the OPG. This overview also explores how the administration of social grants is operationalised and the structures put in place to do so. Furthermore, the chapter investigates challenges and successes in the grant's administration. These interrelated factors combine to demonstrate that the social security system in a democratic South Africa does have an impact on how recipients of the grant perceive the social contract.

4.2 Structure of South Africa's social security system

The political and institutional changes of 1994 created a platform for innovative social security policies with an emphasis on social assistance (Barrientos, 2013, p. 55) that all South Africans can claim and enjoy. At the time of the transition, the country was faced with severe socio-economic problems. Millions of people were living in difficult circumstances, characterised by poverty, inequality, violence, social disintegration, disability, and HIV/AIDS, and needed government support (DPME, 2014, p. 3). There was an urgent need for the government to prioritise its fiscal resources to support the redistribution of wealth and land previously allocated to whites, to be redirected towards the black majority.

The redistribution of wealth post-1994 has been achieved mainly through the provision of government services and social welfare benefits. The main focus of social welfare is to directly alleviate poverty for those with low or no wage income. Social welfare is provided through a wide array of mechanisms in South Africa. This includes government's investment in education, health services, social development, public transport, housing, and local amenities, as well as contributory and non-contributory social security mechanisms (SPII, 2018; World Bank, 2018).

In the context of high unemployment, social security has played a role in limiting the growth of poverty and inequality and cushioning the impact on the poorest in South Africa (ODI, 2011). Despite the many fiscal challenges at the time, South Africa has come a long way and is considered a leader for its extensive social security system in the global South (Patel, 2016). The country’s social security system has been widely acclaimed not only as one of the largest cash payment systems in the developing world (Bhorat & Cassim, 2014; Bundy, 2016), but also as one of the “world’s first debit card-based payment system for welfare and social security” (Ungerleider, 2012, n.p.).

In light of the extreme socio-economic divisions experienced by the black majority, the post-apartheid government introduced a number of social security programmes designed to lift recipients out of poverty. In the South African context, social security measures deal with both absolute deprivation and the vulnerabilities of the poorest, and also with the need of the currently non-poor for security in the face of shocks and life-cycle events. The social security can be categorised into (i) contributory schemes (i.e., social insurance) that protect individuals against adverse events; (ii) non-contributory schemes (i.e., social assistance) that protect the poor using cash or in-kind transfers; and (iii) labour market interventions, in the form of a public works programme. The basic structure of the current social security system is outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: South African social security system



There are three primary social insurance measures: the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), the Road Accident Fund (RAF), and the Compensation Fund. South Africa’s social insurance system also includes a regulated, voluntary component, consisting of private medical and

retirement schemes for those who can afford it, as well as the Government Employees Pension Fund (GEPF) – a defined benefit pension fund established in 1996 and mandatory to all government employees (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020, p. 6). As noted in the preceding chapters, social insurance is largely contribution-based and biased towards formal-sector workers, with very limited coverage of those working in the informal sector. Contract workers and immigrants are also excluded. As such, many people are excluded from being contributors and, subsequently from receiving unemployment benefits. The contributory arm of the social security system has received little public attention, perhaps because this affects a relatively smaller number of recipients compared to social assistance.

The social security discourse in South Africa has primarily focused on the government-funded non-contributory (social assistance) programme that mainly constitutes social grants. There are seven different social grants available, usually in the form of cash transfers provided by the South African government, where contributions are derived from government revenue received from taxes (Browne, 2015, p. 6). Over the years, social grants have become an important source of income relief among low-income households (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020), which ensures a minimum standard of living for older persons and people with disabilities (Patel, 2015). The next section discusses the coverage and impact of social grants in South Africa.

Another government-funded initiative includes the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP). It was implemented in 2004 with the objective to create temporary employment opportunities – basic income security, through labour-intensive delivery methods (Köhler & Bhorat, 2020; Patel, 2015).³² As noted in the preceding chapter, the EPWP is one of the government's short- to medium-term development programmes to tackle unemployment and reduce poverty. The programme focuses largely on infrastructure projects, followed by the social sector that delivers care services, such as early-childhood development and home-care services (Patel, 2015, p. 180). Additionally, the programme aims to provide those of working age with income, work experience, and training for the unemployed. The EPWP puts emphasis on the participation of youth, women, and persons with disabilities to be incorporated into the labour market. In 2015/16 the public works programme provided 742,000 work opportunities to 285,000 full-time equivalent jobs (World Bank, 2018).

³² Other initiatives include various fee waivers for health care, schooling, and utilities (Hall & Woolard, 2014, p. 349). Although not formally classified as social security in the national budgets, they provide important protection to the poor and marginalised.

While this programme plays a critical role to reduce unemployment (and consequently alleviate poverty in marginalised communities), it cannot provide for all people who need protection against economic hardships. The programme's scale is determined by the government's capacity of creating employment opportunities and therefore, it cannot provide jobs to all the work-seeking unemployed persons (Peres, 2019). As illustrated in Figure 1, the EPWP also forms part of social assistance and from this viewpoint is aimed at alleviating poverty associated with unemployment, with a particular focus on able-bodied but unskilled adults (Phillips, 2004, p. 2). The EPWP Business Plan (2019 - 2024, p. 10) states that the EPWP achieves more than just creating work opportunities, the programme also provides income support to the neediest. According to the EPWP 2022 monitoring report, 30,989 work opportunities were created with 42% being youth and 67% women. Although this programme is important, social grants, in contrast, have a larger coverage and can be deemed to have a greater impact on poverty reduction.

4.3 Social grants in South Africa

The social grant system comprises several types of cash and non-cash transfers. In early 2020, the South African government distributed more than 18 million social grants, reaching roughly a third of the South African population. The most common and frequently accessed cash transfers are the older person's grant, disability grant, war veterans' grant, foster care grant, care dependency grant, child support grant, and grant-in-aid. In addition, the Social Assistance Act (RSA, 2004) makes provision for the social relief of distress as a temporary assistance measure. The grant constitutes food parcels and vouchers that are accessed mostly by persons in temporary hardships who are unable to meet their families' most basic needs (SASSA, 2019). This non-cash transfer is given for a short time only, usually for three to six months.³³ The social relief of distress (SRD) grant is another mechanism that the state is using to ensure food security among the poor.

Some social grants, such as the OPG, CSG, SRD grant, disability grant, and the care dependency grant are subject to a means test. The South African government embraced a

³³ The extension of the period by a further three months may be granted in special cases. No person who is in receipt of a social grant may receive the grant and social relief of distress simultaneously, unless the applicant has been affected by a disaster, as defined in the Disaster Management Act or the Fund-Raising Act, 1978 (SASSA, 2019).

neoliberal anti-poverty strategy, using the means test or conditionality before offering social grants to individuals. A neoliberal welfare policy suggests that the state should minimize its role and financial contribution to welfare services. According to the neoliberal view, where the free market is prominent, only when people are unable to participate in the market economy for reasons beyond their control, are social grants used to relieve poverty (Peters, 1997; Dinbabo, 2011). The neoliberal agenda views social assistance as “draining national economic resources”, while it also “encourages laziness and unwanted dependency on the state” (Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011b, p. 2). As was already established earlier in this thesis, negative discourses about social assistance consequently have a significant impact on the creation and interpretation of welfare policy.

The means test is therefore a way of determining whether a person qualifies to receive a social grant. The means test criteria vary from one grant type to another in terms of age, income threshold, and marital status. Van der Berg (1997, p. 16) explains that means testing has always been part of South Africa’s social grant system. It is essential for ensuring that funds target the poor rather than the less poor part of the population.

Direct cash transfers are thus intended for those who have insufficient financial means to support themselves or their dependants (SASSA, 2022). Accordingly, this means that not everyone would “qualify” for social assistance, which contradicts the rights-based social contract approach, as discussed in the preceding chapters. As argued by Pratt (2001), the liberal free market regimes are characterized by selective residual welfare which is a targeted means tested kind of assistance for the poor that imposes restrictions on the scope of social rights. The means test has thus become a very contested issue since the establishment of the Lund Committee in 1995. The contestation around the abolishment of the means test, especially for the OPG and CSG, always ended with a neoliberal stance, resulting in the means test remaining in South Africa.

This thesis focuses on the CSG and the OPG, as these two grants are the most extensive social grants both in terms of coverage and costs. In the beginning of the 2020/21 financial year, the Department of Social Development announced the following means test criteria for the CSG and the OPG: the CSG provides income support to parents and caregivers of children younger than 18 who earn an annual income of less than R51,600 (single) and R103,200 (married). The OPG provides income support to people aged 60 and older whose annual incomes are less than R82,440 (single) and R164,880 (married), and whose assets do not exceed R1,174,800 (single)

and R2,349,600 (married). The CSG and the OPG (like other social grants) are administered as an unconditional cash transfer programme and require nothing from the recipients as far as the use of the funds is concerned.

Table 2 below lists the non-contributory social assistance currently available in South Africa.

Table 2: Non-contributory social grants

Grant	Eligibility
Older Persons	Citizen, permanent resident, or refugee who does not live in a state institution. Must not be in receipt of another social grant for himself or herself. Income below R82,440 (single) or R164,880 (married). Assets below R1,227,600 (single) or R2,455,200 (married).
War Veterans	Citizen or permanent resident who fought in World War I, World War II, or the Korean War; does not live in a state institution. Must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of himself or herself. Income below R82,440 (single) or R164,880 (married). Assets below R1,227,600 (single) or R2,455,200 (married).
Disability	Citizen, permanent resident, or refugee who has submitted a medical assessment of disability and does not live in a state institution. Must submit a medical / assessment report confirming disability. Must not be in receipt of another social grant in respect of himself or herself. Income below R82,440 (single) or R164,880 (married). Assets below R1,227,600 (single) or R2,455,200 (married).
Foster Care	Citizen, permanent resident, or refugee. No means test, must provide court order of foster care status.
Care Dependency	Citizen, permanent resident, or refugee; child under 18 with a medical assessment of permanent severe disability, who does not live in a state institution. Income below R231,600 (single) or R427,200 (married). No assets test.
Child Support	Citizen, permanent resident, or refugee. Income below R51,600 (single) or R103,200 (married). No assets test.
Grant-in-Aid	Recipient of Older Persons Grant, Disability Grant, or War Veterans' Grant, who requires a full-time caretaker, and does not receive care in a state-subsidised institution. No means test.
Social Relief of Distress (SRD)	Temporary grant issued for up to six months, after a disaster or other hardship. Can be issued in food parcels or vouchers rather than cash. No means test, must be unemployed.

Source: SASSA, You and Your Grants 2020/21.

4.3.1 Financial provisions for social grants and trends

The South African government's spending on social protection programmes, through the Department of Social Development, is estimated at R248bn for the 2022/23 financial year, accounting for 95% of the total budget of the department. In addition, National Treasury (2022, p. 56) projects that over the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), this budget will comprise 14.1% of total government expenditure. The budget for social assistance has also grown at 11.4% since the 2018/19 financial year, demonstrating a fiscal commitment to social protection over time and into the MTEF. These budgetary commitments aim to reach 13.3 million children and 3.9 million older persons, an increase from 2018/19 where 12.5 million and 3.6 million were reached, respectively. It is important to note that the value of the OPG has increased from R1,695 in 2018 to R1,990 in 2022, with the CSG increasing from R400 in 2018 to R480 in late 2022.

Despite this, it is crucial to recognise the decline in the real value of the grants over the past few years. The CSG only saw a R10 increase from R450 in April 2020 to R460 in April 2021. According to Hall (2021), the meagre increase meant that the grant could buy even less in 2021 than it did in 2020 as a result of food price hikes and inflation. For instance, when food prices peaked at almost 12% in September 2022, the CSG increased from R460 to R480 in 2022 at a rate of only 4.3% (Human, 2022; Damons, 2022). The annual consumer price inflation was slightly over 7% in 2022 (StatsSA, 2022). The OPG which is substantially higher than the CSG, has also fallen short in terms of budgetary increases. In the 2021/22 financial year, the older person's grant (for those aged between 60 to 74) saw a minimal increase, also below inflation at 1.6%, from R1,860 to R1,890 (Wasserman, 2021). During the same period, the foster care grant saw an even smaller increase of 1% from R1,040 to R1,050 (ibid).

Table 3 below provides a general overview of the trends in grant value per beneficiary across all grants. These increases usually take effect at the start of the new fiscal year, but additional increases can also be implemented later in the year.

Table 3: Grant value per beneficiary

	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
Older Persons 60 – 74	R1,600	R1,700	R1,780	R1,860	R1,890
Older Persons 75+	R1,620	R1,720	R1,800	R1,880	R1,910

War Veterans	R1,620	R1,720	R 1,800	R1,880	R1,910
Disability	R1,600	R1,700	R1,780	R1,860	R1,890
Foster Care	R920	R960	R1,000	R1,040	R1,050
Care Dependency	R1,600	R1,700	R1,780	R1,860	R1,890
Child Support	R380	R410	R430	R450	R460
Grant-in-Aid				R450	R460

Source: SASSA, <https://www.sassa.gov.za/>

Studies have shown that the social grant programme is the South African government's biggest poverty alleviation and redistribution intervention (Rossouw, 2017; Word Bank, 2018). At the end of 2018, this programme alone reached almost 18 million beneficiaries and was estimated to increase to 18.6 million in 2020/21 (National Treasury, 2019). The number of grant recipients has thus significantly increased over the last decade. Coverage increased from just over two million recipients in 1996/7 to almost 14 million in 2009/10 (ODI, 2011, p. 3). The percentage of households that received at least one grant increased from 30.8% in 2003 to 43.8% in 2017 (GHS, 2017) and slightly increased to 44.3% in 2018 (GHS, 2018).³⁴ It is thus not surprising that social grants have become the second biggest source of income (after labour income) in South Africa (World Bank, 2018).

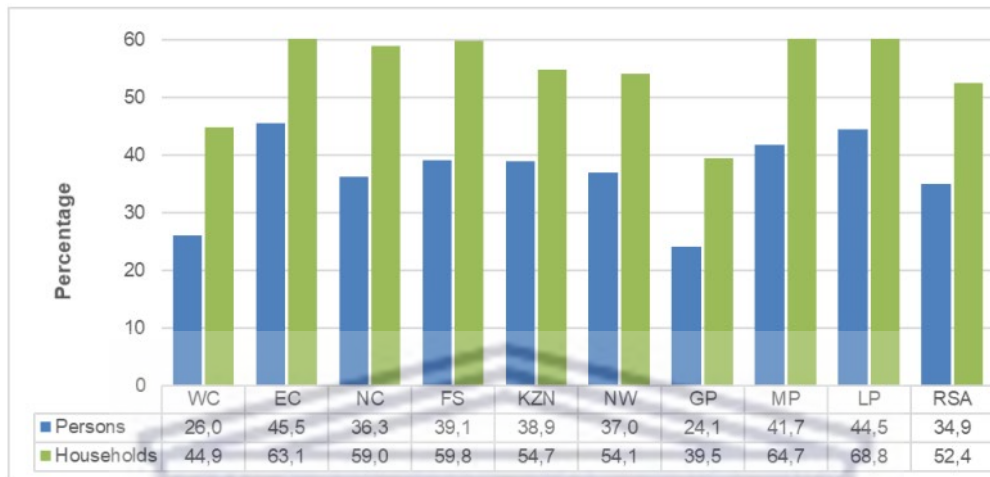
The dependency on social grants is more evident in predominantly black and rural communities where there are high levels of poverty, unemployment, and slow economic growth. These poorer households are relatively isolated from the formal labour market and are extremely dependent on social protection initiatives. With reference to the General Household Survey (GHS) published in 2017, in some rural towns, up to 80% of the inhabitants live from social grants. This report further noted that reliance on social grants is higher in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo, which are also the poorest provinces in South Africa.³⁵ For example, during the period 2017 to 2018, approximately 42% of residents were reliant on social grants in the Eastern Cape, 40% in Limpopo, 36% in KwaZulu-Natal, 38% in the Northern Cape, 19% in Gauteng, and 22% in the Western Cape (GHS, 2017; 2018). These figures

³⁴ Households that received at least one type of grant were most common in the Eastern Cape (59.0%), Northern Cape (57.4%), Limpopo (56.7%), and Free State (50.7%), and least common in Gauteng (30.1%) and the Western Cape (36.7%) (GHS, 2018, p. 31).

³⁵ Levels of poverty differ significantly across provinces, with the Eastern Cape (72.9%), Limpopo (72.4%), and KwaZulu-Natal (68.1%) recording the highest levels of poverty in 2015, while the Western Cape (37.1%) and Gauteng (33.3%) had the lowest levels (StatsSA, 2017).

increased in 2020, as demonstrated by Figure 2 below, that provides an overview of the percentage of individuals and households benefitting from social grants per province.

Figure 2: Individual and household grant beneficiaries per province



Source: StatsSA: General Household Survey 2022

The Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal are provinces that are historically known for their disadvantaged status as they were former homelands – areas that were set aside for black South Africans to live in, along ethnic lines during apartheid. However, as observed in Figure 2, a relatively large proportion of Gauteng’s population also receives social grants. The Western Cape Province, where the study is located, has also seen an increase of 4% over the period 2018 to 2020. The above statistics clearly illustrate how poverty has a strong spatial dimension in South Africa. Reflecting on the different percentages of social grant recipients, one could also argue that race remains a strong predictor of poverty and inequality, with black South Africans at the highest risk of being poor. For instance, the GHS of 2018 illustrated that black individuals are more likely to be dependent on grants for socio-economic survival. The survey found that approximately 34% of black African individuals received a social grant, compared to 30% of coloured individuals, and 13% of Indian/Asian individuals. By comparison, only 7.5% of the white population received grants (GHS, 2018). After two decades of democracy, the history of racial exclusion and discrimination remains somewhat entrenched. Historically disadvantaged South Africans hold fewer assets, have fewer skills, and are still more likely to be unemployed (World Bank, 2018). It is therefore important to recognise how pre-apartheid and apartheid economic policies were instrumental in the social construction of poverty and inequality among black South Africans. To a large extent then, the racial

discrimination and economic marginalisation experienced under the white rule are still prominent in terms of the reliance of historically black households on grants.

4.4 Impact of social grants

The roll-out of social grants has been an extremely important source of income to households that would otherwise face devastation. South Africa is confronted with persistently high unemployment, an economy in decline, and a gradual reduction in the number of taxpayers who contribute to the fiscus. For example, the South African Revenue Service (SARS) notes that there were approximately 5.9 million tax paying citizens in South Africa in 2017, but this number reduced to 5.2 million people in 2020 (SARS, 2022, p. 25). The first point might result in higher numbers of individuals qualifying for state welfare in the form of cash transfers. The latter point (discussed later in this chapter) could have a detrimental effect on the financial sustainability of a growing social grant system that is ultimately funded through tax revenue.

Social grants are often the only means available to survive and participate in the economy. In the poorer communities these social grants are further distributed among relatives and other members of the household who are unemployed and financially vulnerable (Devereux, 2021). In this regard, social grants are most often used as “family grants” which not only have transformative effects for those directly receiving the grants, but also for those who indirectly benefit from them. The research of Granlund (2020, p. 11) clearly shows that the CSG, although a small value, is often pooled in the household and that the injection of state money within the household and community is important for upholding and strengthening social relationships and networks. The provision of social grants enables recipients to participate in traditional and family ceremonies (e.g., marriages, birthdays, and funerals) through purchasing gifts, clothing, and hygiene products (Molyneux et al., 2016; Pavanello et al., 2016). Accordingly, social assistance in the form of social grants does not only protect the poor and vulnerable from financial shocks, but has become a powerful tool to promote social cohesion, inclusion, and citizenship within the broader community.

Several studies have demonstrated that state grants address the minimum needs of those living in poverty and are able to stimulate economic inclusion from below (Brockerhoff, 2013). The literature bears evidence that the current levels of poverty, inequality, and inter-racial differences worldwide have been starkly worse in the absence of such a roll-out of cash grants (see, for example, Brockerhoff, 2013; Leibrandt et al., 2011). As Ferguson (2015, pp. 9-10)

notes, “social grants are a way in which the post-apartheid state could provide highly visible and very effective support, in the form of direct cash transfers, to its electoral base – a way of ‘delivering’ something tangible and valuable, even in the absence of jobs”. These social payments, Ferguson (2015) points out, are part of a new “politics of distribution” that entails a relationship of dependence that ensures people of a “rightful share” in the wealth of the state. Social payments should therefore not be seen as arbitrary charity by the state, but as a right that citizens have by virtue of being human.

Regular social payments (i.e. cash transfers) allow recipients to be active agents of their own social and economic development, rather than passive recipients of dispersed state benefits. Providing cash transfers allows recipients to achieve short-term relief while also deciding for themselves what their most pressing needs are (Ferguson, 2015). Recipients can use cash flexibly, not only to buy food but also to restock or preserve productive assets like livestock and seed (Dreze & Sen, 1991; Sen 1983). Such an approach enables poor South Africans both to engage in economic activities (from petty trade to searching for work) and to participate in what Du Toit (2007, p. 14) calls “the dance of the relational economy”. Based on this perspective, the provision of cash does not only improve people’s nutritional and physical needs but also activates important political and socio-economic rights within poor communities.

Social assistance has indeed been recognised as an important lifeline to the poorest and most vulnerable citizens. The study conducted by Samson et al. (2004) evaluated the social and economic impact of social grants in South Africa. The study found positive impacts on the wellbeing of individuals and households in terms of health, education, housing, and labour market participation and productivity. Furthermore, households that receive social grants are more likely to send their children to school and have access to basic food items that promote better nutrition. Moreover, the study found that people in households receiving social grants have increased both their labour force participation and employment rates faster than those who live in households that do not receive social grants (Du Toit & Neves, 2009; Samson et al., 2004).

Further studies provide evidence that suggests that social transfers play an important role in supporting local economies. A study of a pilot basic income grant scheme in Namibia showed that income increased in the community since the introduction of an unconditional income grant. Grant recipients were enabled to engage in more productive activities, such as starting

their own businesses, which in turn fostered local economic growth and development. The insertion of cash into this local community also enabled individuals to participate in collective projects and did a better job of caring for the sick, including those suffering from HIV/AIDS (Haarmann et al., 2009; Piachaud, 2013). In South Africa, Aliber et al. (2007) found that cash grants enhanced the spending power of poor households and that much of the income from these grants was circulated within the same communities.

Cash transfers, in this context, serve as an investment by the government into the welfare of citizens. As Hamlet Hlomendlini (2017) argues, social grants contribute to economic activity, as more people have money to spend on things – especially in townships and rural areas with higher levels of poverty and inequality (AgriSA, 2017). In most cases then, social grants facilitate the creation of markets for rural businesses. They create opportunities for small rural towns and townships to prosper, and to some extent, create rural employment. Numerous studies have also documented the positive impact of social transfers in terms of poverty reduction. A study conducted by the World Bank in 2014 found that about 70% of social grants spending is directed towards the poorest half of the population in South Africa and consequently, reduced the poverty levels of those living on less than \$2.50 a day (World Bank, 2014, p. 35). This amounted to between R25 and R30 a day in late 2014. This report revealed that social assistance has been the most progressive redistributive measure since 1994. This finding is supported by a report released in April 2018 by the World Bank that notes, “In 2015, government social transfers are estimated to have reduced the poverty headcount rate by 7.9% and the poverty gap by 29.5%” (World Bank, 2018). This is quite remarkable since more than half of South Africans were poor in 2015, with the poverty headcount increasing to 55,5% from a slightly lower 53.2% in 2011 (StatsSA, 2019).

The overarching evidence is that the numbers keep going up and while our current social grant system is not built for beneficiaries to “graduate” themselves out of grant dependence, unless they are brought into formal employment. The grant value is too little and only covers the most basic needs such as food, electricity, travel, and sometimes (when there is money left) for clothing. To change this situation, the government will have to invest more funds towards social assistance, which in turn has bigger implications on social policy and the fiscus. As noted earlier, while the political will is there to alleviate poverty and inequality through the means of cash transfers, the government can only do so much with limited tax revenue at its disposal. To tackle persistently high poverty and income inequality, we need an approach beyond the

provision of social grants. As Hundenborn (2018, n.p.) argues: “The challenge is to ensure economic growth that can both sustain the continued payments of social grants, as well as bring more people into employment”.

A 2017 study conducted by the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) found that South Africa has more people living on social grants than those with formal employment. In 2016, there were 15.5 million people with jobs while 17 million people were receiving social grants (IRR in News24, 2017). This means that the number of social grant recipients are higher than the number of taxpayers. Needless to say, the need to further expand the current welfare system does not look very positive. With slow economic growth and a constrained budget, the government will find it harder to expand the roll-out of grants, or to increase their monthly payments (Mtantato, 2018). As demonstrated earlier, while the government allocates billions of rands each financial year to roll out its social grants programme, the burden of increased taxes to accommodate the up-take in social grants will have an impact on taxpayers. In this regard, economist Mike Schussler observes that South Africa already has one of the world’s biggest social welfare programmes funded through some of the world’s highest taxes (Schussler in Mail and Guardian, 2010). In the long run taxpayers might thus become reluctant to contribute if they are uncertain about the impact of their tax contributions. In 2011, the National Planning Commission stated:

South Africa has had an implicit compact in which the wealthy pay taxes and the government uses these taxes to deliver services and effect distribution. This compact will be at risk if people believe that the tax revenues that they contribute are being spent ineffectively (NPC, 2011, p. 15).

In line with the theoretical discussions in Chapter Two, a social contract can also be built on the principle of reciprocity, where a government and its citizens establish a contract through which privileges or benefits are provided in return for tax revenue or other contributions. In this view, taxpayers have the right to hold the government accountable if it fails to provide public goods and services, such as public education, health care, housing, etc. The buy-in of taxpayers is therefore important to maintain the social contract between the state and those contributing to social security.

In the same vein, it is important for the state to maintain its constitutional obligation towards those benefitting from social assistance programmes, such as social grants. This is noted by Ferguson (2015) who argues that poor and vulnerable groups within society should not be

misrecognised and are also entitled to formal and direct distributive allocations from the state, even though they are not in the position to make any financial contributions towards taxes. Therefore, those who are unable to contribute, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, or children, are also recognised as claiming their rightful share of state resources and wealth.³⁶

It could also be argued that many poor and vulnerable citizens, especially the elderly and unemployed women, make many other kinds of contributions to the socio-economic and political life of the community. They contribute to the productive economy through social reproduction work, i.e., cooking, cleaning, caring, the socialisation of children, and the upkeep of households in general, that they do mostly for free. This perspective also recognizes the agency of grandmothers and unemployed mothers, often in female-headed households, as valuable members of society regardless of their ability to contribute to the country's fiscus.

Accordingly, the social contract goes beyond the often-limited notion of financial reciprocal obligations between state and citizens. It has evolved to a deeper understanding and expression of sharing and distribution of common and shared goods for those who are economically vulnerable but with the same constitutional rights and entitlements as those who make formal contributions.

4.5 Successes, challenges, and perceptions of the CSG and the OPG

Social grants are crucial for the survival for poor and vulnerable groups, especially in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited or non-existent in South Africa. The responsibility lies with the South African state to preserve the livelihoods of its citizens, especially vulnerable groups, such as older persons and children who cannot participate in the labour market. The CSG and the OPG are poverty alleviation measures targeting the largest number of poor beneficiaries in comparison to all other grants in South Africa. The following sections critically discuss the successes and challenges of the CSG and the OPG in relation to the state's obligation to children and older persons.

³⁶ In fact, Ferguson (2015, p. 178) argues that if the distribution of social grants can be conceived as rightful shares (i.e. allocations properly due to rightful owners), then there is no expectation of a return, no debt, and no shame.

4.5.1 Child poverty and the Child Support Grant

The CSG, introduced in 1998, has become South Africa's largest social assistance programme in terms of the number of beneficiaries reached.³⁷ Apart from the CSG, social assistance can also be offered in the form of the care dependency grant, which is primarily aimed at children who have a severe disability, and the foster care grant, which targets children who are placed in the custody of foster parents. The design of the CSG shifted away from the colonial social welfare models where support was contingent on the loss of earnings of the male breadwinner in a marriage-based nuclear family (Lund, 2008; Patel, 2016).³⁸ The CSG was therefore introduced as a child-based rather than a household-based grant so that funds can follow the child even if the child moves to another household or as the parental situation changes (Hall & Richter, 2018; Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013). Accordingly, the design of the CSG was very different from its predecessor, the State Maintenance Grant (SMG), which was modelled on nuclear family structures. In the post-apartheid context, the implementation of the CSG demonstrates the government's commitment to the renewed social contract in terms of social assistance coverage for those who were previously not eligible for the SMG.

Importantly, the CSG recognises that the primary caregiver can be the biological parent, a relative, grandparents, or even a non-family-related person of the child (Patel, 2011). There are also no restrictions in terms of the gender of caregivers who can access the grant. Arguably then, the intersection of gender and childcare were considered and incorporated into social assistance programmes. Despite the gender-neutral eligibility criteria, research has shown that fathers are less likely to interact with social grants. The vast majority of CSG beneficiaries are single female caregivers (Vorster & de Waal, 2008; Wright et al., 2015) who are predominantly poor, black African women with a secondary education and are mainly unemployed (Agüero et al., 2007; Delany et al., 2008). The reliance of mothers or caretakers on the CSG and the absence of many fathers are related, as well. StatsSA revealed that only 31.7% of (African) black children stayed with their biological fathers, compared to 51.3% of coloured children (StatsSA, 2018). Many women, i.e., mothers and grandmothers, are often raising children on

³⁷ The CSG continues to be the main driver behind the rapid increase in beneficiaries and fiscal expenditure since its introduction in 1998. The increase of CSG beneficiaries was mainly due to (i) increased uptake by eligible children; and (ii) expanded eligibility criteria, especially raising the age threshold in phases to 18 years (Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013, p. 123).

³⁸ This study acknowledges a nuclear family consisting of at least one of the two parents and the children, whereas the extended family includes grandparents and other relatives, such as aunts and uncles in addition to the nuclear family.

their own without any support from the biological fathers. In reality then, the care of children remains a predominately a female's responsibility, as Chapters Five and Seven later demonstrate. Only 2% of caregivers who receive the CSG on behalf of their children are men (SASSA, 2016) which could explain the low male participation in studies relating to the accessibility, impact, and delivery of the CSG (Khan, 2018).

Importantly, the design and operationalisation of the CSG also considered the large numbers of children who live apart from both their biological parents and also anticipated the possibility of increasing care burdens on women and families due to the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Patel, 2016). Another consideration was parental absence due to labour migration of mothers and fathers into the cities because of a lack of employment opportunities within rural areas. While labour migration of fathers who reside in less-developed and poorer communities is a common phenomenon in South Africa.

Mokoene and Khunou (2019, p.141) found that labour migration among mothers has also increased. Often young and unmarried mothers enter the workforce and take on the role of "heads of the household" and "family breadwinners". The steady increase in labour migration of both mothers and fathers explains why children often end up in the care of extended family. The approach of "the grant follows the child" recommended by the Lund Committee (also discussed in Chapter Three) was a much-needed solution to the high number of children who live in a non-nuclear family.

Research has shown that only 25% of children form part of a nuclear family in South Africa, while 62% of children live in an extended family situation (Hall & Mokomane, 2018, p. 34). In 2016, for example, approximately 48% of children aged between 0 to 6 lived in single-parent families. Nearly half of these children aged 0 - 6 lived with their mothers and only 2% lived with their fathers (Mbalo Brief, StatsSA, 2018). Many children who do not live with their biological parents are usually cared for by a grandparent. It is estimated that around 2.7 million children live with grandparents in the absence of their parents (Hall & Mokomane, 2018). In most cases, the grandparents are older than 60, and are eligible for an old-age grant, which enables them to provide financial support and care for young children (Mokoene & Khunou, 2019). This is not an uncommon phenomenon in the areas under study, namely the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. While many mothers are the primary caregivers and recipients of the CSG, the grandparents who reside in

the immediate households or community are also instrumental in taking care of young school-going children.

In 2022, South Africa's total population was estimated at 60.6 million people of whom 22.1 million were children under 18 years. Children make up 36% of the total population (StatsSA, 2022) and the majority are faced with high poverty levels from a young age. In July 2020, UNICEF released a Child Poverty in South Africa Report that found six out of ten children are identified as being multi-dimensionally poor, which equates to roughly 62% of the child population. Children living in poor households most often lack the minimum nutrition and health care that is needed to live a healthy and dignified life. These households are likely to have fewer family members who have attained an education and are also more likely to be found in rural areas (Agüero et al., 2007; Delany et al., 2008; Eyal & Woolard, 2011). Furthermore, children who are grant beneficiaries are likely to live in larger households where unemployment is rife and dependency on social grant income is high (Moodley et al., 2017).

The negative effects of poverty have a significant impact on the development and wellbeing of children. Unfortunately, many South African households do not have sufficient income streams, which largely restricts their socio-economic choices in terms of material resources. As Delany et al. (2016, p. 24) rightly argue, limited choices later in life can increase the likelihood of their own children growing up in poverty, which further entrenches and perpetuates disadvantage and inequality. This is supported by the qualitative data collected from Ceres, Klapmuts, Montagu, Robertson, and Villiersdorp, as discussed in Chapter Seven, which demonstrates how CSG recipients have limited economic freedom, decision-making, and choices in relation to day-to-day activities.

The growing levels of poverty among children suggest that many are (or will become) dependent on social grants for their growth and development. In 2020, over 12 million children, or 63% of all children in South Africa, received a CSG (Patel, 2019; SASSA, 2018; 2022). The primary goal of the CSG is to ensure that children living in extreme poverty are able to access financial assistance in the form of a direct cash transfer to supplement, rather than to replace, household income (Delany et al., 2008; Jacobs et al., 2010). Despite the small amount transferred to primary caregivers, the CSG is recognised as one of most effective policy innovations in the global South to combat poverty among children (Patel, 2011). The CSG is also acknowledged in the National Development Plan of 2030, which endorses this form of social assistance as a strategy to address poverty and inequality.

Arguably, the provision of the CSG does represent the state's commitment as duty bearer to provide income relief to poor and disadvantaged families who are either unemployed or have limited financial means to take care of their child(ren). The provision of the CSG is therefore an important (re)distributive instrument and economic transfer that embodies the social contract between the state and families who are financially struggling. Section 28 of the Bill of Rights, which stipulates the rights of children, explicitly states that "every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, health care and social services" (RSA, 1996). The constitutional rights of children have their roots in international law treaties that South Africa has ratified, in particular, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). From the social contract perspective, the UNCRC recognises children as equal rights holders who are entitled to basic nutrition, an adequate standard of living, education, and health care. The ACRWC also promotes a rights-based approach by outlining the state's responsibilities (as duty bearer) to assist parents (or other persons responsible for the children's welfare) to meet the essential socio-economic needs of children (as the rights holders).

These legislative provisions thus place an obligation on their parents and the state to fulfil those rights as enshrined in domestic, regional, and international law. Both parents and the state therefore share responsibilities in the growth and wellbeing of children.

While parents are the primary caregivers of these children, families have come to rely on the state to raise and nurture their children. In this way, the state and families collaborate in the development of the child (Hall & Richter, 2018, p. 22). The role of the state is especially important within a context of high unemployment where parents are not in the financial and material position to provide for all the basic needs of the child, such as food, health, and shelter. As such, childcare does not only fall on parents and families alone, but the state as the duty bearer of social assistance also has a paramount role to play in the realization of children's rights.

While the up-take of the CSG has significantly increased over the years, the impact of the grant has revealed mixed evidence. A study conducted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and South African Department of Social Development (DSD) found that the CSG promotes early childhood development, improves educational outcomes, and contributes to better nutrition and health (DSD et al., 2012; Hall & Woolard, 2014). On the other hand, several studies have also shown that the effects on the aforementioned outcomes have been quite

minimal, especially in terms of food security and nutrition. The amount that currently stands at R480 is inadequate to purchase enough food and to eradicate hunger and nutritional deficits. The rising costs of food prices have made it even harder for caregivers to purchase a “nutritional food basket”, which has increased the risk of stunting among children (Ledger, p. 2017, p. 51). As illustrated in Table 2 of this Chapter, the CSG has the lowest value in comparison to the other children’s grants in South Africa. As previously alluded to, there have been minimal adjustments to the value of the grant, which is most often below inflation rates. The value of the grant has also remained below the food poverty line.

In essence, the small cash amount has not translated into an adequate standard of living for most child beneficiaries. Patel et al. (2017, p. 6) argue that although the CSG lessens the hardships of children in this country, it is insufficient to address the multifaceted needs that children have to ensure their wellbeing. This problem was also illustrated by the research done by Devereux and Waidler (2017, p. 1) that argues that the CSG has only shown marginal improvement in children’s nutrition status since the early 1990s. Although coverage of the CSG might be high among South African children, it appears that the provision of the grant has not been eliminating the problem of malnutrition and food insecurity in South Africa. Similar to these research findings, the Children’s Institute at the University of Cape Town, found that poor families who receive the CSG are often unable to provide the basic entitlements to shelter, adequate nutrition, and other children’s rights. In addition, the value is too low for women to pay for childcare services so they can work or seek employment opportunities (Mkhwanazi et al., 2018, p. 76). This has further weakened caregivers’ position to access food and non-food items crucial for the child’s development. While the state is duty bound to ensure that poor families have the necessary resources and support to provide for the wellbeing of the child, current state provisions (such as the CSG) have not been adequate. This indicates that caregivers who receive the CSG do careful planning to meet the child’s most minimal needs.

Another aspect to consider, which is also previously alluded to, is that the CSG is often channelled to the entire household. This has limited the direct impact on the development and wellbeing of the child. The research of Devereux (2012, p. 417) explains that unemployed adults primarily rely on family support, which is in most cases unofficially “subsidised” by social grants. In other words, although the CSG is primarily designed for the individual child, the grant has “multiple uses and multiple users”, which has reduced the socio-economic impact it can have on the envisioned beneficiary (Devereux & Waidler 2017, p. 19). The modest

amount allocated to the CSG, and the added layer of multiple uses and users thereof, can be detrimental to the primary objective of the grant. The inadequate transfer and the “dilution” thereof within the household are often seen as a weakness of the social grant system in relation to the protection of children against hunger and malnutrition.

The low monetary benefits of the CSG, coupled with the disparity with it and other child-related grants, can be problematic in terms of how recipients view the grant and the state as the primary duty bearer thereof. Invariably, it has the potential to weaken the social contract between the state and caregivers who are receiving the CSG on behalf of the child. Research has shown that many caregivers, who also have limited access to social assistance of their own, struggle to find meaningful employment (Granlund, 2022; Patel et al., 2012). Consequently, having no additional income to supplement the CSG, caregivers are faced with the financial stress of ensuring their own welfare while at the same time ensuring the welfare of the children. The primary nature and scope of the CSG could be considered too narrow in terms of what the grant should be able to cover in relation to the child, while not explicitly considering caregivers who might similarly be economically vulnerable and destitute. Arguably, the policy design of the CSG has not adequately taken the national context of mass unemployment into consideration in terms of how the grant can mitigate issues around the child’s poverty and malnutrition and also the wellbeing of the caregiver. Both are equally important to make the social contract work in terms of protecting the socio-economic rights of the child.

4.5.2 Older Person’s Grant (OPG)

The literature shows that many older people in South Africa are among the chronically poor who most often have the responsibility to provide for both themselves and their dependants (see Chenwi, 2011, p. 4).³⁹ Not only are older people vulnerable due to poverty, most of them are also physically frail due to their advanced years. In accordance with the Older Persons Act (no 13 of 2006) the state is duty bound to maintain and promote the status, wellbeing, safety, and security of older persons in South Africa. These guiding principles are also in line with the international conventions previously outlined in Chapter Three. In terms of older people’s rights, the United Nations Human Rights Declaration (UDHR) indicates that people all over the world should be enabled to “age with security and dignity and continue to participate in

³⁹ In 2011, for instance, almost 40% of older persons in South Africa were classified as poor (Noyoo, 2017).

their societies as citizens with full rights”. The material wellbeing of older people residing in South Africa has predominantly been achieved with social welfare provisions, especially in the form of the non-contributory OPG. Several research studies have shown that the state pension has played a significant role in the material benefits and wellbeing of older persons, especially in the historically poor and disadvantaged areas (Møller, 2011; Patel, 2015).

The OPG is the second largest form of social assistance in South Africa and provides a monthly cash transfer to poor and vulnerable older persons who are over the age of 60. In addition to the means test criteria, the applicant should either be a South African citizen, permanent resident, or hold a refugee (legal) status in South Africa. It is well documented that the OPG is administered with the primary objective of protecting poor and vulnerable older persons who have little or no income to sustain themselves. The provision of the OPG is also to protect their dignity and to enable them to maintain their independent living. Historically, women became eligible at the age of 60 until 2008, while men only became eligible for the grant at the age of 65. However, the gender-bias and age-differentiated criteria for the OPG were largely contested in the post-apartheid context (Burns et al., 2005; Noyoo, 2017). The period between 2008 and 2010 saw male-age eligibility for the grant decrease incrementally to the age of 60 (Schatz et al., 2012). In 2008, a law was passed that allowed men to also apply for the grant when they reach the age of 60. Hence, the Social Assistance Act, 13 of 2004 (RSA, 2004) had to be amended to the Social Assistance Amendment Act 6 of 2008 (RSA, 2008). As discussed in Chapter Two, the amended legislative provision points to the constitutional commitment to promote equality and non-discrimination between male and female, while also strengthening the social contract in relation to social assistance.

Due to South Africa’s colonial and apartheid past, the majority of the older population had been excluded from well-paid jobs and were not in a position to secure retirement benefits in the form of private pensions (i.e., social insurance). As a result, only a small number (under a fifth) of people over the age of 60 have access to private pensions (van der Merwe, 2020). While the majority of older people living in South Africa are in need of state assistance to cope with their increased vulnerability. In 2022, just over 3.8 million people received social pensions (National Treasury, 2022, p. 340) compared to 3.1 million in June 2015 (SASSA, 2015) and 2.8 million in December 2012 (SASSA, 2012). These statistics clearly indicate that more and more older people are applying for state assistance due to the lack of adequate financial resources to fall back on. The demand for the OPG is not only largely driven by increased

poverty levels among older persons, but also the breakdown in multi-generation living arrangements. This is evident when children are either no longer willing or able to care for ageing parents (Case & Deaton, 1998, p. 1334). In 2000, the Income and Expenditure Survey indicated that approximately 80% of age-eligible black women and about 75% of black men reported receiving pension income (Hamoudi & Thomas, 2014, p. 7). The increasing up-take in the OPG is also supported by Woolard and Leibrandt (2010) who found that social grants are well targeted to the poor.

As demonstrated in Table 2, the monetary value of the OPG outweighs all other grants currently available in South Africa. The OPG plays a vital role in maintaining the economic wellbeing of the entire household, and without the grant income, many impoverished households might not be able to survive. Very similar to the CSG, studies found that many OPG recipients share their cash transfer with other family members, especially their unemployed children and grandchildren. Those in receipt of the OPG are expected to take care of other family members, especially when no other form of income is brought into the household. Devereux (2014, p. 18) observes that many unemployed or underpaid adults end up depending on their mothers or fathers who receive the OPG. Ironically, unemployed children have become dependent on their dependants (ibid). Due to the high unemployment rate and slow economic growth, the OPG has increased the likelihood of attracting unemployed persons to a household (Klasen & Woolard, 2000; Makiwane & Kwizera, 2006). Researchers estimate that one grant reaches up to six persons in a recipient's household (Strijdom et al., 2016, p. 3). The provision of the OPG is therefore an important source of income as it assists many households to purchase food and clothes while also paying for electricity, water, and other basic necessities. In many instances then, OPG recipients have become the primary caregivers of the household and frequently act as the sole breadwinners (Tangwe & Gutura, 2013, p. 627).

As noted earlier, it is not uncommon for grandchildren to be in the primary care of their grandparents. While pension sharing has proven to dilute the income gain for many recipients, it has significant socio-economic benefits for children who live with them. For instance, research has shown that children who live with an OPG recipient are less likely to skip meals and are more likely to attend school (Casey et al., 2001; Madhavan et al., 2007). The grant also has empowering effects for female recipients. It has afforded many households access to credit facilities in the local markets, while at the same time, providing many older women with a stable income for the first time in their lives (Ardington & Lund, 1995, p. 19). For many elderly

women, the receipt of the social pension provides them with more control over household resources because of their financial contribution. From this perspective, the cash transfer has proven to increase women's economic resources, which in turn, promote women's economic independence in the household or community. This is in contrast to male recipients. As Ambler (2016, p. 902) indicates, it appears the male status in the household is not affected by pension eligibility because the pension does not change their bargaining or decision-making power.

While a large proportion of social assistance funding in South Africa goes to the OPG, the socio-economic needs of older persons are far from being met due to the household challenges discussed earlier. In many instances, the OPG has become the only source of income, which has resulted in the non-working poor within the household being directly dependent on the cash transfer to secure their livelihoods. With the increase of food prices, the grant is most often not enough to cover the needs of the individual recipient and that of other household members (Bulose, 2020, p. 50). Due to the high unemployment rate, and consequently the migration of parents to seek job opportunities, the financial "burden" of caring for grandchildren has fallen on the grandparents. The individual needs of the many OPG recipients are thus often neglected because of other competing household expenses. Given the above context, the majority of OPG recipients do not enjoy financial and material wellbeing (Makiwane & Kwizera, 2006), which in turn has weakened the value of the OPG in their lives.

The research findings of this study will show that the perceptions and lived experiences of the OPG are greatly influenced by the size of transfer income (i.e., amount of money actually received), which affects the "buying power" of the grant. In other words, their perceptions are largely motivated by what the grant can afford (and perhaps not afford) them in terms of material resources to sustain themselves and their dependants. In terms of the non-material factors, the study found that perceptions and experiences of the OPG are also influenced by their encounters with state officials during the application and renewal of the SASSA card processes. These administrative limitations and gaps in relation to the delivery of the grant, discussed in the section below, have also impacted on how they view the state's constitutional commitment to them as a vulnerable group, faced with multiple socio-economic challenges.

4.6 Administration of social grants

This section provides an overview of the formation of the South African Social Security Agency (hereafter referred to as SASSA) and its mandate in relation to the delivery of social

grants in South Africa. It details the evolution of the system, and how grant payments were outsourced to private or third-party contractors, as well as problems associated with the new system. This is followed by an overview of the latest developments, which includes the decommissioning of traditional pay points and adoption of a hybrid model to administer the grants.

4.6.1 Formation of SASSA

SASSA is a public entity established in April 2005 by the government in accordance with the South African Social Security Agency Act (No. 9 of 2004) and the Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004) with the primary purpose to be responsible for all aspects of the government's social assistance system, such as the processing, management, and delivery of social grants on behalf of the Department of Social Development (DSD).⁴⁰ SASSA is also governed by all legislation related to the operations and governance of any state-run entity, including to the Public Finance Management Act with specific reference to Schedule 3A. The formation of SASSA provided the government with an opportunity to firstly, centralise and standardise the administration and payment processes, and secondly, to improve the efficiency and service delivery to poor and vulnerable groups who are reliant on social assistance. This was done through co-ordination and raising administrative standards through the consolidation and standardisation of contracts with grant payment contractors (van der Berg et al., 2010), which in turn, would reduce the administrative costs of providing social grants (National Treasury, 2008, p. 330). SASSA is required to report to the Minister of Social Development whose national department is responsible for monitoring and oversight in terms of the provision of social assistance.

Prior to the establishment of SASSA, the social assistance functions and benefits were administered by the provincial social development departments. Social assistance was primarily financed by provincial legislatures (Brockerhoff, 2013; Foley & Swilling, 2018) who also used outsourced companies such as Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) and AllPay to undertake the distribution function of social grants. Even at the provincial level, the outsourcing

⁴⁰ These two pieces of legislation outline the requirements and the parameters for social assistance and the institutional structure by which they are administered and distributed.

of the grant payments resulted in a number of administrative and payment challenges. For example, DSD issued a report that stated:

The privatisation did not bring improvements to the grant recipients, because services were still not accessible and conditions at pay points were still appalling (DSD 2002 in SAHRC 2002/03).

Another weakness was that provincial departments were completely autonomous and the national department could not impose administrative uniformity within the provinces. The entire system was thus fragmented and caused payment methods to be inconsistent, and to some extent, ineffective in many of the provincial departments. It was also found that funding allocations made to provinces were not always ring-fenced, specifically for the provision of social grants. This resulted in delayed payments to qualifying recipients or applicants who were kept on waiting lists for long periods of time without any feedback (Taylor, 2004, p. 7). The provincial system was also faced with a lack of administrative capacity and infrastructure, poor customer service, and backlogs. The fact that most of the operations were undertaken manually created several loopholes for fraud and corruption to take place (Foley & Swilling, 2018; Reddy & Sokomani, 2008). The research conducted by Foley and Swilling (2018, p. 9) highlighted that “fraud ranged from millions of rand being siphoned by corrupt civil servants to beneficiaries registering ‘phantom twins’ to receive an additional CSG”. There were also fraudulent activities reported with regards to the OPG. For example, grants intended for older recipients were collected after a person had died. The system was characterised by a lack of accountability, a lack of good management, and a lack of monitoring and oversight. These operational and payment difficulties had a negative impact on the social contract in terms of eligible individuals making legitimate claims to their right to social assistance. These difficulties encountered within the provincial departments therefore reinforced the arguments made by the Taylor Report of 2000 who strongly advocated for the efficient and effective management, administration, and payment of social assistance.

When SASSA took over in 2006, it entered into partnerships with different third-party entities such as AllPay, CPS, and Emphilweni to primarily serve recipients who preferred cash payments. It was also an expectation that these private contractors would render the payment of social grants to qualifying beneficiaries in all provinces in a standardised manner. Recipients who preferred electronic payments could choose from several commercial banks, the post office, or a Sekulula account with AllPay (Torkelson, 2017). The partnership with the above-

mentioned stakeholders eliminated unnecessary interruptions in the grant payment process and brought about other benefits such as providing multiple designated cash points across the country. However, fundamental operational problems still existed in terms of how grants were disbursed by the third-party service providers. It was reported that each service provider followed separate and varying service level agreements and provided different models of payments (Foley & Swilling, 2018, p. 8). These contractual problems had an impact on the quality of services rendered to grant recipients. To improve both operational and payment processes, in early 2012 SASSA announced that it will move away from the manual payment method and re-register all social grant recipients to a fingerprint biometric electronic system (Plagerson & Ulriksen, 2015). According to the then Minister, Bathabile Dlamini, the shift to a digitised system was one of several initiatives the national department would undertake to improve the social grants system (Dlamini, 2012).⁴¹ To operationalise the new electronic system, SASSA entered into partnerships with CPS, who was tasked to design a standardised national payment and registration system.

4.6.2 SASSA and CPS

CPS is a subsidiary of Net1 Universal Electronic Payment System (UEPS), which is listed on both the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) and the US stock exchange NASDAQ. The five-year contractual agreement between SASSA and CPS was worth more than R10 billion (Black Sash, 2022). When CPS was awarded the contract, Net1 went on to harness UEPS to supply grant recipients with a MasterCard debit card that would be linked to a Net1 partner, Grindrod Bank (Vally, 2016, p. 968). The Grindrod Bank accounts were managed under the terms of the contract between SASSA and CPS. This meant that grant recipients would have access to a SASSA card that is similar to a bank card. The new card thus provided more ways for grant recipients to access their monies through multiple distribution cash points. For example, grant recipients could access their money from shops, automated teller machines (ATMs), and mobile cash payment points through the system (Vally, 2016, p. 968). This was very similar to the outsourced social grant system prior to 2012 when provincial service providers such as AllPay were also contracted.

⁴¹ Bathabile Dlamini is the president of the ANC Women's League (ANCWL) and was appointed as Minister of Social Development in November 2010.

Several motivations were put forward for the SASSA-CPS contract, notably that the biometric enrolment system would make social grant payments more secure for recipients, the state, and the national fiscus (Vally, 2016, p. 965), which ultimately would strengthen the state-beneficiary relationship. A key motivation was that the new national social grant register, identified by searchable, “automated fingerprint technology”, would solve the problems of double payments and would diminish fraudulent access to grants, as previously encountered (Torkelson, 2017). While the outsourcing of the payment function to CPS was expected to increase efficiency, the system encountered persistent difficulties. A few months after the contract was awarded, many beneficiaries complained about unauthorised, and sometimes anonymous, monetary deductions from their monthly grant payments (Black Sash, 2022; Vally, 2016). The deductions from loan payments, multiple funeral schemes, and even water payments, resulted in recipients receiving less than the anticipated amount upon withdrawal. In most cases these monetary deductions were endorsed without the permission of the grant holder (Mail and Guardian, October 2015). It was disconcerting that the anonymous deductions were made from grant recipients’ accounts before they had access to their money (GroundUp, 2015). These CPS challenges put the entire social grant system at risk, which severely affected the lives of many recipients who often had no source of income. As demonstrated below, the social contract in terms of the administration and delivery of grants was ultimately weakened by the outsourcing of grant payments to CPS.

The Black Sash social justice organisation and its campaign partners believed that many of the unauthorised deductions could be traced to Net1 and its business affiliates – CPS, Grindrod Bank, Moneyline, and Smart Life. These companies shared confidential information about grant recipients, such as identification numbers and SASSA-branded bank card numbers (Govender in Daily Maverick, 2017; Steyn in Mail and Guardian, 2014). Smart Life, for example, provided funeral cover to grant recipients and used the CPS infrastructure to sell insurance policies. Moneyline, on the other hand, provided loans to grant holders. These loans were linked to the new SASSA cards issued by CPS (Torkelson, 2017). Subsequently, the debit deductions had a negative impact on the monetary value of the grant and recipients had less money to purchase food, clothes, and other basic necessities. Most often these deductions forced many vulnerable recipients to take on more personal loans from financial service providers such as Net1 to put food on the table for their families. Although the loans provided some temporary relief (until the next cash transfer) they also made recipients poorer and more vulnerable than before. Many of the recipients who were victims of unauthorised deductions

complained of the hardships of repaying the exorbitant interest rates from their loans (Black Sash, 2022).

Several human rights organisations raised serious concerns about the integrity and stability of the social grant system in South Africa. They publicly criticised SASSA for its decision to outsource and privatise the cash-transfer system. Private companies linked to CPS were generating huge profits while poor and vulnerable recipients were losing money. It was also extremely difficult for recipients to report the unauthorised deductions from their grant payments. This was another aspect of the social contract that was undermined in terms of access to information and redress. While most grant claimants knew where to find a SASSA office in their area, the locations of CPS offices were largely unknown. The only mechanism available for recipients to submit complaints was through a CPS call centre that was free-of-charge from a landline telephone. While the call centre was a recourse mechanism, many recipients could not find redress due to not having a landline telephone to call from (Black Sash, 2022, p. 104).

To make matters worse, SASSA was unable to directly access the payment system set up by CPS and Net1, which hampered its ability to investigate and stop the unauthorised deductions from the SASSA-branded Grindrod Bank accounts (Black Sash, 2022, p. 43). In May 2016, it was reported to the Western Cape Provincial Parliament that “the total monetary loss due to the unlawful deductions was close to R800 million, of which only R1.5 million has been recovered” (Foley & Swilling, 2018, p. 65). Not only was this a loss of tax revenue, it also jeopardised the livelihoods of many poor and vulnerable groups – older persons, children, and individuals with disabilities. The outsourcing and privatisation of the grant payment system was under severe public scrutiny, which placed SASSA in a very difficult position in terms of their legislative obligations towards grant recipients.

In 2014, two years after the contract was signed, the Constitutional Court declared that the contract between both parties was invalid and illegal because it did not follow a proper and competitive tender process (Black Sash, 2022; Foley & Swilling, 2018; Mahlaka, 2019). Black Sash and other civil society organisations called for the “insourcing” of payments back to SASSA, arguing that such a crucial social function is the responsibility of the government (as duty bearer) and not of private companies. In an attempt to restore faith in the system, SASSA released a press statement indicating its intention to take over grant payments from CPS by 2017 (Foley & Swilling, 2018, p. 24). However, it was clear that insourcing would be an enormous task and SASSA did not have the infrastructural capacity for the conceptualisation

and implementation of an in-house system. This was echoed by the former minister who said that SASSA does not have the necessary “expertise within the organisation because the function of paying grants was always outsourced” (Dlamini, 2017).

It was clear from this statement that there was still confusion and uncertainty around the future of the social grant system. As Granlund (2022, p. 3) notes, SASSA could not guarantee that social grants would be delivered in a safe and timely fashion once the CPS contract came to an end. This caused massive anxiety among grant recipients who were at risk of going hungry and could be left homeless due to non-payment of their rent. Consequently, the social contract between the state and recipients was at risk in terms of the provision of regular and predictable cash transfers to the most vulnerable in society. To avoid a socio-economic crisis, the Constitutional Court allowed for the CPS contract to be extended by a year, but also instructed SASSA to use the additional time to appoint another service provider.⁴² The CPS contract ended in mid-2018, followed by the transition of the payment system to the South African Post Office (SAPO), a state-owned entity.

4.7 SASSA, SAPO and the decommissioning of pay points

In February 2018, Bathabile Dlamini was replaced by Susan Shabangu as Minister of Social Development. The instatement of the new president, Cyril Ramaphosa, and the appointment of a new minister, resulted in drastic changes at SASSA. This body was mandated to phase in the payment of social grant beneficiaries either into accounts at SAPO, or if beneficiaries preferred, into a commercial bank, such as ABSA, FNB, Standard Bank, Capitec, and Nedbank (PMB 2018; Mahlaka, 2019). Similar to previous payment arrangements, recipients had the option to access their money through retailers (i.e., supermarkets) who offer a cash service, such as Boxer, Checkers, PicknPay, Spar, and others. Grant recipients could therefore withdraw their money at till-points and do their grocery shopping at the same time.

While the new “hybrid payment model” aimed to be easily accessible and user-friendly, it came with many challenges. Black Sash (2020, p. 73) expressed concern that the closure of cash pay points would negatively affect beneficiaries who reside in rural and peri-urban areas. While SAPO has a network infrastructure of 2,700 post offices that could be utilised for social grant payments, there were approximately 10,000 cash pay points. It is disconcerting that the

⁴² SASSA was ordered by the Constitutional Court to phase out CPS by the end of September 2018 and to discontinue the old SASSA cards by December 2018.

migration away from CPS implied that grant recipients, especially those not located in towns and cities, would need money for transport to collect their monies from SAPO outlets (Black Sash, 2022, p. 162). Another issue of concern was the service fees associated with ATM withdrawals – commercial banks charge up to R30 per withdrawal and sometimes grant recipients had to make multiple withdrawals because some mobile ATMs dispense only R750 at a time. The decommissioning of pay points was quite problematic for grant recipients who previously collected their monthly pay-outs in the local communities that they reside in. Through community-based monitoring work, Black Sash also found that many of the outsourced pay points had no toilet facilities or chairs and some of the older beneficiaries were not comfortable using ATMs that forced them to send others on their behalf (Maregele & Ngubane 2018). Moreover, beneficiaries were often obliged to spend money at retailers (such as buying airtime) before they could claim their benefits (Black Sash, 2018).

The new system faces ongoing administrative and operational challenges, compounded by safety and security issues. Since the migration of grant payments to SAPO, there has been a spike in the number of robberies at cash distribution points where social grant payments are targeted. In August 2018, SASSA grant money was stolen during a post office burglary in Vryheid, a town in northern KwaZulu-Natal, which resulted in many vulnerable recipients being left stranded, as they had no money to travel home (The Citizen, August 2018). In April 2019, the post office situated in Maitland, Cape Town was robbed and could not distribute the grant payments. On the same day, three armed men entered the Kraaifontein Post Office and forced the employees to hand over an undisclosed amount of money (News24, 2019). While SASSA embarked on safety and security upgrades together with visible policing, many post offices have become soft targets for criminals. In August 2019, armed criminals robbed three SAPO branches in Cape Town while beneficiaries were queuing outside for their money (Booyesen, 2019; Geach, 2019). In early December 2020, a few weeks before Christmas, the post office in Delft, Cape Town was also robbed. The robbery coincided with the payment releases of social grants (Payne, 2020). In February 2022, the Durbanville Post Office was robbed of R50,000 by five suspects (Ntseku, 2022). On 3 November 2022, the *George Herald* reported on a robbery at the Pacaltsdorp Post Office in George. A day later, two post office branches, in Bishop Lavis and Belhar, were robbed. All these robberies ostensibly targeted monies to be distributed to grant holders.

A few other armed robberies took place in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. In many of these instances, social payments were delayed because an undisclosed amount of money was stolen. This clearly shows the safety risk involved in the collection of social grants from these public entities. Not only does it impact the safety of social grant recipients, it also impacts the safety and general working conditions of post office employees who are often traumatised by these unfortunate events. Additionally, this has huge financial implications for SASSA, that needs to ensure that each beneficiary receives the full grant amount that they are entitled to. According to SAPO, the incidence of crime has forced it to close some of its branches in rural areas. However, SAPO admitted that safety and security are increasingly becoming a problem in some urban areas as well (BusinessTech, July 2022). The safety and security issues presented at many SAPO outlets have threatened the payments of social grants, which has negative impacts on the lived experiences of many grant holders who are reliant on SAPO's infrastructure to collect their money.

In essence, the challenges associated with the delivery of social grants in South Africa pose a systemic limitation toward operationalising the social grant system from a rights-based perspective. On the one hand, there is a social assistance system born out of the need for the state to protect previously disadvantaged citizens from poverty. This philosophy is supported by contributing fiscal resources towards the provision of social grants in well-delineated government programmes. On the other hand, there is a system faced with several delivery challenges, which has limited the effectiveness of this approach. The findings chapters show how it actually disempowers grant recipients. This has a systemic impact on the experiences and perceptions of the OPG and CSG recipients. The disempowering effects of the delivery of grants to their intended recipients place a constraint on the social contract and limit the legitimacy and intended outcomes.

4.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter provided an overview of South Africa's social security system in the post-apartheid era. It contextualised the structure of the social security system as a starting point to demonstrate that the system comprises of social insurance and social assistance programmes. This thesis and its research question focus on social assistance and more specifically consider non-contributory cash transfers (i.e., social grants). Thereafter, the chapter investigated social grants in South Africa, noting the various types of grants while focusing specifically on the CSG and the OPG as well as the trends in the value of these grants. It found that the government

has committed considerable financial resources to deliver social grants that are recognised globally, that have provided citizens with a lifeline and source of income that they would not have if there were no grants; this demonstrates a commitment to the social contract. However, the delivery of grants is faced with challenges, for example, its impact on poverty reduction (i.e., value of the grant) does not lift people out of poverty, while the administration of social grants was also found to be laden with challenges and inconsistencies.

Based on the aforementioned, administering the South African social grant system has been faced with a series of crises. These crises include fraud, corruption, inhumane conditions at pay points, lack of political leadership, and lack of public accountability. All these issues collectively have serious consequences for the social contract between the government and social grant recipients. Based on the administrative and contextual weaknesses of the system, one could argue that the social contract between the South African state and social grant recipients has been broken too many times. As a result, these negative experiences have influenced the perceptions and attitudes of social grant beneficiaries towards the government and its commitment to their livelihoods. Importantly, this also demonstrates that the social contract is not just about providing fiscal resources, but also about how these resources are administered. The subsequent chapters (Six and Seven) demonstrate just how deep the impact of these factors are for the lived experience of CSG and OPG recipients within the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts in the Western Cape Province.

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CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides an overview of the research design, methodological approaches, sampling strategies, and ethical considerations of the study. It provides a detailed framework of how the study was conducted in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts in the Western Cape Province. The researcher adopted a case study research design and a qualitative methodological approach to answer the overarching research question and meet the research objectives. The purely qualitative fieldwork conducted in the various research sites allowed the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the recipients of the Older Person's Grant and the Child Support Grant towards the social grant system in South Africa. A key focus was to explore how these perceptions and experiences influence the state-citizen relationship that ultimately informs the quality of the social contract between the government and grant recipients. The study also incorporated quantitative data derived from secondary sources such as the Black Sash Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) Surveys. Combining the quantitative data in this study was seen as beneficial to provide statistical evidence to strengthen the representative findings from the perspective of respondents (Mouton, 2006, p. 177).

5.2 Case study design

There are multiple definitions and understandings of case study research. Essentially, it entails a detailed exploration of a specific case, a single community, organisation, or person over an extended period of time (Bryman, 2012; Burnham et al., 2008). Case study research is also defined by Yin (2009, p. 18), who writes that a case study design enables a researcher to examine a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context. Importantly, a case study design can include a combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence, and therefore, is not limited to one particular data collection method (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Yin, 2009). A case study design thus provides the opportunity to collect different kinds of data such as interviews, focus groups, documents, and policy reviews, as well as employ observation to get a comprehensive understanding of the research problem under investigation.

Case studies can also be both descriptive and explanatory in nature. The researcher can capture the reality of the participants' lived experiences of, and thoughts about, a particular situation

(Cohen et al., 2000, p. 182). The case study design thus provided much-needed depth and detail to the lived context of the social grant recipients and how they perceive the social grant system in South Africa.

Due to the predominantly qualitative nature of the case study approach, it is mostly situated in the interpretivist paradigm (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 42). An interpretivist paradigm focuses on how people interpret the social world and social phenomena, which allows for different perspectives to be explored (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 28). Interpretivist research also strengthens the “trustworthiness” of the data. The data can be rich in detail, authentic, and reflects the lived experiences of the respondents (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014, p. 27). By taking the interpretivist stance, the researcher can describe, understand, and explain how recipients make sense of their social grant status and what this means in the broader contexts of citizenship, rights, and entitlements.

The researcher undertook an in-depth case study of the research problem in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts. The Cape Winelands District consists of five municipal areas: Witzenberg, Drakenstein, Stellenbosch, Breede Valley, and Langeberg. The research focused on six towns in total. More specifically, five towns from three different municipal areas in the Cape Winelands were chosen, namely: (i) Ceres, situated in the Witzenberg municipal area, (ii) Klapmuts and (iii) Stellenbosch which are part of the Stellenbosch municipal area, and (iv) Robertson and (v) Montagu, situated in the Langeberg municipal area. The researcher also conducted interviews and focus group discussions in Villiersdorp, a small town located in the Overberg region of the province. Initially, Paarl, a town situated in the Drakensberg municipal area was identified for inclusion in the study, but due to logistical problems (such as obtaining access to a community-based organisation), it was not selected. Due to the nature of the research design, it is crucial to note that the data collected cannot be used to generalise about South Africa’s population as a whole. The case studies of the CSG and the OPG in the two districts are therefore unique and not a representative sample of all the social grants available or the nine provinces in the country.

5.3 Background to research sites

The Cape Winelands is the most populous district in the province, while the Overberg District is the least populous in the Western Cape. As the statistics below demonstrate, both districts

have seen an increase in poverty levels, which have had a negative effect on the livelihoods of many people.

The Cape Winelands District forms part of the Western Cape Province and is home to approximately 943,000 people (WCG, 2020a, p. 4). The district economy is dominated by agriculture and is known for its fruit, notably grapes and wine production; this sector is the main source of employment. The Overberg District also forms part of the Western Cape and is home to approximately 300,000 people (WCG, 2020b, p. 2). The district is also dominated by agriculture and is regarded “as the breadbasket of the Cape”, due to its large grain farming of mainly wheat (WCG, 2020b). The region is also known for its fruit production, with Grabouw being the second largest supplier of fruit in South Africa (ibid). Agriculture is also the main sector employing people in the district.

During the time of the fieldwork (2018 - 2019), approximately 41% of residents within the Cape Winelands District were living below the poverty line. Income inequality has also reached a Gini coefficient of 0.61 in the Cape Winelands District (WCG, 2020a). In the Overberg District, the percentage of people living in poverty stood at 49.8% in 2019 with a Gini coefficient of 0.59 (WCG, 2020b). Income inequality increased across both districts between 2015 and 2018 with a Human Development Index of 0.77 and 0.76 for residents of the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts, respectively (Socio-economic Profile: Overberg District, 2019). Historically disadvantaged groups residing in the rural parts of these districts remain poor and vulnerable due to the few available employment opportunities being low-skilled and low-paying agricultural work, that is often seasonal. This makes this group of people more reliant on the state for social assistance to meet their basic needs due to the lack of opportunities to access employment.

The researcher chose these two districts based on the available access to recipients of the OPG and the CSG. The Black Sash Organisation, with the assistance of its community partners, was already in the process of conducting community-based monitoring work in these two districts, which primarily explored the impact of the migration of the grant payment system from CPS to the SAPO. Black Sash’s former director and the manager of its Cape Town Office were instrumental in facilitating an introductory meeting between the researcher and the organisation’s community partners. Two community partners located in Ceres and Villiersdorp were already in the monitoring phase and access to SASSA service and pay points was already approved. The community partners located in Klapmuts, Robertson, and Montagu were not

actively monitoring the migration to SAPO during the time that the fieldwork was conducted, but could facilitate access to recipients of the OPG and the CSG through their community networks.

It is worth noting that the researcher is born in Worcester, a town also situated in the Cape Winelands District, and is quite familiar with both research areas in terms of location, languages, and racial representation. However, it was extremely difficult to secure research respondents in towns that display not only urban, semi-urban, and rural characteristics but also different racial identities, which was a key interest of the study. The community partners, although not necessarily “gate-keepers” were therefore instrumental in facilitating access to both urban and farming communities with diverse racial and ethnic identities. The six towns across the two districts were therefore purposively selected, primarily motivated by gaining safe access to recipients and sampling convenience.

5.4 Data collection methods

5.4.1 Primary data: Qualitative methods

Primary data collection methods were entirely qualitative in nature. They consisted of (i) semi-structured interviews; (ii) focus group discussions; and (iii) simple observation. As Bryman (2012, p. 380) notes, qualitative research is a strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Simply put, the qualitative method generally includes people’s (research participants) own written or spoken words in relation to the research problem. The qualitative approach is more holistic and often involves a rich collection of data from various sources to gain a deeper understanding of individual participants, including their opinions, perspectives, and attitudes (Nassaji, 2015). Accordingly, the qualitative methodological approach was deemed the most suitable technique to explore the perceptions and experiences of individuals receiving the OPG and the CSG. It also allowed the researcher to gain a better understanding of how the beneficiaries’ experiences with the social grant system impact their relationship with the state, who is the primary provider and distributor of the social grants in South Africa. As demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven, the findings pertaining to these two groups of recipients provide a very human account of the lived experiences of the grant application and collection process, making this a valuable method in the study.

5.4.1.1 Focus groups with grant recipients

During the initial stages of the research, the researcher had to decide between conducting focus groups and one-on-one interviews to gather data. The researcher opted for focus group discussions as the main data collection method. A focus group discussion is a group interview that is usually conducted in small groups of six to eight people (Krueger & Casey, 2000). However, some scholars have also suggested that focus groups can involve as many as twelve to fifteen participants. The focus group method was chosen for the following two reasons:

First, one of the core strengths of focus groups is that it allows the research problem to be discussed in depth by carefully selected respondents who are familiar with the research topic under investigation. The researcher could bring together a number of participants (with mostly similar characteristics and who can relate to the research problem) in the same setting and at the same time. The focus group technique thus allowed the researcher to reach several recipients in a shorter period of time, whereas individual (one-on-one) interviews would have required several (interview) rounds in order to produce a sufficient amount of data across both grant categories and across the six research sites. As Wildermuth & Jordan (2017, p. 259) argue that “a small number of focus groups may generate as many different ideas about the topic as a dozen or more individual interviews”. This view is supported by other scholars who have noted that focus groups can be a good strategy for carrying out a large number of interviews very effectively while individual interviewing can become labour intensive (Burnham et al., 2008; Bryman, 2012).

Second, the focus group technique allowed respondents to stimulate one another and provide information based on a range of personal experiences and ideas (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 134). The process allowed respondents to raise specific issues and questions relating to the research topic with the support of other respondents. In other words, respondents can play a more powerful and prominent role in a group discussion because there is less opportunity for the researcher to control and manipulate them (Burnham et al., 2008, p. 131). With the focus group method, respondents could also delve into one another’s justifications for holding a particular opinion and to voice different opinions and experiences that they might not have identified in a one-to-one interview. Focus groups could therefore provide more insightful information relating to the research topic due to the diverse and interactive nature of the method (Wildermuth & Jordan, 2017, p. 261). With individual interviews, the researcher might run the risk or disadvantage of certain participants not being very talkative and because of the nature

of this method, the interviewee is rarely challenged by the researcher when providing inconsistent or short replies to questions (Bryman, 2012, p. 503). This suggests that interview respondents might only reveal information regarding their experiences and perceptions of their socio-economic realities that they are willing to share with the researcher. While individual interviews do offer many advantages and is often viewed as a powerful tool to collect qualitative data, the researcher maintains that this technique would have not produced the same amount of qualitative data compared to the focus groups for this specific research study and its objectives.⁴³

Accordingly, the adoption of focus groups as the primary data collection technique was seen as an effective tool for recipients from the same grant type and same racial category to exchange ideas, opinions and experiences about their encounters with the state and that of their social grant. Two to six focus groups were held per research area, which included Ceres, Klapmuts, Stellenbosch, Robertson, and Villiersdorp. The focus groups focused on grant recipients of the CSG and the OPG from different racial identities, namely Africans, coloureds, and whites.⁴⁴ In terms of the composition, each focus group comprised of six to eight participants with both men and women recipients of the two social grants being studied. It is worth noting that each focus group focussed on one grant (either CSG or OPG) and included recipients of the same racial identity or group as classified under the Population Registration Act No. 30 of 1950, which also was the foundation of all apartheid laws. The approach to target the same racial group at a time was done not only for practical reasons in terms of location, language, and familiarity, but also to ensure respondents' willingness to talk about their unique historical and current experiences in terms of the provision of social grants. Only one focus group conducted in Robertson was a 'mixed' group in terms the social grant and racial classification. This group comprised both African and coloured respondents who were also recipients of either the CSG or OPG.

As illustrated in Tables 4 and 5 below, the researcher conducted a total of nineteen focus group discussions by the end of the fieldwork process. Twelve focus groups were conducted with OPG recipients and seven was conducted with CSG grant holders. The focus groups were held

⁴³ Walford (2007, p. 147) argues that in some instances "interviews alone are an insufficient form of data to study social life".

⁴⁴ While foreign nationals are able to access social security benefits in South Africa if they take up permanent residence (by applying for a Section 25 permit) in South Africa, this research focused on South African citizens and not on foreigners who receive a social grant.

in towns that are racially homogenous in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts to ensure the representation and participation of different racial identities and/or groups in the research study. Each focus group discussion lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, dependent on the size of the group and the level of engagement with the questions posed to them. The tables below also illustrate the number of males and females who participated in the focus groups and the respondents' demographics.

Table 4: OPG focus groups – number and demographics

OPG Focus Groups						
Research area	Number of focus groups	Male	Female	African	Coloured	White
Ceres	4	13	20	11	14	8
Klapmuts	1	-	7	7	-	-
Stellenbosch	2	-	12	-	8	4
Robertson	2	3	9	1	4	7
Villiersdorp	3	8	18	11	9	6
	12	24	66	30	35	25

Source: Research study data

Table 5: CSG focus groups – number and demographics

CSG Focus Groups					
Research area	Number of focus groups	Male	Female	African	Coloured
Ceres	2	-	16	9	7
Klapmuts	1	-	8	8	-
Stellenbosch	1	-	10	-	10
Robertson	1	-	7	3	4
Villiersdorp	2	-	16	6	10
	7	-	57	26	31

Source: Research study data

The key purpose of the focus groups was to gain insight into the experiences and perceptions of the OPG and the CSG recipients towards the social grant system. For the data collection, a semi-structured questionnaire was developed consisting of mostly open-ended questions. The semi-structured technique was to encourage group interaction, which enabled the participants to express their thoughts, perceptions, and experiences about the research problem under investigation. The semi-structured approach also allowed the researcher to introduce questions

in different ways or order as seen appropriate for each focus group (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 221). This was important, as each focus group was different in terms of location, language, socio-economic background, and people's understanding of the research topic. Accordingly, the semi-structured approach provided a level of flexibility; the researcher could ask follow-up questions that were not necessarily included in the focus group questions guide to gain a deeper understanding of answers provided by the respondents.

The researcher designed the focus group questionnaire, which consisted of four sections of open-ended questions that broadly covered the following areas: (i) use and views of social grants, (ii) access and design of social grants, (iii) experiences of SASSA's service and pay points, and (iv), attitudes towards the government. The questions were translated into Afrikaans and IsiXhosa by two Master's students who were compensated through the researcher's National Research Foundation (NRF) funding. After the questionnaire was translated, it was piloted with a Black Sash community partner situated in Delft, Cape Town. The pilot focus group consisted of both CSG and OPG recipients who predominantly identified themselves as either African or coloured. The pilot study involved eight participants and was conducted to determine the feasibility of the data collection method, and importantly, to detect any unclear and ambiguously formulated questions. The questions were posed in Afrikaans and English. Although the constant translation between Afrikaans and English took some time, all the participants were satisfied with the length of the focus group discussion. There were no IsiXhosa-speaking participants who took part in the pilot study. After the pilot study was conducted, the researcher made minor amendments to the focus group questionnaire. The objective was to improve the research instrument by simplifying and clarifying certain questions, words, or phrases that might appear confusing to participants. In line with the research objectives, the primary technique employed was focus group discussion, to determine how grant recipients from different racial identities understand the relationship between government and citizens in relation to their right to social assistance. It also explored how the relationship between the government and social grant recipients can be sustained and strengthened.

During the course of the data collection process, some CSG and OPG recipients in Ceres, Stellenbosch, Montagu, and Villiersdorp opted not to take part in any focus group discussions. The choice for one-on-one interviews was (in these cases) more prevalent among the white and coloured recipients, especially those receiving the CSG in Ceres and Montagu. The stigma

associated with being a social grant recipient, especially among younger mothers, may explain why some respondents within the CSG category felt reluctant with participating in a group discussion. Their reluctance could be based on possible fear of others knowing about their grant status. Consequently, the respondent's age and possible marital status (and not so much racial classification) had a potential impact on whether these females opted to participate in general, and specifically in focus groups. For example, and this is reflected on in Chapter Seven, three of the CSG interviewees in Montagu were single and young, i.e., between the ages of 17 and 19. In Ceres, three out of the four mothers interviewed were either never married or divorced with very little support from the biological fathers. These aspects alone could potentially add to the 'stigma' and 'shame' experienced by many single mothers who receive the CSG. The researcher thus conducted individual interviews to ensure that recipients' identity and social grant status were respected and kept confidential. At the end of the fieldwork process, sixteen one-on-one interviews were conducted across the different research areas with recipients who did not feel comfortable with a group interview.

Table 6: Interviews – number and demographics

Interviews				
Research areas	OPG	Demographics	CSG	Demographics
Montagu	1	Male (African)	4	Female (Coloured)
Ceres	1	Male (White)	4	Female (White)
	1	Female (White)	1	Female (Coloured)
Stellenbosch	1	Female (Coloured)		
	1	Female (White)		
Villiersdorp	2	Female (White)		
	7		9	

Source: Research study data

To ensure consistency, the same questions that were developed for the focus groups were posed to the interviewees. While it was unexpected, the in-depth interviews were beneficial to gain deeper insights into the day-to-day challenges that many recipients experience to claim the grants. Importantly, making the interview option available to both CSG and OPG recipients made them feel comfortable to share information about their experiences of the social grants, and by extension the services of SASSA, without feeling that their identity and personal stories might be disclosed to the public. The interviews therefore provided the researcher with an opportunity to further delve into the research problem and obtain relevant data that was not necessarily conveyed in the focus groups.

The interview approach also yielded its share of largely unforeseen challenges, as reflected on earlier in this chapter. It was sometimes difficult to pose all the questions to interviewees because most of them could only reflect on certain issues or situations (that personally impacted them) in terms of accessibility, delivery, and the utilisation and impact of social grants. Resultantly, some interviews were extremely short and others were quite lengthy depending on the interviewee's comfortability and interpretation of what was being asked. With the focus group technique, all the questions could be answered and reflected on due to the diversity of the group and their diverse views and experiences. In retrospect, the researcher could have prepared a shorter semi-structured questionnaire to accommodate respondents who opted to be interviewed. In any event, the researcher is also aware that there was no guarantee that a shorter research instrument would have elicited greater responses from the interviewees.

An important consideration was the issue of language for both focus groups and interviews. It was important that the researcher had the right language skills to facilitate discussions with the social grant recipients. Bertram and Christiansen (2012, p. 82) suggest that language can influence the information shared with the researcher. Respondents tend to be more talkative and expressive in their own language than when speaking a second language. As noted earlier, the research team presented all the information related to the data collection instruments in three languages: Afrikaans, English, and IsiXhosa. The researcher is fluent in Afrikaans and English and could explain or rephrase certain questions when needed. Although the majority of the Cape Winelands and Overberg residents' vernacular is Afrikaans, there are also IsiXhosa-speaking residents in some areas. It was therefore important that an alternative moderator and/or translator were always present when focus groups or individual interviews were conducted with IsiXhosa-speaking respondents.

The role of the IsiXhosa moderator was to ask the questions in IsiXhosa, make notes, and translate the response(s) to the different questions back to the researcher, who also took notes, in the event that a follow-up question was needed. The same moderator would transcribe the recordings using their notes and the notes of the researcher, who was present during all the focus groups. While the constant translation between the moderator and the researcher was at times a lengthy process, it was necessary to avoid any exclusion or misrepresentation of any racial and/or language group to participate in the data collection process. As Matthews and Ross (2010, p. 109) explain, relying on the use of a single language can result in the exclusion of participants whose contribution can be significant for the data collection process. To ensure

that the correct information was captured, the researcher also used a tape recorder (with the permission of the respondents) and made extensive notes for future referral.

5.4.1.2 Semi-structured interviews with key informants

In most cases, focus groups and interviews result in self-reported data and have the potential to be subjective because it is largely based on the lived experiences of the respondents. It was therefore important that the data collected was verified or triangulated using other methods of inquiry. The researcher opted to interview key informants who are knowledgeable about the research topic. Only a small number of informants were selected and interviewed from the following categories:

- Black Sash paralegals (3)
- Community-based organisation workers (4)
- SASSA officials (3)
- Politicians (3)

The research team held interviews with the Black Sash organisation in Cape Town and with its community partners in Ceres (Witzenberg Rural Development Centre), Montagu, and Villiersdorp. These community-based organisations have been actively involved in conducting community-based monitoring at various SASSA pay- and service points in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts. These informants are practitioners in the field of social security and were selected due to their relationship and direct contact with social grant recipients.

Initially, the researcher planned to conduct interviews with SASSA officials working in both districts to gain insight into the challenges they face in the administration and delivery of social grants. These potential interviews were regarded as beneficial to hear the voices of SASSA officials who work at service- and pay-point centres because of their direct interaction with CSG and OPG recipients on a regular basis. However, it was difficult to obtain interviews with SASSA officials in the respective research sites. They were extremely reluctant and kept their responses short. It was difficult to gain their trust and commitment, especially considering that the fieldwork took place during a crucial time of migration to the hybrid payment approach with SAPO as the key distributor. In Villiersdorp, SASSA officials declined and indicated that formal permission must be requested from the Caledon office. In hindsight, it was perhaps a very challenging and stressful time for SASSA officials working in Villiersdorp due to venue

capacity problems. Due to limited time and funding available for extensive travelling, the researcher decided to approach SASSA officials individually while on site (mostly pay points) visits with the Black Sash monitors. Only towards the end of the fieldwork process, one SASSA official from Worcester (part of the Cape Winelands District) agreed to be interviewed on the condition of anonymity. On the day of the interview, two other officials from the Worcester office received permission to be interviewed. They similarly requested that their identity remain confidential. These interviews were very insightful; these three officials had experiences of working in both Villiersdorp and Ceres, and could therefore provide the necessary insights into the systemic challenges and weaknesses identified throughout the research process.

The research team also conducted key informant interviews with politicians, who at the time of the data collection served variously on the Portfolio Committee on Social Development in the national parliament, and the provincial legislature. The key objective of the interviews was to gain insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system in South Africa. During the period 2017 to 2018 the identified politicians were actively involved in parliamentary discussions with SASSA about the transition process from CPS to SAPO. One of the politicians who served on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (SCOPA) was instrumental in overseeing SASSA's contractual agreement with a private service provider for the distribution of social grants. The researcher initially approached politicians from three different political parties; however, only two political parties responded to the request. The researcher held in-person interviews with the two Members of Parliament (MPs), representing the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) and Democratic Alliance (DA) respectively, at a location and time convenient for the respondents. Due to time constraints, the Member of the Western Cape Provincial Legislature (MPL) who is also a DA member opted for a written response to the interview questions.

5.4.1.3 Sampling and selection of participants

The study adopted two non-probability sampling techniques. It used snowball sampling for the focus groups and chose purposive sampling for the interviews with key informants. Bryman (2012, p. 716) explains the snowball sampling approach as follows: "The researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others". Following this approach, the research team identified social grant recipients at the various pay points during the period of simple observation with

community partners working in the selected research sites. The researchers then asked these recipients to identify other recipients who would be willing to discuss their experiences around the social grant system. The community partner assisted with the recruitment process by identifying recipients who previously required assistance from their offices. However, this strategy could also be a form of convenience sampling, as the community partner already had a list of contacts to refer to. Both the snowball and convenience sampling approaches were found effective and simple, especially in terms of time and money, to recruit a sample of people to participate in the research study. However, the sampling techniques presented a limitation – respondents for the OPG and the CSG were likely to be very similar to each other in terms of certain characteristics such as gender, language, and age. This is echoed by Noy (2008), whose use of snowball sampling showed that women are potentially over-represented within snowball sampling due to their likelihood to be more cooperative (Noy in Parker et al., 2019). Interestingly, the female participation across both grant types during the course of the data collection was more prevalent than that of their male counterparts.

Purposive sampling is used by researchers who collect qualitative data and who focus on the exploration and interpretation of experiences and perceptions of respondents (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 167). The goal of purposive sampling is to make deliberate and strategic choices about which people or group should be included in the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014; Bryman, 2012). Key informants are thus chosen due to their unique characteristics, qualities, and knowledge that is crucial and relevant to the research question and objectives. Key informants are usually referred to as “information rich” sources who are willing to share their knowledge and experiences in the field (Bernard, 2002). For purposes of this study, this sampling technique allowed the researcher to engage with a specific group of people based on their active involvement and knowledge regarding the social grant situation in South Africa. To this end, people were chosen “with purpose and intention”. For example, the Black Sash organisation and its community-based partners provided information that further enabled the researcher to gain a more in-depth understanding of the possible challenges social grant recipients face on a daily basis.

5.4.1.4 Simple observation

There are two major types of observations, namely: simple observation, where the researcher remains an outside observer, and participant observation, where the researcher is simultaneously a member of the group being studied and a researcher conducting the study

(Babbie & Mouton, 2011, p. 293). This study adopted the simple observation approach to collect data. This technique allowed the researcher to pick up on people's actions and not only rely on their verbal accounts (Kelleher, 1993, p. 126). In essence, simple observation provided the opportunity to observe social grant recipients in their own context. The researcher could thus see for herself the conditions under which social grants are administered and delivered in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts. This method further assisted the researcher to collect non-verbalised data, such as the conditions of the payment facility – safety, adequate shelter, toilets, etc. – how queues are managed, and the interaction between grant recipients and SASSA officials.

Initially, the researcher planned to do simple observation at SASSA pay points in the selected research sites for a period of three to four months. Due to the migration to SAPO and the adoption of the hybrid payment approach by the government, most of the SASSA pay points were closed down. As such, the researcher was only in the position to do simple observation in Villiersdorp in the Overberg District, and partially in Ceres, situated in the Cape Winelands District. Due to this limitation, the simple observation approach was not as effective and valuable to the overall data collection process.

5.5 Secondary data: Black Sash Community-Based Monitoring Survey

As noted earlier, the study focused strongly on primary data collection methods. The researcher also consulted a secondary data source, namely the Black Sash Community-Based Monitoring (CBM) Survey Results for the period 2016 to 2018. The objective was to gain further insights into the research problem that could assist with the triangulation and verification of information received from the primary data sources. The CBM involved collecting data at SASSA facility sites and doing door-to-door interviews capturing citizens' experiences of the social grants' distribution. The selected community partners surveyed at least 300 respondents per facility in the different provinces over three to four cycles of monitoring. This was to ensure accurate sampling. Monitors conducted on-the-spot surveys of people waiting in queues at various SASSA facilities across the country, and recorded their own observations of the process (Koskimaki et al., 2016). For the purpose of this study, the researcher drew only on the survey findings in the Western Cape Province with a specific focus on the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts. The survey instrument includes the following considerations:

- Ease of access
- Safety of grant recipients at public facilities

- Complaints mechanism and responsiveness
- Waiting periods
- Staff treatment towards grant recipients
- Personal experiences of SASSA

While the analysis of the secondary data remains limited in this study, it provided new insights into experiences and perceptions of grant recipients (in particular the OPG and the CSG) towards the services and performance of SASSA, and what improvements grant recipients would like to see in the future.

5.6 Qualitative data analysis

The researcher used thematic content analysis to explain and interpret the qualitative data collected during the fieldwork period. This approach helped to identify key ideas, common patterns, and themes regarding the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher worked through a large amount of textual data to explore similarities, differences and relationships between the focus groups and interviews in the different research areas. To start off the thematic analysis process, it was important to get familiar with the data and get a preliminary understanding of the meaning of the data (TerreBlanche et al., 2006, p. 323). First, the researcher read through her field notes and transcripts line by line, highlighting and noting down key ideas as they appeared in the text. Second, this process was followed by searching for common themes, by identifying and extracting quotes and phrases used by the participants. During this step, it was crucial to determine how the key themes that “naturally” emerged from the data are relevant to the overall research question and objectives (ibid). Third, the researcher provided codes for the participants in terms of their (i) social grant, (ii) gender, (iii) racial identity, (iv) location, and (iv) age. For example: CSG F_C_V_30 and OPG M_W_V_70. Table 7 below explains how the codes can be read.

Table 7: Participant coding system

Grant	Gender	Race	Location
OPG	Male (M)	African (A)	Ceres (C)
CSG	Female (F)	Coloured (C)	Klapmuts (K)
		White (W)	Montagu (M)

			Stellenbosch (S)
			Robertson (R)
			Villiersdorp (V)

Source: Research study data

5.7 Validity, credibility and transferability

Validity, credibility and transferability are often presented as criteria for assessing the trustworthiness and quality of data gathered during the fieldwork process.

In qualitative research, validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the results are in relation to the research objective(s) and question(s) (TerreBlanche, et al., 2006; Matthews & Ross, 2010; Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). To achieve validity, I have already mentioned that the semi-structured questions were pre-tested on a small group of research participants before the researcher embarked on the fieldwork process. The piloting of the data collection instrument provided the time and space for the researcher to determine the appropriateness and feasibility of the data collection technique (primarily focus groups) and instrument (semi-structured questionnaire). Importantly, the pre-testing phase also provided the opportunity for the researcher to assess the extent to which the data collection instrument measures what it is intended to measure in terms of the objectives of the study (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015, p. 193). After the completion of the pilot study, the researcher had a debriefing session with the research supervisors to further clarify certain wording and definitions to avoid any misunderstandings or misinterpretation of questions before the fieldwork process commenced.

Credibility in qualitative research generally refers to the extent to which the data obtained, and the analysis thereof, can be recognised as believable and trustworthy. In other words, for any data findings to be recognised as “credible” it should accurately reflect and interpret the participants’ reality and positioning, while at the same time, represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original views shared (Bertram & Christiansen, 2015). Thus, to achieve credibility, the researcher incorporated multiple forms of data to answer the overarching research question and address the key objectives of the study. For example, the observation technique was used at certain pay-and-service points and that of the Post Office prior to and during the fieldwork process. Additionally, and to further strengthen the validity and credibility of the data, in-depth interviews were conducted with Black Sash fieldworkers

and community monitors to reflect on their experiences at pay-and-service points and their encounters with social grant recipients across the selected sites. The job of the researcher was to carefully review all of the data, make sense of it, and organised it into the research categories and themes identified. Part of this process was to cross-check transcripts to make sure that they do not contain any mistakes during the transcription phase (TerreBlanche, et al., 2006). The process of using multiple sources – focus groups, interviews, observation, and the CBM dashboard - was important to determine the extent to which the data gathered from the CSG and OPG recipients were a truthful reflection of their social realities and encounters with not only SASSA, but the social grant itself.

Linked to the credibility and reliability of the qualitative data obtained, was the incorporation of the CBM dashboard data collected by the Black Sash. The quantitative data generated by the CBM project gave the researcher another opportunity to check the trustworthiness of the data obtained from both the focus group discussions with recipients and interviews conducted with community-based organisations in the respective towns. Combining both qualitative and quantitative data with the adoption of the observation technique, also assisted with the ‘triangulation of data’, i.e., to cross check information from different data sources. The data triangulation was an imperative step to ensure that the research conclusions were accurate and that a truthful account of the lived realities and experiences of social grant recipients who formed part of this study were captured. Several scholars have indicated that data triangulation can reinforce validity, credibility and reliability because the process allows the researcher to ‘corroborate’ and ‘confirm’ emerging findings and to determine to what extent consistencies and/or inconsistencies exist within the data obtained from various sources (Bryman, 2012; Matthews & Ross, 2010; TerreBlanche et al., 2012; Stahl & King, 2020).

The next critical step was to determine the transferability of the data, in other words, the degree to which the results of the qualitative findings can be applicable and transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). It is important to note that transferability (also known as generalisability) is not always easy to determine or measure, especially in qualitative research, due to the context specific nature and sample size of the research undertaken. As such, the researcher cannot guarantee that the results can be generalised or transferred to a larger population, i.e., outside of the two districts being studied. However, in attempting to address transferability aspect of this particular research, the researcher provided a detailed description of the research sites, the context in which the study

was carried out, and the methodological measures taken to conduct the fieldwork. As Seale (2000, p. 41) and Korstjens & Moser (2018, p. 122) argue that the role of transferability is providing “rich and thick descriptions” to convey the findings to the readers. Providing detailed information may “transport” readers to the research setting and be fully emerged in the study’s findings. Readers also have the opportunity to make their own “transferability judgment” and conduct their own “thought experiment” especially when the readers are not familiar with the specific context and setting in which the research study was carried out.

Lastly, while the aspect of transferability was difficult to determine, key lessons can be learned from this specific study conducted in the Cape Winelands and Overberg districts. These key lessons could potentially inspire social change and action from the South African national government, more specifically the Department of Social Development and SASSA, that can benefit the larger social grant population in South Africa.

5.8 Ethical considerations

It is important that research studies follow a set of moral standards and ethical considerations. All ethical aspects of this research study were reviewed and approved by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) at the University of the Western Cape (UWC).

Generally, in social sciences the researchers study human beings as subjects, and therefore, their rights should be protected (Rubin & Babbie, 2011). To avoid any unethical research practice, this researcher gave serious consideration to the ethical guiding principles for research, namely: voluntary participation, confidentiality, consent, anonymity, and truthfulness (Durrheim, 1999; Neuman, 1997). Having these principles in mind, the researcher explained the overarching purpose of the research to all potential participants. This was done through an information sheet that provided a detailed outline of the research question(s), objectives, and ethical processes.

Once the participants granted their permission to participate in the study, a consent form was provided. A consent form is important for participants to formally acknowledge that their participation is voluntary, they have the right to anonymity, and that all information given will be confidential (Durrheim, 1999, p. 66). Both the consent form and information sheet stressed that the rights and dignity of individuals and groups will be respected throughout the research

process. Participants granted their permission to audio record the interviews and focus group discussions. The researcher also requested that all focus group participants keep the research discussions confidential and not to disclose any of the participants' identities. These requests were added to the individual consent forms.

In addition, participants were informed that only the researcher (the principal investigator) and her supervisors will have access to the names of the participants and the data obtained from them. That further entails that all information such as the audio-recorded interviews and focus group discussions will be kept in a protected place at all times. As Barrow et al. (2022, n.p.) note, "researchers must keep any shared information in their strictest confidence and any information provided by participants through their study involvement must be protected". To this end, the researcher uploaded all recordings, notes, and transcriptions of interviews and focus groups discussions to her personal computer that is password protected. The researcher safely stored the raw data related to the participants' personal information, written notes, and printed transcripts in a locked cabinet in her office at the university. The researcher asked the research assistants (moderators, language translators, and transcribers) to sign a consent form to acknowledge their role in the research process and importantly, to keep all information and identities confidential.

The consent form also acknowledged that participation is completely voluntary and no compensation or benefits would be offered. The researcher informed participants that the research process will be free from any harm or coercion, and that participants have the right to decline and/or withdraw from the research process at any time. It was important that the researcher explicitly explained the research ethics to all participants to avoid any misunderstandings and concerns in terms of their involvement in the study.

5.9 Data collection challenges and limitations

The researcher experienced several challenges and practical limitations during the data collection process. Due to the qualitative nature of the focus groups and interviews, the translations and transcriptions took more time than was anticipated. The research team transcribed both the focus group discussions and interviews verbatim and therefore it generated a large amount of textual information. For example, a 60-minute focus group discussion would take between four to six hours of translation and transcription (if done in Afrikaans or IsiXhosa). As Bloor et al. (2001) suggest, a focus group session lasting one hour can take up

to eight hours to transcribe. Therefore, when it is transcribed, it can generate up to fifteen pages of text that needs to be analysed (Bertram & Christiansen, 2014). The interviews and focus group discussion conducted in English were easier to transcribe because no direct translation was needed. At the outset, the large amounts of data were overwhelming, but as the process unfolded the researcher had a better idea of which data was most important and needed to be analysed to answer the research question and meet the study objectives.

The organisation of the focus groups was also challenging in terms of recruitment, finding a convenient time and venue for all the stakeholders involved. The issue of trust played an important role in focus group discussions. Some focus group respondents felt more comfortable to speak if a member of the community-based organisation was present, observing in the background. The researcher noticed that there was already a trust relationship established between most of the social grant recipients and the community partner due to the organisation's active role within the community and what it represents within the local context of advocacy for people's right to social assistance.

Further to the above, some focus group participants also tended to lose focus or concentration when the size of the group exceeded eight respondents. In Ceres and Villiersdorp, in particular, some of the focus groups had between eight and ten respondents. This happened when the researcher, with the assistance of the community partner, over-recruited. As Bryman (2012, p. 517) notes, it is common practice in focus groups to over-recruit in the event that one or two people will not turn up for their session. It was thus important that the researcher kept the questions short and interactive. The researcher adopted a flexible approach in terms of the flow of the conversation and how questions were phrased, depending on the "mood" and "energy" of the room. This helped the researcher not to lose control of the focus group proceedings and could get the best possible information from the social grant recipients.

Another limitation was the issue of gender and racial representation in relation to the research study. While there was a combination of both male and female OPG recipients across the research sites, all the CSG recipients who took part of the study were women. This strongly reflects the gendered nature of both physical and financial childcare in South Africa (Hatch & Posel, 2018, p. 267).

Linked to this, was the challenge of recruiting white CSG recipients in the research areas. The fact that only a small minority of white people receive social grants (or might be eligible but

prefer not to participate in the system) was seen as a challenge. The researcher had to solely rely on the community-based organisations' social networks to gain access to this racial group. As noted earlier, some white CSG recipients declined to participate in the focus group discussions and the researcher conducted interviews with those who were willing to participate. The recruitment of male recipients within the CSG category was also extremely challenging for both the researcher and the community partners in the selected research sites. As was previously discussed in Chapter Four and demonstrated in Chapter Seven, it is evident that childcare and maintenance was predominantly by females and hence the high up-take of the CSG compared to their male counterparts. In a context of widespread father absence, very little is known about the small minority of men who actually claim the CSG (Khan, 2018). Some studies have also shown that men are often ashamed and refuse to access the CSG because of the stigma attached to receiving a 'women's grant' (Hunter 2007 cited in van Driel, 2009; Khan, 2018).

The researcher is aware that the overall findings in relation to the CSG would have been strengthened if men receiving the CSG were interviewed. Interviews with male recipients would have yielded important insights how they interpret and understand the social contract between citizens and the state in terms of the CSG. Finally, the researcher is also aware that better representation of white CSG recipients would have allowed for a more nuanced analysis of how they perceive the state and social grants. Given the above-described context, some research challenges and limitations were difficult to overcome.

5.10 Concluding remarks

This chapter explained the overarching research design and methodological approach that were briefly introduced in Chapter One. It outlined and discussed the qualitative and interpretive nature of the data collection process with the objective of assessing how the social contract between the government and social grant recipients can be strengthened. Furthermore, this chapter gave a detailed account of the non-probability sample techniques adopted to recruit and select the research participants in the respective research areas. It also discussed challenges and practical limitations - keeping in mind that the researcher was unable to recruit white CSG participants in all the research sites. Only four white CSG recipients were interviewed in Ceres. Also, there were no male CSG recipients who formed part of the overall sample. It is important to reiterate that this study did not explore all the social grants available and only focused on two districts within the Western Cape. This is a methodological limitation, which subsequently

implies that this study is not in a position to generalise its findings in terms of the experiences and perceptions across the nine provinces in South Africa. The next two chapters present the results of the fieldwork process in the form of key themes that emerged from the empirical data.



CHAPTER SIX: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE OLDER PERSON'S GRANT

6.1 Overview

As alluded to in the preceding chapters, the realization of the social contract relies on the ability of the state to respond to the needs of citizens. It is the fundamental idea that the state has specific responsibilities towards its citizenry, and consequently, it has to respond to the challenges that people, especially the vulnerable in society, face (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2019, p. 18). In this sense, it can be argued that the state was established to serve the people and play an important role in the distribution of socio-economic resources necessary for people's day-to-day survival. The provision of social assistance in the form of social grants for older and senior citizens is an integral part of the social contract, an eminent symbol of the South African Constitution.

Much of the literature studying the impacts of the Older Person's Grant (OPG), also commonly referred to as the "state pension" in the early 1900s and the "old-age grant" in the early 2000s, has mainly focused on the material benefits it provides for recipients. Thus far, very little research has been conducted on the realization of the social contract and the perceptions of transfer recipients towards the state and its various institutions, such as SASSA and by extension the Department of Social Development. To this end, the aim of this chapter is to explore the day-to-day experiences, perceptions, and attitudes of OPG recipients towards the government.⁴⁵ The aim of this chapter is to understand how cash transfers have shaped the state-citizen relationship – the social contract. In particular, drawing on the social contract theory, it critically assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system based on the experiences of OPG claimants across gender and racial categories in the Overberg and Cape Winelands Districts.

6.2 The state as provider and distributor

In the series of interviews and focus group discussions, OPG recipients were asked to explain their perceptions of the state in relation to the provision of social grants. Many of the senior citizens, especially those residing in farming communities and old-age homes, expressed feelings of gratitude towards the state for the provision of the social grant. The role and "social"

⁴⁵ This chapter uses the terms government and state interchangeably.

duty of the state therefore featured prominently in recipients' discussions. Some respondents characterised the state as the "provider" to those who are unable to work for an income due to their old-age status. In the High Noon and Kaaimansgat Valley in Villiersdorp the OPG receivers, who are all previous farm workers, in particular emphasised the "caring nature and supportive role" of the state. They shared the following:

I am happy to receive a social grant. I value the grant. I won't be able to survive without it. I am not working and cannot expect much. I feel the government does a lot for me by providing the grant. The government gives me what I do not have. I am not forced to steal from others to survive. The grant enables me to pay my debt. I can buy food and clothes on *skuld*⁴⁶ and pay it off later because I have the grant as an income (OPG M_C_V_63).

The social grant from the government means a lot to me because it is the only source of income I get. I have no husband and no children who can work for me. If I do not get the grant every month, where else will I get money from to survive? (OPG F_C_V_65).

I am very pleased with my social grant. I feel that the government cares about the elderly (OPG F_C_V_79).

All the recipients agreed that the social grant, or in their words, the "All Pay", helps to fight poverty in their farming community. The cash transfer sustains them and affords them the opportunity to contribute to their children's and grandchildren's material wellbeing. One recipient from High Noon noted:

The government knows that I desperately need the money. I am unemployed, but with this social grant I can take care of my grandchild, who has schooling needs (OPG F_C_V_68).

From the above discussions, it was clear that receipt of the social grant is a confirmation of "being seen by the state", which subsequently has a huge impact on recipients' attitudes towards the state. The collection of the social grant is also likely the most used channel to directly engage with the state. The interviewees also indicated that other channels of engagement with public institutions include visiting the local clinic and during elections.

The above sentiments were shared by another respondent who resides in Villiersdorp. A 78-year-old white woman from Villiersdorp who had received the OPG for seven years at the time

⁴⁶ The word *skuld* is Afrikaans for debt; in this context it refers to buying on credit.

of the interview, expressed her gratitude towards the government for providing her with a monthly income. After her husband's passing, the OPG recipient was left with very little financial support and could no longer afford to cover rent, food, and medical aid. In her words:

I am extremely thankful for the social grant. Yes, the money is little to survive on, and I had to let go of my medical aid ... but, I also know that there are others who don't get the grant, probably because they don't need it. I believe the government gives it with a good heart" (OPG F_W_V_78).

It is clear from the recipient's response, that her perception of the South African state is primarily influenced by the material benefits of the social grant. Seeing the state care about her wellbeing during the most vulnerable time in her life brings a sense of security. There is a reduced stress level of where money for basic necessities will come from. In another respondent's words:

Without the grant, there will be a huge hole in my pocket and I already know what I can buy and not buy with the money. I will be upset if the payments don't continue (OPG F_W_V_78).

Interestingly, white recipients residing in the old-age home in Villiersdorp had very little to say about their perceptions of the state in relation to the social grant. It seems that they had hardly any relationship with the grant, as many preferred the money to be paid directly into the account of the old-age home towards their monthly rent. The majority also confirmed that their children applied on their behalf. A female recipient commented:

Beggars can't be choosers. I am grateful for receiving it, but I will not toyi-toyi if I don't get it anymore. I don't think the government will listen to us. I don't think we can tell the government what we want, so I am okay with what I can get. We cannot demand more (OPG F_W_V_70).

The majority of the other respondents confirmed this statement, referring to the social grant as "pocket money" to be used at the old-age home. Another respondent said,

My children said I should apply, even though I was hesitant. I will be honest, I have a private doctor so maybe it helps my children to cover him?" (OPG F_W_V_75).

While these responses (from within the urban areas) were vastly different from the experiences of the recipients of the farming community, it also recognised how an individual's social class plays a role in how the grant is interpreted, and whether it has the power to strengthen state-

citizen relations. Importantly, the responses also assume that the state is somewhat “invisible” to them as there was no direct engagement with the application process or the collection of the grant itself. The direct presence and visibility of the state therefore has the potential to influence the social contract dynamics among grant recipients.⁴⁷

A few days later, I travelled to Goniwe Park, a predominantly African informal settlement in Villiersdorp. The focus group discussion took place at a local community hall used as a day-care centre for children. The community hall was also a place for residents to come to when they need information about SASSA payment dates and venues. The OPG recipients, who generally were all former farm workers, mostly shared similar responses as Anne⁴⁸ and those residing in the High Noon and Kaaimansgat farming valleys. Respondents agreed with a recipient who noted the following:

It is the government that provides for us because we are old. I am frail and have leg pains and cannot go out to make money like I used to. Because of the government, I get a SASSA card and I when I put the card in the bank machine, I get money (OPG F_A_V_83).

Other recipients said that the social grant helps people with many material things: “I can feed myself, my family, and meet other basic needs, like buying soap” (OPG F_A_V_67), and it is therefore that the social grant “is a source of life to many of us” (OPG M_A_V_60).

In early June 2018, the fieldwork journey led me to Ceres in the Witzenberg District. At the time of the interviews and focus group discussions, Black Sash and the Witzenberg Rural Development Centre (hereafter referred to as WRDC) monitored the transition from traditional pay points to the South African Post Office (SAPO). Most of the OPG recipients in the study site were either living alone or residing in a state old-age home. A small minority, mostly among the white recipients, had working-age children living with them, mostly unemployed or having short-term jobs. It was evident that the social grant was the primary income to sustain the older persons both within the old-age homes or households.

⁴⁷ Citizens form ideas about their benefits, citizenship, and the state through their interactions with welfare state bureaucracies (i.e. human service workers). Therefore, it could be argued that receiving an OPG or any other type of grant is more than just a guarantee of the right to a certain amount of money; it also qualifies as a ‘service’ from the government that results in actual participation in, and knowledge of, the social security system.

⁴⁸ Anne is a pseudonym for recipient: OPG F_W_V_78.

OPG recipients residing in one of the old-age homes in the town centre of Ceres, noted that without the support from the state they would have been out on the streets without a decent place to live. One respondent explained that both his legs were amputated and he received the disability grant for about three years. In 2009, he turned 60 and qualified for the older person's grant. In his words:

It helps the older people. Here, you need to pay rent to have roof over your head. You can't do anything else because you have no other form of income. I feel helpless without it. I don't have legs. So, I can't do anything for an income. The government doesn't want to see me sitting on the side of the road (OPG M_W_C_67).

Similarly, another recipient who resides in Nduli, a predominantly African township, indicated:

The government has been good to me. The government knows that I need the money to cover my rent and municipal bills. I also buy food and go to the hospital for free. Because of my grant I can stay out of poverty (OPG F_A_C_65).

Another respondent who lives in a small townhouse in a predominantly coloured community in Ceres said:

I've been receiving disability [grant] since 2006 and pension since December 2017. I became disabled in 2006, and the government has taken care of me since then. Do you understand what I'm saying? Yes, the pension is not a lot of money, but my wife and I are coping. If I use my money right, it can go far (OPG M_C_C_61).

It is evident that the state uses cash transfers to validate its constitutional duty to provide much-needed relief to poor and vulnerable individuals such as older people within society. Going by the views of the above respondents, it seems that the social contract can be interpreted in terms of financial provision. The fact that the social grant is available and accessible by those who need it, means that the state is upholding its end of the contract. The social grant is therefore seen as something tangible that can bring material livelihood resources in the form of food, soap, clothing, etc. It is also evident that the provision of social grants strengthened the image of the state. Social grants thus have the power to alter citizens' perceptions of the role, duties, and obligations of government, and improve citizens' view of the state (Lagrange et al., 2021). On the other hand, a lack of income support by the state can damage its image, and grant recipients may resultantly lose confidence in the social contract and start questioning its legitimacy, as shown later in this chapter.

Remarkably, a few respondents, especially among the coloured and white population groups, viewed the state as the “distributor” rather than the “provider” of social grants. Respondents alluded to the fact that “citizens pay taxes” that enable the government to fulfil its constitutional duty to older citizens in relation to social assistance. Respondents from Ceres and Villiersdorp, in particular, stressed that there was a time that older people “fought for the democracy”, “helped moved the country forward”, and “contributed to taxes”. Consequently, it is the government’s turn to look after them. Some comments from respondents reflecting this thinking are outlined below:

The government is not giving us the money, it only distributes the money that comes from taxpayers (OPG M_W_V_70).

The government can only provide the social pension because people pay their taxes. It is because of taxpayers that we can claim our grant from the government (OPG M_C_C_65).

In the early years we had to pay our taxes. So now, it is probably being ploughed back because we have been paying taxes for years. Every month tax was deducted from my salary by the government, and therefore, I am entitled to receive my state pension (OPG M_W_C_68).

The social grant is my livelihood. I can’t live without it because I have worked years for the day to claim it. I have contributed towards it my whole working life (OPG F_C_C_84).

I grew up with the understanding that I should pay my taxes to the government, and I will receive a social grant when I retire (OPG M_W_C_69).

I worked for many years in a day hospital’s kitchen and contributed to the government so that I can claim my social grant when I retire (OPG F_W_C_66).

I agree that the taxpayers make it possible for me to receive my social grant. I worked extremely hard for the local farmers with the hope that when I retire, I will be able to receive my social pension (OPG F_C_V_76).

These participants felt that the state has a moral and social obligation towards them because of their financial contributions made during the working stages of their lives. The data above points out that the very essence of a social contract is reciprocal – a mutually beneficial relationship between state and citizens. As explained in Chapter Two, states and citizens have rights and responsibilities towards one other (Harvey et al., 2007) to make the social contract work. The social contract is thus built on an understanding of citizens’ rights to claim social

benefits and access public goods, but also that they understand their responsibility to contribute towards the government's fiscus, in the form of income tax and value-added tax (VAT). The reciprocal nature of the social contract was initially detailed by John Locke, who argued for mutual obligations – to obey the law and pay taxes – in exchange for delivery of public services and goods.

6.3 Being seen by the state: A sense of citizenship, recognition, and rights

Respondents spoke about “being recognised and valued by the state” because of their social status in society. As senior citizens who are old and unable to work, they require financial assistance from the state. Their views are captured in the following quotes:

Yes, I do feel recognised and valued by the government – because the government provides the social grant. The government gave us permission to apply and receive this grant. The government knows that we are not working, we do not have an income, and we need the money to have something to eat. I cannot ask my neighbours for food every day. I rely on the grant the most (OPG M_C_V_63).

The government recognises and values us as citizens and social grant beneficiaries. The government cannot disown me. I am born a coloured from South Africa and that is why I must receive my social grant (OPG_F_C_V_73).

Yes, the government is good for me. I feel recognised and valued because the government provides me with something that I need and would not have had. I worked for the local farmer since a young age and contributed to the farmer's profit, which in turn paid taxes to the government so that I can get my social grant when I could no longer work (OPG M_C_V_67).

This finding resonates with the work of Oduro (2015) that says that Ghana's conditional cash transfer programme called the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP), “made beneficiaries feel like citizens and forged a sense of being part of the state,” connecting them to the idea of the state above all else. In that sense, the issuing of social grants served as a form of contract between the state and beneficiaries (Oduro, 2015, p. 31). The above finding also echoes the work of Corbridge et al. (2005), that claims that modern interventionist states are characterised by the increased need and ability of the state to “see” its citizens. In the same way, state interventions such as “welfare provisions”, in the form of social assistance, generate multiple ways that people can access and experience the state. In the same vein, the OPG represents “being seen directly by the state as a citizen with fundamental rights and

entitlements”, regardless of what racial group they belong to. A sixty-one-year-old recipient from Klapmuts said the following:

Since receiving the social grant, I feel more recognised as a South African citizen. I also feel valued and protected by the government, for example, the social grant affords me to buy food to survive. I am also trying to build on by my house, using the social grant. All of us sitting here have our own RDP houses provided by the government. The government does recognise us as its citizens, but also understand that we are poor and need its assistance. I don’t know the wealth of other people, because we do not live under the same roof, but I know that before the social grant, I was at a lower status (OPG F_A_K_61).

Recognition was therefore a strong theme that emerged in the study. Recognition – in the form of the social grant – thus naturally deepens citizens’ relationship with the state. Interlinked to recognition is the idea of citizenship. OPG recipients are increasingly aware of their entitlements that are strongly influenced by the idea of “being recognised” as a citizen. The literature is somewhat divided on whether social security can promote citizenship among grant recipients. Some scholars argue that the assumption that social protection can promote citizenship among poor constituents has remained theoretical (see, for example, Farrington et al., 2007 in Plagerson et al., 2012). This is because how grant receipt interfaces with concepts of citizenship remains largely unresearched (Neves et al., 2009). However, in this study, citizenship, and by extension, recognition through the Constitution, emerged as a dominant theme. Two respondents from High Noon and Kaaimansgat in Villiersdorp explained how their social grants cannot be taken away, because “the state made the law that ensures that I receive my social pension. It is already written in the book of law” (OPG M_C_V_63), and “I agree, the law stays the law, and not even the ANC can change it. The government already made me a promise of receiving a social grant” (OPG F_C_V_65). The study found that being equally recognised through legislation such as the Constitution made a huge impact on how these respondents value the government’s commitment to their overall wellbeing. The perception of political equality before the law is therefore important to strengthen a social contract that was previously racialised.

Historically, there were weaker levels of recognition and citizenship experienced among non-white South Africans because social assistance benefits were based on racial bias. The so-called ‘non-white’ citizens were not “equally” recognised and did not receive “equal” social assistance coverage and benefits under the colonial and apartheid governments. One could thus

argue that recipients of cash transfers who have historically been economically and socially marginalised were less likely to have positive images or recollections of the state. These past experiences of the state are captured by respondents who reside in Bella Vista in Ceres and High Noon in Villiersdorp. They shared the following:

I didn't get paid in the apartheid years. But I always used to go withdraw my mother's money. And that money, between the black, white, and brown, was a big difference. There were unfair rights!! I mean, the new regime gives us the same amount. That is what I can say about the apartheid years, there was that unevenness (OPG M_C_C_70).

My dad was 68 years old and they still didn't want to give him a pension. They said he looks too young and he looks like he can still go and work. And back then, if you're 67, then the people qualified for pension. In the apartheid years they must approve you and that time the magistrate looks at you himself and says if you can still go and work (OPG M_C_C_66).

All I know is that under the apartheid government, under the old DA, we struggled a lot! I know that my father only received a R400 under the apartheid government (OPG M_C_V_67).

In apartheid time it was very difficult. My father used to get his social grant on a quarterly basis, but now it's much better because I get my grant on a monthly basis (OPG M_A_V_60).

Although the respondents had different recollections of how much their parents could claim under apartheid, they all detailed a situation where it was far less than what they were currently receiving. Based on the available evidence, recipients' historical backgrounds and racial identities also play a huge role in how they will interpret their relationship with the state, and importantly, how they will assess their own citizenship. It is evident that key historical moments in South Africa shaped the social contract between state and citizens. For example, a few respondents suggested that the current ruling party, the ANC, recognised "black" people as citizens and therefore initiated equal social grants to all older people, especially those regarded as poor and marginalised. Their recognition and entitlement to a social grant was therefore strengthened with the election of the former president, Nelson Mandela in 1994. These were mostly the sentiments of OPG recipients from Villiersdorp and Klapmuts:

A social grant was a white privilege, but we (black people) received the grant because Mr Mandela advocated for it on our behalf. He was a good leader and we don't know if the new leader will be the same as Mr Mandela as he was a good man (OPG F_A_V_67).

Mandela made sure that we all got paid the same. Previously, we all got paid but we all didn't get the same amount. White people were the first to get paid, then the coloureds, and then the blacks. This is no longer true (OPG F_A_V_66).

I am grateful to Mandela for this social grant. Other political parties would never provide us with social grants. It was Nelson Mandela's idea long ago (even before we were born) that old people must be provided social grants (OPG F_A_K_62).

While the majority of grant recipients were aware that they have a constitutional right to social assistance (echoing citizenship), other respondents, especially in Klapmuts and Villiersdorp, were still uncertain or did not believe that this right would be protected should another political party come to power. One of the OPG recipients residing in Klapmuts said, "If it was not for Nelson Mandela, there would not be any form of social grant. Other political parties do not care about giving social grants to us" (OPG F_A_K_65). The majority of other respondents who were part of this particular focus group discussion agreed with this viewpoint. In Villiersdorp, another OPG recipient said: "No, the ANC must win the next election. If it does not govern, we will struggle too much!! President Jacob Zuma made it possible for me to receive my R1,600 to buy me food and clothes" (OPG M_C_V_84). When prompted, many of the respondents acknowledged that experiences of the state have often been dominated by political parties and state representatives. Some respondents indicated that they will vote for the ANC because of "fear of losing the social grant", while others mentioned that the DA has promised to increase the social grant and was therefore worthy of their vote in the 2019 general elections. This OPG recipient from Ceres said, "the DA said that if we vote for them, they will give us an increase. I saw Mmusi Maimane on TV and he confirmed it" (OPG F_C_C_65). Clearly, some recipients saw the social grant as being at the behest of a political party.

These mixed responses from the respondents indicated that there is a legal interpretation of the social contract based on the responses to citizenship and constitutionality. There is, however, also a strong political interpretation of the social contract that is prompted by political beliefs. Political parties are often found using social grants as an electioneering tool. Based on the responses from OPG recipients, the words of politicians are thus powerful in establishing a social contract. In 2021, a door-to-door campaign in the township of Daveyton, the ANC national chairperson, Gwede Mantashe said, "All of you sitting here are being paid by the ANC government every month. All of you. Without doing anything" (Malinga, 2021, n.p.). This resonates with previous research done, which said there is a general perception that social grants can be a "vote buying" mechanism used by the government to solicit support from poor

voters (Patel et al., 2016). In 2019, the Centre for Social Change at the University of Johannesburg found that social grant recipients were statistically more likely to vote for the ANC.

Consequently then, both research studies found that social grants are likely to have a great impact on political attitudes and behaviour. Scholars argue that grant recipients were more likely to vote for the ruling ANC party if they felt uncertain that their socio-economic rights would be protected if another party came to power (Patel et al., 2016, p. 53). In this regard, political parties have the power to shape people's understanding and expectations of the state, notably what the social contract means and can deliver, especially in terms of social assistance.

6.4 State institution engagement

Another key theme that emerged strongly was that of state engagement. Through the application process, grant recipients had to interact with SASSA, which in turn also shaped their perceptions of the state. From the responses, it seemed that respondents who had more interaction with SASSA became more critical of the state and how the state “sees” them as citizens. Plagerson et al. (2012) maintain that “being seen by the state” is equally important as “seeing the state” through interactions with public institutions.

During the fieldwork process, I learned that SASSA does not have a designated office in Villiersdorp and makes use of satellite offices to service the community, requiring staff from Caledon and Worcester to travel to Villiersdorp two to three days a month to render services. From early- to mid-2018, the satellite office was a local church near the town centre of Villiersdorp. This is the only time that social grant queries can be addressed face-to-face. If a grant recipient has an urgent issue, that person needs to travel to Caledon or Worcester – both towns are approximately 48 kms outside Villiersdorp. However, in early November 2018, while on a site visit with Black Sash, I learned that SASSA no longer serviced recipients at the local church. The Black Sash monitors informed me that the lease agreement with the church came to an end and subsequently SASSA moved their operations to a local sports field also in Villiersdorp. Upon my arrival at the sports field, I noticed that social grant recipients were waiting in long queues and being assisted in a small “changing” or “locker” room that belongs to the Villiersdorp Rugby Club. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, a female SASSA official said:

The location is not conducive to render services to new and current grant recipients. The venue is small, not well equipped, and not friendly towards people with disabilities. There are toilet facilities but no provision for water dispensers and this is a big problem. SASSA Caledon is aware of the problem and is currently looking for an alternative venue within Villiersdorp. However, finding a suitable venue is difficult because there have been complaints from previous venues, such as the local church, that SASSA clients dirty the premises (SASSA Official, Villiersdorp).

While speaking to the Black Sash monitors, recipients complained about the long waiting period at the service venue. One female OPG anonymously noted, “Because of limited space, everyone sits and waits in one queue. I came to resubmit my application form but had to wait with people who have other queries” (OPG F_C_V_60). The SASSA official explained that the service on that specific day was particularly slow because the furniture arrived late at the venue. She said “although SASSA informs the Villiersdorp Rugby Club about their monthly schedule, tables only arrived at 11h00 the morning. The rugby club needs to ensure that tables and chairs are provided”. Based on the SASSA official’s response, a male OPG recipient noted: “SASSA should get an appropriate venue within Villiersdorp to render services to us. We have been coming to the sports field for almost 3 months” (OPG M_C_V_65). The late arrival of tables thus caused a huge logistical and operational delay for both SASSA officials and grant recipients. Importantly, it was evident that the space provided was not intended to accommodate the social grant process. It particularly had a negative impact on the overall experiences of older individuals and people with disabilities who had to wait in long and overcrowded queues.

The above responses indicate that permanent SASSA premises or locations provide a sense of certainty. Also, grant recipients expect quality service delivery from public institutions that they have regular engagement with. As noted, cash transfers present an important point of contact between individual and state, where the social contract knowingly and unknowingly is at the centre of engagement. The administration and dispensing of social grants cannot be separated from the social contract. A permanent location and high-quality service delivery are thus required, necessitating state intervention, in Villiersdorp.

As Gaventa (2010) points out, it starts with the perceptions of citizens themselves when asked how they interact and view the institutions from which they are expected to benefit. In Klapmuts, a former farm worker in Stellenbosch and Paarl, explained that her interaction with SASSA has not been very positive:

Most of the time their service is very poor. They were not helping us. Sometimes they would ask you to come in the following week, and the waiting period usually takes the whole day, not that there are a lot of people coming to apply or long queues. It's just that they do not care much about us. Even if you have managed to talk to them, they would send you to the police station for some documents and say that I have to come back again the following week (OPG F_A_K_61).

Another OPG recipient also from Klapmuts relates to the above story and explained the following:

It was very difficult and tiring; sometimes it could even take about six months to get your details to the system. That time I was struggling to get food to eat in the house. There was a time when I told myself that I was giving up, I then decided to go to work on a farm that is very far from here. I had to walk with my bare feet to come back, the boss/owner of the farm would not even give us water to drink. I had to drink dam water, as I had no choice (OPG F_A_K_62).

A recipient from Goniwe Park in Villiersdorp shared similar concerns about her engagement with SASSA:

I'm also worried about SASSA, but I cannot complain because I still need the grant money. Sometimes you will find out that they have run out of forms and you will be trying for a month to get your application done, or sometimes when I go there, and hear that my papers were missing, which I have already submitted and I will have to submit again (OPG F_A_V_63).

Another OPG recipient from Elsenburg Farm in Stellenbosch related to the above experiences with SASSA. She said:

I had a bad experience at SASSA in Klapmuts. I went there to enquire about my OPG application, and because the process was very new to me, I asked a lot of questions. They spoke in a cold tone of voice and made me feel very stupid. I feel the staff on duty could have handled the situation better because I needed information about my documents. I noticed that staff on duty directed people around in a rude tone. I did not like the way people were treated. SASSA staff should have a positive attitude towards the general public (OPG F_C_S_61).

The above discussions revealed that there is a lengthy turn-around time. Many grant recipients were asked to repeat visits for the same services due to incomplete or missing documentation. Not all OPG recipients are fortunate to have their application completed within the same visit. These repeat visits also left recipients feeling frustrated with the social grant process. From the discussions it was also clear that respondents have associated SASSA with the state, and

therefore, feel that the state is not adequately “seeing them” due to problems of poor infrastructure, missing documents, and unfriendly staff behaviour. The *Batho Pele* principles rightfully indicate that frontline service providers are the face and voice of government. *Batho Pele*, the “putting people first” framework, was first introduced during Nelson Mandela’s administration to give birth to better delivery of goods and services to the public.⁴⁹ The *Batho Pele* guidelines specifically target government employees (and those in municipalities) to be service-oriented while aiming for excellence in the provision of both tangible and intangible functions and public services. The framework clearly stipulates that consultation with service users should take place to identify their needs and provide an opportunity to give feedback on the quality of services they received (DPSA, 2021). Importantly, people’s perceptions of their government are based on the nature and quality of the services they experience at the hands of public servants and the agencies tasked with the delivery thereof. Unfortunately, the continued administrative problems encountered at some SASSA service points in relation to the OPG application process have undermined the philosophy of *Batho Pele*.

6.5 Distance, dignity, and inclusion

The traditional system of direct cash payments was replaced in late 2018 with a new mode of delivery, which primarily consists of electronic payments. The traditional system of “pulling” recipients to a designated place of payment, for example, a local town hall, has been replaced with “push systems” whereby the organiser – in this case SASSA – pushes the delivery of social grants down to the level of the individual cash-transfer recipient. Currently, instead of going to cash pay points to collect their grants, recipients must access their money in one of three ways: (i) through the tellers at the post office or commercial banks, (ii) through the ATMs linked to these institutions, or (iii) through retailers that offer cash, like Boxer, PicknPay, Spar, Shoprite, and others (Piper et al., 2019).

With reference to SASSA’s 2018–2019 Annual Report, the majority of grant recipients opted to access their money at ATMs, followed by retailers, such as supermarkets, and to a much lesser extent, from SAPO (SASSA, 2020, p. 10). This is quite surprising as SAPO has been designated as the “payment method” determined by SASSA Regulation 21(1)(b). This was

⁴⁹ *Batho Pele* is Sotho term that means “People First”. *Batho Pele* is a term used in government that refers to all policies, initiatives, and programmes intended to reform the provision of public services (DPSA, 2021).

confirmed by SAPO's former Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Mark Barnes, who stated that the post office "would act as an anchor in the system while Postbank would be the vehicle of delivery" (Thamm, 2017). The new mode of delivery, also referred to as the hybrid model, is a combination of insourced, co-sourced (shared responsibilities) and outsourced services (SASSA Strategic Plan, 2020 - 2025). Through this process, SASSA announced in 2017 under the leadership of the former Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini, that the agency will be embarking on modernising the payment system to incorporate more stakeholders. The aim of the hybrid model is to provide grant recipients with more payment channels and choices, better access, flexibility, and convenience. The provision of including multiple stakeholders aims to ensure that not one service provider, such as CPS, has a monopoly on the payment scheme (Herman, 2017a; 2017b).

In contrast, the new mode of delivery (i.e., the hybrid model) of social grants has not truly benefitted OPG recipients residing in rural and peri-urban areas. The Black Sash has accused SASSA of shutting down the cash points too soon, because "some grant beneficiaries in rural areas battle to get their money" (Maregele & Ngubane, 2018). Other critical issues were also raised, such as no toilets or chairs provided at many of the pay points, and some of the older recipients had problems using ATMs to withdraw their pensions. Consequently, many older recipients had to send family members on their behalf to collect their money (Maregele & Ngubane, 2018). It was reported that often recipients had to spend additional money, for example, to purchase airtime at retailers or pay bank charges at ATMs, to claim their social grants. The findings indicate that the majority of older recipients prefer to receive their pension payments at traditional (SASSA - CPS) pay points because of problems using and accessing ATMs and retailers, disabilities, and lack of security, to mention a few.

Both formal and informal conversations with OPG recipients gave me further insights into the problems and shortcomings experienced. The findings reveal that both urban and rural OPG recipients felt that the new mode of delivery has come with indignities and exclusion. Recipients residing in rural communities are more negatively affected by the closure of the SASSA cash pay points and the migration to electronic payments. Concerns were raised that the new mode of delivery can be quite problematic due to the increasing cost implications for recipients living in remote locations who need to travel long distances to a bank teller, post office, or retailer. Throughout the study, concerns were thus raised regarding long travel distances, travel costs incurred, and the insecurity along the travel routes. It is clear that older

people, who were generally used to a service-and-payment system closer to home and comfort, have been subjected to indignities and exclusion in various ways. The new system imposed emotional, mental, physical, and financial strain on OPG recipients in both the Cape Winelands and the Overberg Districts.

The overwhelming majority of OPG recipients who participated in this study complained about the long distances they have to travel to access SASSA services and SAPO branches. An OPG applicant indicated, “I have been standing in a long queue since 6 am the morning. I travelled from High Noon to the local sports field to speak to SASSA about my grant application” (OPG M_C_V_60). High Noon is a farming community approximately 12 kms outside Villiersdorp. There is no public transport available from High Noon farm to the Villiersdorp town centre. Recipients have to hire “private cars” or wait until the farm manager provides transport on Saturday mornings to travel into town. SASSA officials, however, only visit the Villiersdorp community once or twice a month during weekdays.

Consequently, very little social infrastructure, notably public transport, is available to OPG recipients living in High Noon and Kaaimansgat to access services from SASSA and SAPO. Between May 2018 and November 2018, the Black Sash and the Elandskloof Senior Club monitored the transition from pay points to SAPO. A total of 154 grant beneficiaries were surveyed during this period; 66 participants (43%) indicated that they travel between 5-10 kms to SASSA or SAPO branches in Villiersdorp; 50 participants (32%) indicated that the distance travelled is between 2-5 kms to reach SASSA and SAPO. The majority of the respondents (69%) complained that travelling to the facilities is quite difficult.⁵⁰ Therefore, it can be argued that the locations of both SASSA and SAPO branches may reduce accessibility to these services, which have an impact on the inclusivity of the delivery of social grants. The work of Lemanski (2019) demonstrates that public infrastructure is a key means through which citizens can claim their rights and entitlements. As such, infrastructure is a vital component of state-society relations. This means that infrastructure such as SASSA premises and public transport is not just a technical and operational aspect, but is intimately linked to citizen experiences when they need to connect and engage with public institutions.

⁵⁰ Black Sash Community-Based Monitoring Survey Data in Villiersdorp was retrieved from <https://cbm.blacksash.org.za/sites/villiersdorp/results/123>

In the absence of reliable infrastructure, as in the case of High Noon and Kaaimansgat, OPG recipients find it difficult to access services situated in the urban area of Villiersdorp. Similar experiences were reported in Elsenburg Farm, Klappmuts, and Nkqubela in Robertson. With the closure of the cash pay points, access to social grants became more difficult and expensive to access by OPG recipients located in rural communities. Respondents residing at the Elsenburg Farm, approximately 8–10 kms outside Stellenbosch central business district (CBD), voiced their frustration with the new payment system. They explained that before the closure of pay points, SASSA and CPS came to the local primary school for new applications and to make payments in cash. Security was also provided at the school on days when social grants were collected. From the discussions, it was evident that OPG recipients from the Elsenburg area preferred the face-to-face interaction with SASSA and CPS as opposed to the technology-based interfaces such as the SASSA-toll free number for queries, and ATMs for collections. It is therefore not surprising that OPG recipients feel that the government has let them down because of a lack of service-and-payment infrastructure in farming areas. A female OPG recipient lamented:

We are not happy with the new payment system. For us, old people, it was very comfortable and safe to walk down to the local school to get our money. SASSA and CPS came to Elsenburg every month so that we can collect our social grants. Now, with the new system we have to travel far to Stellenbosch to get our money. I travel by public transport and sometimes it is very dangerous for an old woman to travel alone. The travelling to the SASSA or the ATMs is also expensive. I pay R13 to the town centre and R9 to get to SASSA. It costs me almost R50 to get to SASSA and back home. Also, I want to say that in the heat of summer, my husband travelled from Elsenburg to SASSA in Cloeteville. After waiting for a long period, my 67-year-old husband was turned away because his bank statement was too old. He had no travel money and had to walk from SASSA in Cloeteville to the town centre to get a bank statement at Standard Bank and he walked back to SASSA again (OPG F_C_S_65).

Consequently, applying for and collecting social grants requires knowledge, time, perseverance, and money. The transport costs also reduce the net value of the grant, which may disadvantage the poorest in accessing grants (Ralston et al., 2016). Over the research period, I watched and heard numerous grant recipients express their concerns about the long travel distances and related costs when they claim their social grants. Most of the distribution points such as ATMs, retailers, and post offices are generally situated in urban areas. This study deems it unacceptable to expect rural pensioners to travel relatively long distances to collect their grants. This challenge was reflected in a response by a SASSA official who stated that public services should be provided as close as possible to where people reside, the movement of

people to access services such as SASSA would include extra costs for the public, often an expense that they cannot afford (SASSA Respondent 1).

Similar to Villiersdorp, Black Sash has been mapping the distances recipients in Stellenbosch have to travel to get their cash transfers. Distance mapping started even before the closure of pay points in some areas, such as Stellenbosch. Between October 2016 and November 2016, Black Sash and the Step-Up Association surveyed 304 grant recipients at the Stellenbosch community hall. A total of 169 participants (56%) indicated that they spend anything between R11 and R50 on travelling to claim their social grants. It is evident that travelling substantial distances at great cost to access social grants is not new, but a recurring problem faced by many recipients. In Klapmuts, a small town 17 kms from Stellenbosch, the majority of the African OPG recipients similarly expressed grievances about the increased travel time and transportation costs.

A research collaboration between the University of the Western Cape (UWC) and Black Sash initiated after the decommissioning of pay points, revealed that costs to access the grant increased for both urban and rural recipients. The research explored the impact of the closure of pay points in terms of both travelling costs and withdrawal charges to collect the grants. Collectively, the access costs went up roughly three times for urban respondents from R13 to R39, as opposed to a staggering nearly nine times from R11 to R96, for rural respondents.⁵¹ Major reasons for the general cost increase in both urban and rural areas were administrative fees and deductions due to using ATMs and retailers, each of which have different degrees of deductions. For rural respondents, the increase was also associated with added transport costs that involved travelling further than before. For instance, before the decommissioning of pay points, rural beneficiaries travelled approximately 2.5 kms but it dramatically increased to 9.3 kms (Piper et al., 2019, pp. 11-10). This finding speaks to the point made earlier around the lack of payment infrastructure such as ATMs and retailers in some rural communities.

Similar findings emerged in the focus group discussions that I conducted with OPG recipients residing in Nkqubela, a township approximately 3.7 kms from Robertson town centre. Older persons spent more time and money to access their social grants from the ATMs and retailers. As the study conducted by UWC and Black Sash revealed, “grant recipients in Nkqubela have

⁵¹ The research was conducted in the following areas: Delft and Khayelitsha in the City of Cape Town, Robertson in the Cape Winelands District, and Genadendal in the Overberg District.

to embark on a 30- to 40-minute uphill walk to the payment sites” (Piper et al., 2019). Recipients in Nkqubela noted that before the closure of the pay points, SASSA used a local town hall in Nkqubela to render services and payments. According to respondents, the local town hall was more convenient because it allowed them to have face-to-face interaction with SASSA and CPS officials, especially when they had application- and payment-related queries. Regarding the question of how respondents perceived they are accorded respect and dignity, a thirty-year-old CSG recipient commented that the government needs to do more to ensure the wellbeing of the older people at ATMs and retailers like Shoprite and PicknPay. She explained the challenges of the older people living in Nkqubela:

There are many older people that are sick, with high blood pressure and so on, who need to stand in long queues to collect their money. It is the government’s duty to ensure that our older people are treated with respect and dignity at these pay points. In the week, I saw an older man who is really sick sitting on the floor at the retailer waiting for his money. He needed to go to the doctor. There was no chair for him to sit on and there was no water to drink while he was waiting in the long queue. I immediately alerted the staff that the old man needs immediate assistance. Also, on SASSA days we get into town at 8 am and wait in long queues. Sometimes we wait until 10 am, or even later, to be assisted. The waiting period is very long (CSG F_A_R_30).

Other respondents agreed with the above sentiments. They pointed out that older people with wheelchairs gained quicker access to the local pay point (town hall) in Nkqubela. One OPG respondent said, “The local pay point had measures in place for older people with disabilities to feel safe and respected. However, now at the retailers the older people who are wheelchair-bound are directed to stand in the long queue” (OPG M_A_R_75). It was also revealed that senior citizens with disabilities do not get any special treatment at ATMs or retailers. They are also expected to travel by public transport to apply and collect their social grants. Consequently, disability and poor physical health may act as a barrier among older people, especially in rural communities, to access their social pensions.

Another CSG recipient who attended the focus group discussions in Nkqubela further explained that OPG recipients do not have a designated queue to be assisted and older people can wait for two to three hours at retailers to collect their money. She said, “The problem is, there are many young people in the queue collecting money from different SASSA grants and for different people. Someone can have five SASSA cards, which prolongs the whole waiting process” (CSG A_F_R_47). Aside from the increased cost and distance, a key concern for the older people is how queues are managed and the lack of support offered by service providers,

such as the post office, ATMs, and retailers. The following quotes were taken from the UWC and Black Sash Report:

The young and old need to stand in the same line. The young people don't allow the old people to go ahead of them.

There are no facilities at the bank. There is no-one to ask why I have money being deducted, so I just don't ask anyone.

There are no officials or police at the ATMs. One is at own risk.

The two CSG recipients from Nkqubela argued that the best way forward is to have SASSA representatives monitoring the queues at retailers to ensure that older people are being prioritised and assisted with care, dignity, and respect. They also argued that the safety of the older people is at risk on the days that SASSA monies are being collected. They explained that security was provided at the local town hall (in Nkqubela township) but with the migration to the new modes of delivery older people are soft targets for *skollies*⁵² at any time. As Vally (2016, p. 973) argues, the presumption that technologies of grant delivery through the access point of supermarkets would ameliorate crime – or the fear thereof – is unfounded. Arguably, the insecurity of the social grant system did not end with the cancellation of the CPS tender. As discussed in Chapter Four, the new hybrid model that involves several service providers have opened new avenues for crime and robbery at pay points, which most often affects the most vulnerable groups who are reliant on accessing the grant.

In a follow-up visit to Nkqubela, respondents further explained the indignities and exclusion experienced. They described how many older people do not have the physical capacity to walk or travel by taxi to the town centre to collect their grants. OPG recipients end up hiring private transport to get to and from these facilities. One OPG respondent explained: “SASSA does not do home visits for older people. We have tried calling SASSA to come to Nkqubela to assist us with applications or the card swap, but they do not come and we must travel to them” (OPG F_C_R_80). Another OPG recipient noted that “some of us have to hire a private car to take us to the retailers or ATMs to collect our monies. We pay R50 for petrol!” (OPG F_C_R_65).

It can therefore be argued that a human-rights based approach is not particularly evident in the distribution process of the OPG. In general, older people residing in rural areas appear to be

⁵² *Skollies* is an Afrikaans slang word that means thieves or petty criminals in English.

worse affected by the closure of the local pay points and the migration to the hybrid model. As the data points out, older people's right to dignity and inclusion are largely compromised by the lack of accessibility of the grant, the long queues, and the safety risks involved. The data also demonstrates that some banks and retailers do not provide chairs, shelter, and drinking water while recipients wait for their monies. All these aspects strongly undermine the quality of services that the older people receive at the "hybrid" basket of pay points. This goes against the guiding principles of SASSA that pledge "to administer quality customer-centric social security services" (SASSA website, 2022), "putting customer needs at the forefront of everything we do" (SASSA, 2022, p. 17) and "SASSA will take the needs of its customers into consideration by developing user-friendly and quality products and services" (SASSA, 2012, p.10).

At face value, it seemed that those in urban areas would find the payment system easier and more accessible due to their location. Four white OPG recipients residing in the urban side of Stellenbosch also shared their experiences:

With the new payment system in place, we do not go to the town hall anymore. We go to the ATMs or supermarkets like PicknPay to collect our monies. It can take up to two days to receive your allowance. Everywhere you go you find long lines on pay day. Sometimes you stand for a long time at the Capitec ATM and when it is your turn then the money is up. It reads, "Out of cash". I can't afford to go to ABSA or the other banks because it is too expensive! (OPG F_W_S_70).

PicknPay often does not have enough money to pay us. There is a machine at PicknPay to withdraw your SASSA money. I paid R14 for my withdrawal. I get upset because there are old and poor people standing in long queues, not knowing if they will get their money and if they will be able to buy food. Another thing that makes me very angry is the fact that PicknPay does not even give chairs to the old people. I went to the store management and they said there is nothing they can do about it. I get upset because people, the social grant recipients, spend their money at PicknPay; at least they can provide some plastic chairs while we wait. There is no water to drink and many times there are moms with little babies in their arms who wait long to withdraw their money (OPG F_W_S_67).

It takes long to receive your grant money. The queues at our local PicknPay are so long, people queue from the door to the parking lot (OPG F_W_S_80).

We do not use the post office to collect our pensions. There is a post office near the Stellenbosch University but it is always crowded. The mail parcels are laying around everywhere ... The place is also full of students. It's not for old people to go there (OPG F_W_S_64).

The second quotation above clearly shows that the net value of the social grant is reduced by access costs. In addition, there is no guarantee that retail outlets, or even SAPO, the primary distributor, will have sufficient money to pay all social grant recipients who come to collect on “payday”. This was the case in Robertson where the majority of recipients surveyed indicated that the post office branch systems are either offline or they do not have any money (Piper et al., 2019). The responses around the post office are not surprising, as media reports have indicated that SAPO has faced several grant payment crises since it took over from CPS. A retired ACDP Member of Parliament who served on the Social Development Portfolio Committee, commented that Parliament was aware that SAPO may face challenges incorporating the social grant payments. However, the migration was necessary to resolve the CPS contractual problem while also ensuring that there are no delays in grant payments (Dudley, 2019).

In a written response, the former Member of the Executive Committee (MEC) of Social Development in the Western Cape, also acknowledged that the migration was a mammoth task and there was bound to be some challenges along the way. In any event, the former MEC made it clear that SAPO’s operational and technological challenges should not form the basis of any excuse in terms of grant payments (Fritz, 2019). Two of the SASSA officials who took part in the study confirmed what the politicians expressed. They explained that the post office was selected because it has a branch in every town and not the same can be said for ATMs and retailers. It was important for SASSA to find an alternative to CPS because SASSA was not capacitated and had nothing in place to distribute the grants. The SASSA respondents further explained that the post office was not entirely ready for the transition from CPS, which left many grant recipients uncertain of whether they would receive their payments with the new SASSA gold card. They commented:

There were many conversations about their systems not being prepared for the migration. We often found that when recipients want to make a new card or even withdraw their money, their system is offline. With CPS we never had this problem (SASSA, Respondent 1).

The network is sometimes down and recipients are sent away. Sometimes the post office also does not have money to distribute the grants. In some instances, recipients have come to our offices to let us know that the post office has no money (SASSA Respondent 2).

The above responses illustrate the many shortcomings of the social grant system since the migration that primarily affected the older people residing in both urban and rural communities. In late 2020 it was reported that SAPO was running at a financial loss and was considering closing many cash pay points around the country that may jeopardise access to social grant payments (Mashego, 2020). Furthermore, it was reported that the post office may have its information technology and electronic communication services disrupted due to outstanding debt payments to Telkom. The post office relies on these services to pay the social grants (Makinana, 2022). The new modes of payments, whether through SAPO, commercial banks, and retailers have therefore made little difference to improve the quality of delivery of social grants for the most vulnerable in society. Based on previous studies conducted, it seems that problems in terms of the grant distribution process were also encountered under other “private” or outsourced payment contractors such as AllPay and CPS (Joseph, 2012; Mokgala, 2015; Ngwenya, 2016; Vally, 2016).

A study conducted by Joseph (2012) highlights the inhumane conditions at pay- and service points, such as no shelter, no running water or toilet facilities, missing files, lost applications, and the lengthy turn-around time before social grant applications are approved. Despite the challenges and shortcomings relating to dignity, respect, and inclusion being previously reported, it seems nothing has changed over the years (Van Dijk & Mokgala, 2014). This was confirmed by community-based monitoring work done by the Tshedza Community Development Project in Gauteng, who reported that grant holders had to wait in long queues at the SASSA-CPS pay-and-service points for hours before being assisted. Another example is the Relemogile Advice Office in Limpopo Province that reported that SASSA’s internet access and network as well as equipment often malfunction. Most often people are turned back and they have to return another day to be assisted. This is costly to the poor who cannot afford to travel back and forth (Koskimaki et al., 2016). SASSA was initially established to ensure that payments are done in a dignified and humane manner. However, the findings of this study, together with prior research conducted in this area, have revealed a different story. It seems as if the principles of dignity, respect, and inclusion are still distant goals to be achieved.

All these challenges have had a negative impact on the lived experiences of OPG recipients and have negatively impacted their perceptions of the government. Recipients understand that the distributors, such as the commercial banks and retailers are not part of the government. However, in their responses it is also clear that even though distribution of the grants is not

formally conducted by the government (SASSA), recipients still expect a measure of governmental oversight to ensure good quality services. This points to a growing perception among the older people that the state has become distant and unresponsive, and is not meeting its constitutional obligations. The responsibility has fallen on outsourced service providers, such as commercial banks and retailers to ensure that citizens – in this case older people – can claim their social grants on time. It can be argued that the delivery mechanisms are still, to a large extent, oppressive and discriminatory, especially for senior citizens living in the rural parts of the country.

These problems are not unique to a certain town, district or even province, but can be seen across South Africa, in both rural, semi-urban and urban communities. In August 2018, GroundUp reported that grant recipients, including frail and sick pensioners, have to wait in long queues outside SASSA cashpoints in Mfuleni, Cape Town. People arrive the day before or early in the morning between 3am–5am to improve their chances of being served (Feni in GroundUp, 15 August 2018). In September 2019, in the south coast of KwaZulu-Natal it was reported that senior citizens arrive in the evening and sleep on the hall floor in wait for their social grants the next morning. Black Sash paralegal fieldworker, Jerome Bele visited the local community centre in Dududu, Durban and said:

It was shocking to see those senior citizens with blankets ready to sleep on the ceramic tiles at the centre. They travel from different areas in groups to gather at the centre overnight. Sometimes they get home very late because the post office either runs out of cash, or the money van arrives late (Bele, 2019).

A great concern was the “appalling conditions which the elderly have to endure to get their social grants” and the “health risk that it posed to their bodies” (Bele, 2019). The post office in Dududu apologised for the logistical problems such as “cash drop-offs and IT glitches” that delayed payments, but also acknowledged that they do provide dignity services such as chairs, water, and toilet facilities. However, grant recipients felt that very little was done to rectify the issues with urgency. An OPG recipient named Veronica shared the following with Bele:

This was the third time that I had to sleep in that centre. We are in rural areas and travel quite a distance to get to the post office, especially knowing that there’s no guarantee that we will get the money on time, if we get it at all ... We appeal to the government to intervene in this (Bele, 2019).

How do the problems sketched above impact the social contract? The decision to digitise and modernise the social grant system reflects the importance given to social grants as a practical way of fulfilling and progressively expanding the social contract with regard to accessing social assistance in South Africa. In the last three to four years, access to social grants has been made “easier” and more “convenient” by introducing multiple payment methods and cash distributors. With reference to SASSA’s 2018–2019 Annual Report, it states that “SASSA’s vision was to increase the payment platforms through the implementation of alternative pay points model” (SASSA, 2019, p. 53). Additional service providers or distributors were also introduced to minimise the experiences of beneficiaries waiting in long queues at cash collecting points. In this sense, there is a strong state commitment to the delivery and expansion of social grants. Since the ANC took power in 1994, it has gradually transformed the social grant system, which has not only boosted the party’s legitimacy and political dividends, but also constitutes an important measure that has broader implications for society (Chitonge & Mazibuko, 2018, p. 263).

Grant recipients have therefore been able to claim their social grants on a monthly basis, which also indicates that the social contract between the state and citizens is still intact. While payment challenges do exist, the vast majority of recipients have peace of mind that their social grants will be available and paid on a monthly basis. As illustrated by the stories of OPG recipients from Ceres, Klapmuts, and Robertson, the government is seen as the “provider” and “caregiver” of the poor and most vulnerable. Their stories suggest that the social contract became a basis for expectation – citizen from state – which has provided and strengthened the recognition and legitimacy of social assistance and people’s entitlement thereof.

There are also additional successes that have the opportunity to further strengthen the social contract. According to SASSA’s Strategic Report (2020–2025), the outsourcing model agreement with SAPO has led to a savings of approximately R1 billion to the fiscus during its first year of implementation in 2018/19 (SASSA, 2020, p. 10). On the other hand, it can also be argued that the social contract is not faultless and spaces need to be created for beneficiaries to negotiate better payment conditions, irrespective of their age and positionality. From the above stories, it can be argued that the state has, at least to some extent, failed in its obligation to “oversee” and “monitor” both SASSA facilities and outsourced distributors in terms of the physical conditions under which payments are being made to claimants. There is a general concern over the quality of service delivery and the reduction in service quality at certain cash

distribution points. These concerns are also illustrated by the individual stories of many OPG recipients across the research sites.

These are aspects of the social contract that need urgent review and strengthening by the Department of Social Development and SASSA, collectively. While the national department only has an oversight role, but no operational control over SASSA, this dire and dehumanising situation requires an urgent and drastic intervention in terms of ensuring better public accountability. The appalling physical conditions, disregard of the elderly's dignity, and the deplorable quality of services need to improve. In doing so, the lived experiences of pensioners ought to improve. While delivering social grants to almost 18 million beneficiaries on a monthly basis is an enormous task, SASSA has a constitutional and legal responsibility to ensure that all services are rendered in accordance with the Customer Service Charter and the *Batho Pele* principles. Although it might be daunting, these include private and outsourced contractors, such as commercial banks and retailers. Ensuring accountability and oversight of public functions and services towards third-party contractors should ideally maintain minimum standards and these could possibly be facilitated by stipulations within service level agreements.

Moving forward, it is imperative that SASSA put stronger administrative oversight mechanisms in place to regularly monitor and (re)evaluate the quality of services that grant beneficiaries receive at all cash distribution points. Linked to this, are the service level agreements between SASSA and SAPO. Since the migration to SAPO, there have been several logistical and operational issues that also include allegations of fraud and mismanagement. In February 2020 it was reported that SAPO faced financial difficulties and will be forced to close social grant distribution points (Democratic Alliance, 6 February 2020). This could also imply that there is a lack of proper regulatory oversight by SASSA, and by extension the Department of Social Development, which will invariably cause inconveniences to grant recipients who are solely dependent on their social grants.

The reduction in SAPO outlets will also negatively affect beneficiaries – particularly in rural and township areas – who will have to spend additional transport costs to reach alternative cash points. Due to colonialism and apartheid's social engineering, it is mostly non-white grant beneficiaries who reside in these rural and township communities with hardly any permanent employment. They are most severely subject to the huge disparities in the levels and quality of services between rural and urban areas. Arguably then, beneficiaries residing in the rural and

township areas are by no means benefitting from the new outsourced model. As mentioned earlier, many rural and township communities lack social and technological infrastructure, which pose many challenges to beneficiaries who are still required to travel longer distances and spend money to access their social grants.

It is beyond doubt that the payment system has not been as effective as envisioned by SASSA when it was implemented following the CPS scandal. In reality then, SASSA, together with the post office, as the key service providers, are morally obliged to find ways to get cash into rural communities where it is needed – usually communities without access to cash-dispensing infrastructure such as ATMs. It would promote accessibility and strengthen inclusivity among the most vulnerable groups who are technologically challenged and are in dire need of government's assistance, and respect.

6.6 Accountability and trust

It is evident from the above discussions that there are different but also related aspects that are critical for a strong social contract. The social contract is thus not an end in itself or only a mere outcome. A social contract is an ongoing process that needs to be informed by ongoing state–citizen engagements around issues of citizenship, rights and responsibilities, and human dignity.

While the provision of social grants in itself has somewhat deepened the social contract, the challenges around administrative and delivery delays, mismanagement, and corruption have undermined the progress since 1994. Another theme that emerged is that of accountability and trust. Research has shown that accountability is a key driver of the social contract between state and society. Much of the literature claims that erosion of trust in government poses a threat to state–citizen relations. As such, social security interventions need to be informed by strong accountability mechanisms that will foster greater trust between the government and citizens (Hickey & King, 2016; Newell & Wheeler, 2006). It affirms the fundamental principle that duty bearers in the form of public officials and service providers are accountable to rights-holders – the citizens. However, there has been a constant struggle by the poorest and most vulnerable, in particular those residing in rural areas, to hold government accountable for poor services at pay points and SASSA service centres. The lack of quality services and the perceptions of corruption within SASSA have to a large extent weakened trust in state

representatives, and subsequently, the social contract. A strong social contract depends largely on the extent to which citizens trust their governments (Kidd et al., 2020, p. 2).

An OPG recipient from Ceres, for example, explains his frustration with the state and how those in power are not held accountable for the mismanagement of funds:

The money is wasted ... how many millions of rand gets wasted on unnecessary expenditures and unnecessary things? I don't understand it; the guilty people are moved to another post. If it was me or any of us, that stolen money would be reported and we would be prosecuted and locked up. You only hear about that person who stole the money once and then you don't ever hear about that story again. What happened to the person that gave permission for the unnecessary expenditures in SASSA, the things that were used unnecessarily? Look how chaotic things have been at SASSA lately, and it is still continuing ... because of their chaos they are going to close the post offices in certain rural areas. Where should those people go that are receiving their money from the post office? So, the government gives money but then they take it back. If you look at the wasting of money there is so much the government could have given the older people. There are many people who are struggling just to get a little bit of money for freedom and then it's taken away by corruption (OPG M_W_C_67).

The corruption scandals around SASSA were also the concerns of the OPG recipients who reside in Ceres. Respondents from Bella Vista and the Nduli township noted that they have seen and heard on television that people within SASSA have taken money for themselves. An OPG recipient residing in Bella Vista shared the following:

I know of stories where SASSA's people have taken the grant money of older people that have passed away. They take the money for themselves. Now, we don't know how these things happen or what they do to get these names registered (OPG F_C_C_68).

Other recipients commented:

There was a woman that took the money from SASSA. I'm very disappointed in the government for choosing her again. The government knows that a lady called Bathabile Dlamini took the money. I saw that on television (OPG F_A_C_79).

There are always new politicians being placed in positions, and most times seem dishonest. The government needs to get the dishonesty out of the system (OPG M_W_C_67).

It might be that the former minister is innocent and did not take the money, but that she has simply lost control over the situation. They must still be accountable to us (OPG M_C_C_66).

Newspaper articles during the fieldwork period also revealed the enormous accountability deficits that exist within the Department of Social Development and SASSA. These media sources gave insights to how the rights of vulnerable OPG recipients were knowingly put at risk under the watch of the previous Minister of Social Development, Bathabile Dlamini:

- Lapsed state pensions will be reinstated with backpay on November 1. *Herald Live*, 20 October 2019.
- SA's social grants: New system, new problem. *Daily Maverick*, 08 October 2019.
- New social grant system hurts the elderly, study finds. *Sowetan Live*, 05 October 2019.
- Old people and babies spend night outside in queue for SASSA services. *GroundUp*, 26 April 2019.
- Politicians told not to try to keep costly pay points open. *Daily Maverick*, 08 March 2019.
- No end to SASSA problems in sight as post office struggles to cope. *South Coast Herald*, 12 July 2018.
- DA slams SASSA's failure to pay out social grants. *eNCA*, 3 July 2018.

As previously noted, many OPG recipients are aware of their constitutional right to claim social assistance. However, they are not always knowledgeable about seeking recourse for poor services at SASSA pay points and service centres. Consequently, they are less likely to hold government accountable for administrative delays and monetary deductions. This is especially true for social grant beneficiaries who reside in the rural and farming areas because they do not know where to turn to.

An important question thus remains how South Africa can realize, maintain, and strengthen a social contract between the government and social grant recipients while corruption, fraud, and other injustices are increasing. In 2022, the former Minister of Social Development was found to have lied under oath in relation to her testimony during an inquiry into her role in the 2017 grants distribution crisis. The 2017 social grant crises, as outlined earlier in Chapter One, forms a critical part of the experiences and perceptions OPG recipients shared in this research. Civil society organisations (CSOs) have been instrumental in the realization of the social contract, especially in terms of the social assistance. They have emerged as key actors that play an active role in holding the state accountable and advocating for policy proposals to advance the social security agenda. According to Hickey and King (2016), it is not uncommon for non-state actors to embark on initiatives designed to ensure answerability from the government.

The Black Sash Trust has been an important actor in the area of accountability and answerability. The Black Sash campaigns have proven that resource mechanisms are important to protect the rights and entitlements of grant recipients. Their persistence in mobilisation over time has demonstrated the power of accountability to hold state functionaries, especially those in elected positions and service providers such as CPS, to account. These constructive spaces of engagement have also created opportunities for grant beneficiaries to become active agents in the realization of the social contract. Importantly then, the findings suggest that a strong social contract is particularly linked to levels of political will of government officials who have been tasked to root out corruption in public institutions. Political will and accountability are important strategies to overcome poverty, inequalities, and years of social injustices perpetuated by colonialism and apartheid. Political will cannot be separated from the state's commitment towards the realization of rights and the distribution of resources, such as social grants. Accountability, on the other hand, is crucial in a period of growing privatisation of state services and functions, as in the case of CPS.

6.7 Buying and survival power of OPG

It was noticeable that the monetary value of social grants is likely to influence the perceptions towards the state. In the respondents' views, the monthly amount demonstrates the extent to which the government cares for its senior citizens and their wellbeing. The monthly amount also influences to what extent recipients can contribute to, and participate in, day-to-day economic and social activities.

A small minority of the OPG recipients felt that the amount received is “adequate” and provides them with “buying and survival” power. This finding also relates to section 6.2 of this chapter that discusses “seeing the state as the provider and caregiver” of the poorest and most vulnerable in society. This was strongly expressed by a 62-year-old white woman who lives with her husband – a person with a disability – in the town centre of Villiersdorp. The OPG recipient is a wood seller and recalled how emotional she was when her application for the social grant was approved. She described that the grant provided much-needed economic security at a time when the family was facing many challenges due to ill health and the inability to work a full-time job. Her husband, whose leg was amputated and is wheelchair-bound, could no longer fulfil the breadwinner role in the household. The recipient said: “Honestly, the money that we receive is not thousands. It is very little money, but I feel a sense of relief to know that at the end of the month I will be receiving an income”. She spoke at length, describing how the

social grant is considered an important economic transfer that enables her to “put food on the table, pay the monthly rent, pay the municipal rates, buy electricity, and still cover the phone bill”. In addition, she explained that receiving two social grants – for herself and her husband – enables her to assist others who are “less fortunate” than her, such as the casual domestic worker who does the cleaning and the man who works in the garden (OPG F_W_V_62).

Despite the low amount of the social grant, the recipient has seen significant changes in their life as a result of the OPG. The monthly cash benefits have had a transformative effect in terms of financial choices and freedom. It has granted the recipient an opportunity to access a form of independent income, through selling wood, which results in other material benefits. The monetary benefits of the grant were also extended to two casual workers, which means that the grant provided some financial relief to others within the broader community. In instances where there is an increase in supply and demand of wood, she is able to employ one or two more casual workers.

The receipt of the social grants also strengthened her relationship with the state. There is a strong sense of “being recognised” and being afforded an opportunity to experience citizenship and belonging. She said (in a crying voice):

When I collect my social grant, I sense happiness and peace. Before I received the social grant, I did not think much of it, and did not even realise where the money comes from. When I found out that I am eligible to apply for social assistance, it meant so much to me!” It opened my eyes to other things, such as free access to health care. The government provides that service to me as well (OPG_F_W_V_62).

However, there were mixed responses, across the gender and racial divides, about whether the social grant has improved their socio-economic positions. In contrast to the story related above, there are many respondents who felt that the money is inadequate to survive on and that the grant has had a minimal effect on addressing poverty and inequality among older citizens. Many of the respondents commented that they found that the grant is too small to make any socio-economic difference, and some even claimed that it is not enough to afford them any sense of dignity.

In the community of Bella Vista in Ceres, strong critiques emerged regarding the lack of buying power of the OPG. Many recipients expressed how the small amount has negatively impacted their relationship with the state in terms of recognition and financial provision. Two OPG recipients shared the following:

The money is not enough for me. I have money for one week and no money for 3 weeks. It is not enough money to get by. It is very difficult to survive like this. There is no savings or private pensions for us to fall back on. We are mostly farm workers from a rural area. I do not feel acknowledged as a citizen, because we as senior citizens in rural areas do not get what senior citizens should receive from the government. We get written off. We are finished working and old, and there is no real place for us anymore. We don't mean anything to the government anymore even if you did a high standard of work. If you finished working, they don't see you anymore. You are only a zero. You are only a citizen in name, but not acknowledged as one. I could be wrong, but that is how I experienced it as I listen to the news and read in newspapers, especially us coloured people are never acknowledged. I worked myself to death for the farmer, but he is the one that has more than me. They debated in Parliament about increasing our grants, and the politicians just mumbled. I want to see if the president can live on R1,700 per month (OPG M_C_C_66).

I don't have a good quality of life. I feel it is below standard, because at my house, when I have received the money, I will start at the municipality and then I will work my way down. And, with the money that's left, I will have to buy food for the house. And if you got paid today, then tomorrow I ask my wife: "Mamma, what are we going to cook today and tomorrow?" I will have to see what I can do because there is no more money. I will ask how much did this food cost, and hear it was R500 or R600 worth of food, but it's only one bag of food. I also want to add that the money is so little that I cannot eat meat anymore. When I make soup, I only buy the meatless bones at the butchery. I cannot buy me warm clothes either (OPG M_C_C_70).

It is clear that the differences between the two positions in relation to the economic effects of the grant are very extreme. Upon careful reflection and consideration, both viewpoints signify the importance of the historical political arrangements in providing the necessary economic foundations. While the 62-year-old white recipient is genuinely in need of the grant to survive, she has had access to economic resources that the coloured and African recipients did not. A case in point: the white recipient owned a house in the town centre of Villiersdorp that was later sold to her son when she and her husband could no longer afford the maintenance. Currently, they are renting the same house from the son, which has provided some financial relief. This is while the majority of black recipients from Bella Vista and Nduli in Ceres live primarily in sub-economic (RDP) houses and have to take care of their unemployed children as well. The number of persons dependent on the OPG, especially in the black communities, thus create a situation of "too many mouths to feed" to feel any transformative effects of the grant itself. The circumstances and context of each individual receiving the OPG are thus

important. It has a great impact on how they will view the grant and whether they feel that the state is sufficiently recognising and caring for them.

While the OPG is an important lifeline, the majority of the OPG recipients have demonstrated, through their stories and reflections, a relentless “struggle for survival” in terms of the lack of buying power of the grant. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, social grants have increased below inflation which continues to erode its purchasing power. Respondents echoed these findings, and complained that the annual increases are too small to fill the much-needed gaps in the household. For example, in early 2021, there was a small increase of R30 for the OPG. This was below inflation and the government was accused of approving an “anti-poor budget”. The then Minister of Finance, Tito Mboweni, cynically remarked that “there is no social contract to say there must be a certain increase each year, the allocations we made are what we could afford” (Wasserman, 2021). This comment illustrates that the government claims to have fiscal constraints in increasing the value of the grant, even though the increase in the cost of living has diminished its buying power. This means that already poor grant recipients will be getting poorer in terms of affording basic necessities to sustain their livelihoods.

6.8 Concluding remarks

This chapter discussed the key findings about how older people view their social grant and how their attitudes towards the grant have influenced and shaped their relationship with the government. The grant has proven to be a crucial tool for economic redistribution, which enables senior citizens to support themselves while also taking care of their families. In this way, recipients do feel acknowledged, valued, and recognised by the state. OPG recipients who took part in this study view the state as the primary provider who has a moral, legal, and political duty to ensure their wellbeing. The social contract is therefore strongly embedded in their expectations of the state in terms of its constitutional and political promises. The chapter also discussed the major issues and difficulties that many older persons are confronted with in terms of accessing their grants, as well as the lack of buying power experienced by some households.

The accessibility of the grant has been negatively impacted by the closure of the traditional pay points within the local communities. The costs involved in terms of money, time, and dignity have to a large degree weakened the social contract between recipients and the state. The state is regarded as a distant and unwilling partner who has neglected their responsibility towards

recipients in terms of monitoring and oversight of cash distribution points. The state is therefore expected to do more; to become more active in the overall delivery and distribution processes of the grants. The direct visibility of the state at the local community level, as was previously the case, can potentially strengthen the state's relationship with OPG recipients.

The data also shows that those who are residing within the poorer sections of society, struggle to get by on the OPG alone because the grant is often shared with the entire household. Many respondents noted how inadequate the monthly amount is in comparison to their monthly expenses. Despite these challenges, the OPG continues to be a crucial source of social assistance that offers some financial relief to older people who have no other source of income.



CHAPTER SEVEN: KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT

7.1 Overview

This chapter focuses on the key findings of recipients of the child support grant (CSG) in relation to their understanding and experiences of the social grant system in South Africa. The majority of the CSG recipients who formed part of this study were unemployed. Only a small minority of females indicated that they had some sort of casual employment. The researcher noticed that employment was more likely for white CSG recipients who also had other income streams to depend on, while income was minimal for African and coloured recipients who reside in the small, agricultural towns of Ceres, Klapmuts, Montagu, and Villiersdorp. This chapter demonstrates that the majority of CSG recipients felt that the promise of the social contract is not being adequately delivered. The chapter also highlights that the social contract in terms of receiving the social grants can be easily “broken” or “undermined” when recipients feel that the state is not living up to its legal, moral, and political obligations in terms of adequate livelihood provision.

7.2 The CSG is not enough; there are more gaps to be filled

On the question of their perceptions about being seen and recognised by the state, the vast majority of CSG recipients expressed a deep sense of gratitude towards the government. As the responses show, the social grant income has helped CSG recipients to take care of their children, especially when mothers are unemployed and fathers are absent or not contributing to their children’s welfare. CSG recipients from different racial identities who reside in Ceres, Klapmuts, and Robertson commented the following:

I think the grant makes me feel appreciative towards the government, because they are helping me. If I didn’t have this grant, I would have continued to struggle (CSG F_W_C_32).

The government is providing us with social grants because we are not working. The government is trying to meet us halfway, because we are reliant on seasonal jobs on the farms. These are the reasons why the government is helping us to buy food and to raise our children (CSG F_C_K_53).

The government gives the grant because sometimes we are alone. We have no-one to support us. So, the government has to do this for its people to survive. A grant for a

child, because fathers always run away ... So, the government must give the grant at least for a Huggie nappy, milk, and pap (CSG F_A_R_30).

While CSG recipients spoke positively about the provision of this grant, they also expressed serious concerns about the inadequate monetary value of the grant in relation to their overall household expenses. The importance of the CSG and what it can realize for both the mother and the child were therefore discussed at length during both the interviews and the focus group discussions. A CSG recipient from Montagu explained that the grant is just enough to buy the most basic items for the child. This 18-year-old mother who has a seasonal job as a fruit picker and packer said, “Everything is spent on the baby. It is not much and there is hardly any money left to buy clothes for the baby. I just spend it on milk, nappies, and food for him” (CSG F_C_M_18). She further described how the CSG does not last for the full month and the desperate need to borrow money to cover additional expenses:

All the money is spent on pay-out day. I buy everything that my child might need. I also need to borrow money from people with their own businesses. Maybe I borrow R50 and then I am expected to pay back R75 at the end of the month (CSG F_C_M_18).

The above recipient was very vague whether “people with their own businesses” were actually loan sharks. The 18-year-old mother also noted that sometimes she had to borrow money from her mother because the CSG is so little. While the mother was the only CSG recipient who explicitly recounted how she has to borrow money, research has shown that those in receipt of the CSG are often forced to buy food on credit, or borrow money from neighbours and relatives to supplement their groceries (Black Sash, 2021, p. 22). Many CSG recipients have also fallen prey to loan sharks. In 2020, a joint research project by the Black Sash and the London School of Economics and Political Science found that children’s grants are widely used as collateral for loans for the household. Although this has been declared unlawful by the Social Assistance Act, it has not stopped recipients from borrowing money to survive. From a social contract perspective, the situation of borrowing money to cover additional expenses in the household (that the child might benefit from) is rather complex because the Social Assistance Act makes it clear that the money belongs to the child. Accordingly, caregivers who are in receipt of the CSG cannot use it as collateral for any form of credit (Black Sash, 2020, p. 14).

CSG recipients from Robertson shared similar experiences in terms of the value and how the grant was being utilised. A 50-year-old mother explained that she had been unemployed for the last 10 years and receives the CSG for her nine-year-old child. She described how the CSG

helped to pay for some school-related things, but other items such as clothing for the child was too expensive to cover with the CSG:

I struggle to buy clothes for the child because he is always growing. Every month he needs new clothes because the other ones are too small. I can only pay for some school things with the grant and maybe food. But, it is not even enough for food (CSG F_A_R_50).

Another CSG recipient echoed this by saying:

I have three kids. I have to buy for all three of them clothes, but I can't with the grant money. I can't buy for all three of them because of the money that they need at school and the crèche. For example, my oldest child is going to Cape Town on a school trip and I must give a R100. I must also buy snacks for the child who is at crèche. Even the baby has needs like nappies and milk. So, I can't just say I will buy groceries from the money, and I can't just pay for the rent with that money. I must plan to get more money to cover that costs. I take on "piece jobs" to make up the money for food and rent (CSG F_A_R_30).

In the communities of Villiersdorp it was also striking how caregivers have mostly prioritised the grant for school-related activities. A CSG recipient from Goniwe Park, who at the time of the focus group, was unable to remember the precise years her children were born, indicated that she has two boys who were born between 2000 and 2005 who need the grant to attend secondary school. She explained that both boys receive meals at school every day and the food feeding scheme has been a great help because she is unemployed.⁵³ Although the CSG has somewhat changed her socio-economic situation, the 35-year-old mother also expressed concerns about the additional costs related to the boys' schooling. The recipient said that "the CSG is way too little for me. My boys want to attend school tours, which cost money. I must also buy school clothes for them and other school necessities" (CSG F_A_V_35).

Very similar views were voiced by CSG recipients from Hamlet and Bella Vista in Ceres. They agreed that the CSG has made a difference because mothers can send their children to school and afford to buy some school supplies. Although the money is seen as a significant "lifeline", the monetary value is too low to cover all the expenses related to raising a child. Two mothers expressed themselves thus:

⁵³ The school feeding scheme, also known as the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) is a government programme that provides one nutritious meal to all learners in primary and secondary schools.

I have two boys for whom I receive the grant. They are 13 and seven years of age. I pay about R300 for transport to and from school for one of my children. I have to buy new school shoes and also clothes as the seasons change. The school hosts a lot of events such as athletics, for which I also have to pay to support my children. I don't receive enough money to provide for my children's basic needs throughout the month (CSG F_C_C_37).

I have three kids and I'm receiving the grant for two of them. They're both attending primary school. I don't pay school fees. So, the biggest part of the grant is spent on transport to school. After the transport fees are paid, there is no money left to support their school's fundraisers, such as buying hot-dogs on Fridays (CSG F_C_C_42).

The above comments raise the critical question of what the social contract in terms of the CSG should cover. This is quite complex because the CSG is primarily intended to alleviate child poverty, improve health and educational outcomes, while also providing food security for children in poor and underprivileged communities (Delany, 2016; Triegaardt, 2005b). While extra-mural activities such as athletics, school tours, and fundraisers are important aspects of the child's social development, the associated costs could be considered outside of the scope of the CSG. It is important to note, when the CSG was initially introduced in 1998 it was with the main objective to supplement existing household income (Patel et al., 2015, p. 379). However, as the stories of the above recipients illustrate, the CSG has in many instances become the only source of income and consequently needs to cover a wide range of aspects that might not be directly associated with the policy intentions of the CSG. This has placed pressure on the social contract because children have other developmental needs that cannot be adequately satisfied with the CSG income only.

It was also evident that CSG recipients were faced with even greater financial burdens when the fathers are absent and do not contribute to the emotional and material wellbeing of the child. The literature has shown that South Africa has an exceptionally high number of absent fathers (Eddy et al., 2013; Lund, 2008; Patel & Mavungu, 2016). The challenge of absentee fathers was very common among many of the CSG recipients across the research sites. In the cases where fathers were present, a large number of fathers did not make financial contributions. A recipient who resides in the town centre of Ceres described how she, as a single mother of two boys, is the only breadwinner at home, "because my ex-husband puts in no effort to find work, and therefore he plays no part in helping me" (CSG F_W_C_34). She further explained that she has a casual job at a local store and with the help of the CSG, her money is just enough to "purchase some food to feed them" and to cover the bus fare to school and back. This was also

the view of another single mother from Ceres who has been receiving the CSG for her two-year-old daughter. She explained that while she is earning some money, she is also struggling with all the financial responsibilities:

The father of my child left me for another woman who was also pregnant. I knew I could not depend on my child's father to contribute. He sometimes gives money towards food and her day-care. That is why I feel that the amount is very little to take care of a child. If only we could receive a little bit more than what we are currently receiving from the government. With more money, I would be able to give more to my child. If you look at the costs of baby food and products in the shops, you can hardly buy anything with the grant money. For a baby, you can maybe buy some yoghurt or other small items that will help to keep her fed. I don't know how it will work when she has to attend school. I will have to buy her books and pencils with that money. There are more gaps to be filled (CSG F_W_C_32).

It is evident that the majority of grant recipients have prioritised the money for their children's needs in terms of food, clothes, and schooling, to name a few. From the above quotations, it can be strongly argued that these primary caregivers are trying their utmost to uphold their end of the social contract by using the CSG for the benefit of their children. As explained in Chapter Two, the social contract is based on an agreement between the state and citizens on their mutual roles and responsibilities (Cloutier et al., 2021, p. 25). The South African Social Assistance Act, Section 19 (No 13 of 2004) clearly cautions primary caregivers not to abuse and misuse the grant allocation as this constitutes a criminal offence. For example, CSG recipients should not use the money (that is intended for the child) on alcohol, drugs, and borrowing from loan sharks. While there are negative perceptions that some mothers do use the money in an irresponsible manner, the vast majority of participants agreed that the money is first and foremost intended for the care and wellbeing of the child. Consequently, there is limited scope to see to their personal needs as caregivers. A recipient from the Nkqubela township in Robertson reported that, "I am unemployed and because the grant is so little, the money is only helping my child. It is only for the benefit of my four-month-old baby" (CSG F_A_R_20).

Only a few participants explicitly mentioned that sometimes the CSG is also used for small personal benefits because of unemployment. A CSG recipient from Nduli township in Ceres said the following: "Every month when I collect the CSG I will buy pads for me because it is a need. I am not working and I know that my child's grant money is coming" (CSG F_A_C_50). It is therefore clear that levels of unemployment and other personal factors can influence how the CSG money is used by those who receive it. As discussed in Chapter Four, several studies have shown that the CSG is usually channelled to the entire household. This

situation can be expected, as research conducted by Patel et al. (2017, p. 6) argue that children do not exist in isolation of their families and the communities in which they live.

The caregiver who receives the CSG has therefore become an agent of the grant who manages the grant on behalf of the child beneficiary. The CSG recipient thus plays an instrumental role to strengthen the social contract between the state and children. As John Rawls has noted, “As fully rational adults, heads of households must act as contract holders on behalf of children” (Rawls in Weston, 2022, p.1). Similar to Rawls, Goldblatt (2005) also argues that the role of the CSG recipient is important; the recipient is lawfully required to mediate social assistance and deliver it on behalf of the state. To further illustrate the significant role and responsibility of the caregiver in relation to social assistance, Goldblatt notes, “They claim it, collect it, and are then expected to turn it into food, shelter, clothing, education, health and other aspects of a child’s maintenance” (2005, p. 242).

While CSG recipients have the responsibility to facilitate the social grants provided to children, they have largely been excluded from the social contract in terms of accessing their own social assistance from the state. This is one of the key limitations of how the CSG has been structured since its implementation; children are to some extent protected against poverty and malnutrition, but the caregivers are not. It is evident from the data collected that many of the CSG recipients, especially those who are unemployed and underemployed, are mostly disadvantaged by this gap. The argument of Goldblatt (2005, p. 243) in relation to the systematic exclusion of caregivers from social assistance still holds:

Unemployed, impoverished women (and some girls) are expected, without any means to feed themselves (or meet any of their other needs), to provide child care services for the society, in exchange for nothing.

Over the years, the (in)adequacy of the CSG has been questioned and criticised because of its limited scope to meet the social security rights of caregivers. From a social contract perspective, the failure to provide for the caregivers of poor children can be seen as a violation of the right to social security as promised in the Bill of Rights, Section 27 of the South African Constitution (Goldblatt, 2014, p. 32). CSG recipients should therefore be equally recognised for their own citizenship entitlements to social security as citizens and caregivers. Mothers and caregivers need to be better integrated into the South African social security system in order to protect them from financial vulnerabilities. In the context of gendered welfare dynamics, where

fathers are largely absent or not providing any monetary assistance, extending social grant benefits to female caregivers will not only promote their social citizenship but also increase their financial dependence. The South African government has the difficult task to adopt social assistance policies which recognises that everyone has the same social rights in case of illness, disability, and unemployment, etc. Citizens should not be divided into groups of ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ but should ideally be recognised as equal citizens who have equal rights and entitlements to the social contract.

As mentioned in the previous chapters, the Constitution is seen as the most fundamental social contract between state and citizens. It reads that “everyone has the right to have access to social security” and that “the state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights”. In addition, failure to progressively extend social assistance to all citizens who are unable to support themselves, is arguably seen to be incongruent with universal treaties and conventions that South Africa has duly adopted (see Chapter Three). Matthews (2020, p. 7) rightfully argues, the administration of social protection cannot be divorced from both the domestic and global structures that govern it. Accordingly, there is a disconnect between socio-economic rights guaranteed by both national and international law and the lived realities of ordinary citizens, especially those who are solely reliant on social assistance. It is therefore important that the social contract between the state and CSG recipients is re-evaluated, especially in the context of increased structural poverty, inequality, and unemployment in South Africa.

The Covid-19 pandemic placed pressure on the state to respond to the existing gaps and insufficiencies in South Africa’s social security system. The gaps and insufficiencies are largely in terms of two social security components: coverage and adequacy. With the Covid-19 pandemic, the South African state made significant attempts to address the existing gap of state support to groups that were either (i) partially included and (ii) previously excluded. It was argued that the pandemic was the “ultimate test” of government’s commitment to ensuring and strengthening socio-economic human rights (Rinquest, 2021). In April 2020, SASSA announced that the CSG will be increased by R300 for May 2020 only, and R500 will be paid to primary caregivers for five months from June 2020 to October 2020 regardless of the number of children they have (Bhorat & Köhler, 2020; Maeko & Mathe, 2020). The mere fact that the state provided a caregivers’ top-up allowance demonstrates that the state acknowledged the existing gap. The right to social assistance was also extended further. A top-up of R250 was

introduced for all other existing social grants in South Africa. The government also introduced the social relief of distress (SRD) grant of R350 a month (Adelle & Haywood, 2021). This grant is intended for people, aged 18 to 59, who are unemployed and do not receive any form of social grant or payments from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). The implementation of the R350 SRD grant was welcomed by many stakeholders as it was seen as the beginning of a permanent basic income grant (BIG).

Although the temporary (CSG) caregiver's top-up and R350 SRD grants were introduced after the fieldwork was conducted, it addresses the issue of primary caregivers who need additional financial support that can supplement the income of the CSG. The implementation of the temporary caregiver's and R350 SRD grants definitely paved a way for a more inclusive social contract in terms of the right to social assistance for those who are not covered under the current social security framework. However, the social contract was again under scrutiny when the caregivers' top-up was terminated, and many CSG recipients who were partially included or covered were again excluded from receiving any benefits. Many CSG recipients therefore applied for the SRD grant of R350 with the hope to fill the income gap.⁵⁴ While this grant has been extended until March 2023, it has been reported that many unemployed CSG recipients are struggling to access the SRD grant and that the appeal process is not always effective (Mafata, 2021; Matthews et al., 2022). CSG recipients were faced with multiple administrative and technological barriers that prolonged access to this form of assistance. The administrative challenges to apply and to rightfully claim the CSG are not new and have been reported on since the grant was implemented in 1998. The subsequent section discusses the barriers to accessing the grant and the implications it has on the social contract in terms of the right to social assistance.

Based on the experiences highlighted above, the CSG has become the primary source of financial support for many caregivers to support the child. While the CSG is seen as the "bedrock of household income" it is often criticised for its small monetary value and its inability to make a significant impact on the economic conditions of women (Granlund, 2020, p. 89). As explained earlier, many recipients expressed feelings of hopelessness because the grant alone cannot provide for their children's day-to-day needs, let alone for their own needs

⁵⁴ Since 1 July 2021, receiving a child support grant should not exclude one from getting the R350 Covid-19 grant.

as well. Even though the CSG recipients noted that they do feel recognised by the state, the state should consider raising the amount of the CSG to enable mothers to effectively become the people responsible to “administer” the grant. The state could also consider providing a caregiver allowance or “top-up” grant, as introduced during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

7.3 Administrative barriers associated with the CSG

In Chapter Six, an overwhelming majority of OPG recipients described the material barriers that they encountered to access their social grants under the hybrid system. These included: longer travel distances to payment points, increased travel costs, the length of queues, and being victims of crime. CSG recipients were similarly asked to share their experiences of interaction with SASSA, with a particular focus on the grant application process. Interestingly, there were only few CSG recipients who experienced no problems with the application process. These are some comments from the interviews conducted in Ceres:

The service was fast and efficient. I did not wait long at all. I waited roughly a month to receive my money. When the money was paid, I received extra money for the waiting period as well (CSG F_W_C_32).

I did not struggle with the application. I went to the police station and the bank to get statements. I went back to SASSA to hand in the forms (CSG F_C_C_28).

Yes, they [SASSA] treated us well. I have never had a problem with them. My application was approved on the same day (CSG F_W_C_41).

In contrast to the above responses, the majority of participants who receive the CSG detailed the negative experiences they endured when visiting the SASSA facilities to apply for their grant. The following sub-sections demonstrate how CSG recipients from various research locations encountered difficulties that can be framed around (i) incorrect or insufficient documentation, and the (ii) increasingly expensive exercise to access the grant, due to transport costs.

7.3.1 Incorrect or insufficient documentation

The first barrier relates to the required documentation. To apply for the grant, primary caregivers are advised to visit their nearest SASSA office, where they will be required to complete an application form. According to SASSA’s website, primary caregivers are required

to bring the following documents: Identity document (ID), child's birth certificate, proof of address and income. This will be either three months' bank statements or an affidavit if applicants have no proof of income. Caregivers who do not have an ID or the child's birth certificate can still apply by completing a sworn statement or affidavit in the presence of a Commissioner of Oaths.

While SASSA has made attempts to make the application process easier, the majority of CSG recipients detailed how existing administrative barriers and challenges have caused delays in applying and securing the grant. Three recipients from the farming communities of Kaaimansgat and High Noon described how lengthy the application process was because the documentation requirements were not always clear. They further recounted that repeated trips to SASSA made them feel despondent about the whole process. As previously explained, there is no public transport available from Kaaimansgat and High Noon and grant applicants have to arrange for private transportation to the town centre where SASSA operates from. Three CSG recipients from the farming communities in Villiersdorp said the following:

I had to hike up and down from High Noon farm because my documents weren't right. I had lots of doubts about SASSA, but I knew that my child needs it. Thankfully, my child qualified. I had to travel back and forth in the hot sun and sometimes rain. The one month they would say this and that is wrong. The next month someone else helped me and he or she would say that the way I was told previously was wrong. The whole process took me almost three months (CSG F_C_V_29).

The people at SASSA who helped me had an attitude. They had no patience and wanted to do everything in a rush. I was very unhappy because they went through my documents in a rush and they were also rude. The process also took me about three months because when I get to SASSA, they would say that I should turn around and come back the next month because my documents were not correct. I also had to hike back and forth to get my application sorted (CSG F_C_V_25).

The people who work at SASSA are not helpful. When I approached them with a question about my application, they seemed unfriendly and uptight. It made me feel very bad to be treated like that. I felt like I had to constantly beg them to help me through the process (CSG F_C_V_27).

The lack of information regarding the required documents can be seen as one of the biggest barriers for CSG recipients to access the grant. The feelings of uncertainty and fear of being told that the documents are incorrect are further exacerbated by the lack of support and co-

ordination at local SASSA offices. According to the coordinator of a community-based organisation situated in Villiersdorp, it is common for grant applicants to travel to the local SASSA offices in the early hours of the morning with the hope that their applications would be submitted and processed for the next payment cycle. The lack of information about the eligibility criteria of the grant and documentation required, creates a situation where the application process can be quite lengthy for some applicants. This means that there is no guarantee that CSG applications will be successful in the first month of visiting SASSA and applying for the grant. The repeated visits to SASSA, or what Carswell et al. (2019, p. 598) refer to as “to and fro” time, have shaped recipients’ perceptions of SASSA in a negative light. Being a CSG recipient herself, the coordinator despondently described how many applicants have to leave their homes at 5 am to join the SASSA queue while waiting for officials to arrive at 10 am or sometimes at 11 am. She further noted that it is common for applicants to be turned away after they had waited for long hours in the queue. This is mostly due to incorrect and insufficient documentation:

Yes, people will be confused. There is no information, such as posters and pamphlets available to explain which supporting documents are required. SASSA also only visits Villiersdorp twice a month and people hear about important details by word of mouth. We (as monitors) try and help applicants by giving them advice on the process. Let me explain what I mean: there are usually two officials at the help desk, but they always seem busy. When we go for our monitoring work, we usually do the work of SASSA by providing support and direction to people who are confused about what to do and where to go (Black Sash Community Partner Coordinator, Villiersdorp).

The findings correspond with earlier research studies that show that the application process can be quite onerous, problematic, and stressful on primary caregivers (Gibbs et al., 2018; Luthuli et al., 2022; Wright et al., 2015; Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2015). The literature thus confirms that administrative barriers to access the CSG have been an issue of concern for a long time. Invariably, the difficulty in navigating the application process with hardly any knowledge and understanding cause delays in claiming the CSG, which could increase the vulnerability of both mother and child(ren). The notion of “waiting for the state”, as explained by Carswell et al., (2019) resonates with the realities of many CSG recipients who are expected to wait in long queues, with the possibility of not being properly assisted, that usually result in repeated trips to SASSA if the application documents are deemed to be incorrect or insufficient. A CSG recipient from Klapmuts explained:

When I arrived at SASSA, they told me to go there ... and sit there ... and I was sent up and down with my application. I only got proper assistance when I went back the second time. The person who assisted me on that day actually listened to the story (CSG _F_A_K_25).

This quotation further demonstrates the time-consuming nature of application processes and how primary caregivers' time is not always respected. It resonates with the work of Olson (2015), who writes that individuals who are claiming from the state know they must wait appropriately, or face the consequences. Here, Olson's comment holds true for CSG recipients; the consequences of not waiting in the SASSA queue could lead to further financial uncertainty and vulnerability. Although the application process has proven to have many administrative difficulties, CSG recipients who participated in this study have been quite resilient by travelling back and forth to obtain the necessary documents to ensure that their application is successful.⁵⁵

It is important to note and understand that the application for and delivery of social grants is a practical manifestation of the state. It is through this process that the state reinforces the social contract of "citizen" welfare being the responsibility of the state. To translate this responsibility into a reality, SASSA has become the conduit for or main driver of the social contract. In their research about the administrative process relating to social grants, Plagerson et al. (2012, p. 975) state that encounters with public officials were viewed as essential steps towards accessing the goods provided by the state. However, how the state, through SASSA, has been experienced and imagined, has not always been meaningful. The persistent confusion and uncertainty of the requirements relating to the application process, and the repeated trips to SASSA, are practical examples of how citizens have been administratively constrained to make legitimate claims to social assistance. While the bureaucratic process governing the grant application is legitimate to ensure that the system is not abused and misused, the practical conditions of the process itself can be detrimental to the social contract. There is an ongoing need for SASSA to improve its communication and information sharing tools to make the application process more user-friendly and accessible. In this way, primary caregivers will feel more empowered and recognised by the state when they visit SASSA offices.

⁵⁵ Although there is no data presented in this study, there are primary caregivers who possibly gave up on the application process and did not become CSG recipients. This is another weakness of the social contract that needs to be investigated. However, these people were not part of the scope of this study.

On a related note, and equally important to the administrative challenges experienced at SASSA service points, is the card swap process initiated in late 2018. Grant recipients were required to renew their SASSA cards to pave the way for the new hybrid payment model, described in Chapters Four and Six. According to a Black Sash paralegal, there was significant confusion and frustration around the card swaps in the local communities that she was monitoring at the time. In relation to Ceres and its surrounding areas, she said the following, to provide context:

Grant beneficiaries did not know where to go to make their new cards, they did not know when the dates were, they did not know that SASSA and the pay points in their community were going to close, and when it was going to happen. Grant recipients thought they were to make Postbank cards and not SASSA cards (Black Sash Paralegal, Cape Town).

In Villiersdorp, it was also reported that many grant recipients were unclear of the card swap process and experienced administrative difficulties accessing their money on the new “gold” card. The coordinator of the local community organisation recalled that some beneficiaries had to wait long hours before being assisted by SASSA officials. The quote below illustrates how officials have the power to systematically include or exclude grant recipients from claiming their cash transfers:

Many grant recipients in Villiersdorp could not complete the SASSA card swap because the “system” was always down. I also recall cases of some beneficiaries who were not able to access their money when they got their new cards from SASSA. They weren’t really assisted with the process. They were told to wait, or go back to the post office or the commercial bank, or to come back the next month to SASSA. Some beneficiaries reported that the pin number that they had chosen the previous month during the card swap did not work. When it was mentioned to the SASSA officials that some of the cards were faulty, they said that beneficiaries have probably forgotten their pin numbers and that the people are reckless, which was not the case, because most of them could remember the pin they had chosen (Black Sash Community Partner Coordinator, Villiersdorp).

The question remains: how do the administrative challenges and the lack of information in relation to SASSA applications and card-swaps affect the social contract? The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, also referred to as the *Batho Pele* White Paper, highlights that “information is a powerful tool” and a lack of information can be a barrier to good service. The document clearly emphasises how government departments should provide

more and better information for citizens to exercise their constitutional rights. It further reads: “national and provincial departments must provide full, accurate and up-to-date information about the services they provide, and who is entitled to them” (*Batho Pele* White Paper, 1997). The collective comments of CSG recipients however, have demonstrated a different picture on the access to information. Sadly, the commitment made in the *Batho Pele* White Paper to provide inclusive public services through proper and accessible information has not been a lived reality for many CSG recipients. The data shows that recipients, especially those residing in the rural areas of Kaaimansgat and High Noon, had been on the receiving end of uncertainty, confusion, and frustration. It is a great concern that many CSG recipients recounted negative experiences with SASSA due to a lack clarity with regards to the application form and the necessary supporting documents required to secure the grant.

Additionally, it can be argued that SASSA is not upholding its end of the social contract, as stipulated in the Customer Service Charter that outlines the standard of services of all government departments. This is crucial because this is the social contract in writing between the state and grant recipients. The Service Charter, which is aligned with the *Batho Pele* principles, also emphasises that public institutions should “provide appropriate signage and information desks” that will improve the delivery of services. Ensuring access to information is critical to strengthen recipients’ understanding of their own rights and entitlements in terms of social assistance. Access to information about payment dates, documentation, and grant distribution points are important to meet the objectives of the social contract between the state and grant holders.

7.3.2 Transport constraints

The second barrier relates to the distance that recipients are required to travel and how expensive claiming the grant has become. Recipients from the farming communities of Elsenburg in Stellenbosch and Nkqubela in Robertson recounted how they needed to travel back and forth to obtain the necessary documents for the grant application. In addition, the migration from SASSA pay points to SAPO resulted in more travel time and public transport money. The amount of money spent to access the CSG added additional pressure on the grant, which is already a small sum of money. The following responses were extracted:

If we need to go to SASSA, we need money to go see them. The police station is also far away, and we need taxi or train money to get there. If SASSA could at least come to us once a month, then we would not need to give out so much money on travelling.

When the municipal council members were here, I asked them to organise transport to take us to the pay points every month and still nothing happened (CSG F_C_S_31).

We have to pay about R10 to go to town and R10 to return home. I cannot walk to town in the rain and must take a taxi. Sometimes I take a slow walk and it takes me an hour (CSG F_A_R_30).

Despite evidence of challenges that many of these recipients face in obtaining the grant, very little has been done by SASSA to remedy the situation. In 2008, the Lund Committee reported on the direct and indirect costs associated with the grant application process. According to the Committee, long travelling distances is one of the multiple barriers and inconveniences that many recipients are faced with. In 2016, a few years after the Lund Committee published its findings, the Department of Social Development also reported that applicants travel long distances and make multiple trips to SASSA offices to get their cash (DSD, 2016). A research study conducted with CSG recipients in Durban suggested that there would be immediate economic benefits for mothers who no longer have to travel with a young baby to government offices to provide documentation (Luthuli et al., 2022). As explained in Chapter Six, SASSA has the responsibility to be accessible in terms of both distance and travel costs. Accessibility is important to claim public services, especially by poor and vulnerable groups who often are not by the financial means to cover additional costs, such as public transport.

From the above, it is clear that the administrative procedure associated with application to access the grant is not well communicated, especially in terms of the required documents. This is surprising, because effectively, applicants only require three base documents, namely: an ID, the child's birth certificate, and proof of income. As also highlighted, transport costs are a "hidden" expense that erodes the monetary value of the grant. Beneficiaries are therefore disadvantaged as the "to and fro" can be considered as an unnecessary burden. Government, in the form of SASSA, could then be construed as eroding the social contract by making it unnecessarily hard, time-consuming and onerous because of bureaucracy. One could argue that with better information sharing, SASSA could dramatically improve the experience of many grant applicants, thereby strengthening the social contract.

7.4 The CSG should be delivered with dignity and respect

Several studies have shown how the CSG serves to protect the human dignity of primary caregivers (see, for example, Hochfeld & Plagerson, 2011a; Matthews, 2020; Patrick &

Simpson, 2020; Wright et al., 2015). Drawing on the focus groups and interviews it also became evident that while the CSG protects the dignity of caregivers to some extent in terms of accessing material resources (see sections 7.2 and 7.3), human dignity can be absent in other aspects of the grant process. This section demonstrates that many CSG recipients felt that their right to dignity – a foundational principle of the South African Constitution – was not always respected and protected by SASSA. In some instances, their dignity was undermined by verbal and non-verbal communication. CSG respondents could recall several occasions where they were mistreated and often looked down upon by officials working at the service centres where the grant application takes place. These negative encounters were shared among recipients residing in Villiersdorp and Klapmuts. Both towns do not have SASSA offices and recipients need to travel to the nearest towns for assistance, or in the case of Villiersdorp, wait for the “satellite office” that is only available once or twice a month. The lack of SASSA infrastructure in these two towns caused feelings of frustration, exclusion, and the erosion of dignity when treated badly after several hours of travelling and waiting in long queues.

The coordinator of the community partner in Villiersdorp described how SASSA officials are not always friendly and approachable. Many recipients from Villiersdorp across the social grant spectrum do not often feel confident and comfortable to interact with officials. The negative encounters are not only experienced by CSG recipients, but by other grant holders as well. It is, however, experienced to a somewhat lesser extent because of the applicant’s age and other circumstances, such as disability. The coordinator had the following to say:

The mannerisms of some SASSA officials make recipients feel like a burden to them. I have seen that some SASSA officials treat people like they’re a flock of sheep. I remember an instance when an official made a statement, and a woman raised her hand to ask a question. The woman was acknowledged in an irritable manner and her question was not even answered. They just do their jobs to get done and because they have to. They are not there to listen to our problems. Those who are not educated, usually struggle. People are often sent away without the understanding of what they need to apply for.

Speaking from her own CSG application experience, the coordinator described that standing in the queue can be humiliating and “you do not really feel like a person” because there is a lack of care and respect from SASSA officials when people interact with them. She noted:

It is almost a shame for young mothers to stand in a SASSA queue. There is a perception that we are “begging” from the state. You do not want to be seen as a person who needs the money, especially when we have to stand in long lines. It is humiliating.

In the same breath, the coordinator indicated that she also understands and can empathise with CSG recipients for feeling reluctant to speak up against poor services at certain service centres. The reluctance can be due to fear of their application being unsuccessful or even the notion that SASSA does recipients a “favour” by giving them the grant. Previous research has shown that CSG recipients often feel unable to defend themselves against those who administer their applications because it might cause harm (Wright et al., 2015, p. 448). A 35-year-old mother who resides in Goniwe Park in Villiersdorp indicated that some SASSA officials have no problem to send people from pillar to post to the extent that applicants often feel scared that the CSG will be declined if they do not comply with their instructions (CSG F_A_V_35). Another CSG recipient from Goniwe Park explained how being illiterate and uninformed about the processes further disadvantaged some applicants when they need to interact with SASSA. She recalled asking for assistance from an official but was not granted the appropriate respect. She said the following:

Even if you ask for small assistance you can see that some officials are not happy. Some will shout that they are not only dealing with you and you are wasting their time. I know that they are hired to assist us. Some of them do not understand that we are illiterate and need them to willingly assist us. I have seen that they have no respect for people, because people were not willingly assisted and treated with respect. That negativity will be smeared to all of them (CSG F_A_V_45).

The aforementioned response demonstrates that many recipients are relatively uninformed due to their low levels of education and literacy and are therefore reliant on SASSA to assist them to claim the CSG. However, their expectations are often met with distrust and discourteous behaviour. A SASSA official commented that based on his experience, it is often taken for granted that everyone can read with comprehension and the language that is communicated by officials is understood. He stated that there have been instances where applicants did not understand what is required from them, leaving them confused, as the official had not appropriately clarified what documentation was required (SASSA Respondent 1). These “careless” attitudes among public officials can obstruct the notion of a person’s inherent dignity, as underpinned in the South African Constitution.

As the findings have shown, there is a great awareness among CSG recipients that their right to claim social assistance is being compromised by negative encounters with SASSA. A research report entitled *Social Security Based on Dignity and Respect* argues that people instinctively know when they are treated with the necessary dignity and respect, and when they are not (Simpson et al., 2017, p. 7). However, recipients' awareness of their rights and entitlements is often silenced by fear of being "excluded" by some SASSA officials from receiving the CSG benefits. Accordingly, dignified recognition is a form of inclusion and should be strongly embedded in the application and delivery processes of social assistance. To restore dignity to human beings through the provision of social grants cannot be understood only in the monetary sense (i.e., the redistribution of cash to alleviate poverty), but should also be considered in relation to the conditions in which the redistribution takes place. Drawing on the work of Nancy Fraser (2002), Granlund (2020, pp. 38-39) strongly argues that both recognition and redistribution are equally important and the one should not be prioritised over the other. The principles of dignity and respect should therefore be anchored at all levels of social security systems. As the stories below demonstrate, the principles of dignity and respect are often undermined in different and complex ways. This is essentially a shortcoming of the social contract between the state and grant beneficiaries.

A few CSG recipients described how they are often interrogated by SASSA officials about the whereabouts of the children's fathers and marriage statuses. Three single mothers from Klapmuts, Montagu, and Villiersdorp explained how these questions made them feel uncomfortable and doubtful of whether they would secure the grant or not:

I had to travel to SASSA more than once to apply for the grant. They were telling me to bring the father of the child with me. I had to lie to them because at the time I did not know where the father of the child was. Although I finally got the grant, it was not an easy process because the SASSA staff was ignorant about my circumstances and shouted at me. They would say to me that it is not possible for my child not to have a father (CSG F_A_K_29).

I am a single mom and the application process was very uncomfortable for me. I felt judged because of certain people's attitudes at SASSA. But they do not know my circumstances about the father that does not support me. I also dropped out of school when I was in grade 10. I took my mother with me the second time I went to SASSA to help me with the application because SASSA said I am too young to apply (CSG F_C_M_19).

In some instances, our surnames are not the same as the child's. I got divorced. They did not handle the issue in a respectful manner. They asked me to provide proof that I

am divorced and that the child is really mine. They also said I should consider going to Home Affairs to be assisted with a surname change for the child to get the grant (CSG F_A_V_39).

The repeated trips and long periods of queuing, as previously explained, do not only have implications for the recipients' financial costs (e.g., transportation) and opportunity costs (e.g., time), but are also perceived as dignity being undermined. It implies that the women's time is not important and that they are unworthy of speedier service from SASSA (Wright et al., 2015, p. 447). A recipient from Goniwe Park in Villiersdorp explained how the entire grant application process was an "up-and-down" process that took a lot of time, and made her feel poor. She explained:

If I was not poor, I would not have been doing all this up and down to SASSA. I was expected to return more than once. If only I had a job, I would not be exposed to such a feeling of poverty when I applied for the grant (CSG F_A_V_45).

The feeling of poverty is not only attributed to the monetary value of the CSG, as explained earlier in this chapter, but can also be experienced through the day-to-day interaction with SASSA officials. In that sense, it can be considered that poverty is not only experienced through a lack of economic resources, but can also be experienced in terms of being "misrecognised" based on your social standing or status. This is reflected in the work of Hochfeld and Plagerson (2011a, p. 57) who argue that often widespread negative discourses can subject grant recipients to feel "self-serving and a drain on resources", which can lead to disrespect and stigmatisation. It can be argued that the lack of respect shown by some SASSA officials has the potential to further perpetuate the negative discourses around social grants. Drawing on the work of Granlund (2020, p. 83), this form of misrecognition from state officials can affect recipients' sense of dignity and self-worth in negative ways.

Ultimately, the state becomes more visible to grant recipients through their different encounters with SASSA. The above narratives have shown that the several encounters with SASSA, especially the frontline officials, are often associated with indignity, disrespect, and stigmatisation. While recipients do not necessarily have the courage to address their concerns with SASSA, their responses demonstrate that they do pay attention and often reflect on their interactions with the state's bureaucracy. CSG recipients do want to be treated with dignity and respect and they do want access to information to fully participate in the social grant system. On the contrary, the findings have shown that there is a strong disconnect between the

expectations and entitlements of recipients and the treatment they receive at SASSA to access their grant. It is indeed sad to observe that the conditions under which recipients access and receive their grants have not changed. Based on the literature, undignified and uncouth behaviour towards those who are eligible and receiving state (social) support has been documented since the CSG was introduced in 1998 (Gibbs et al., 2018; Granlund, 2022; Wright et al., 2015). Therefore, one could argue that very little has changed to strengthen the state–citizen relationship in relation to the grant process.

Furthermore, experiences are contradicting the founding values of the South African Constitution and the principles of *Batho Pele* that guide the service delivery of state institutions. To reiterate, SASSA offices constitute an important contact point between recipients and the state. It is crucial that frontline workers are seen to be friendly, helpful, and treating everyone with dignity and respect (DSD, 2022). A shortcoming is that human dignity is not explicitly explained or conceptualised in the Service Charter for Public Administration, nor the eight principles of *Batho Pele*. Arguably, human dignity can be perceived and interpreted differently by recipients and SASSA frontline workers, if this is not clearly defined. To strengthen public institutions like SASSA, it is important that greater emphasis is placed on inherent dignity of people, regardless of age, gender, or social class. In addition, SASSA could consider developing a set of indicators that could measure certain aspects associated with customer care, and therefore human dignity, such as no more than one-hour waiting time and speaking to applicants and recipients in their mother tongue. Only then will this aspect of the social contract be fully embraced and strengthened by those who access as well as administer the grant.

7.5 The CSG and state dependence: Not by choice, but by circumstance

The story of a young African, 30-year-old female, captured the complex relationship of social grant dependency and the need to find employment. At the same time, it also highlighted how many women who receive a social grant, struggle to provide for their children, especially in a context where both mother and father are unemployed with little support from family members. This CSG recipient has three children aged nine, four and one. She receives a social grant for all three children. At the time of the focus group discussion in 2019, she received a total of R1,230 per month (i.e., R410 per child) that was primarily used for food, electricity, and school-related items. The 30-year-old mother explained that she is constantly faced with equally important and competing material needs on a daily basis. It is thus difficult and quite frustrating for this CSG recipient to plan or budget when so many expenses need to be covered

by the social grant. She voiced her concerns about the school-related expenses that take most of the cash transfer:

The eldest one is at school. They say at school we must give, let's say a R100, towards a trip to Cape Town. I must give R100! It is also winter now. I must make sure my child has warm clothes to wear at school. The other one (child) is here at the crèche and I have to pay his fees as well. I also have to buy things for him to take with to crèche. I also have baby. And the baby needs nappies, the baby needs milk, and also clothes. I can't buy [things] for all three of them because money is needed at school, there is money that is needed at the crèche, and even the baby has other needs. At my house, I can't use the grant for other expenses. I can't say that I am buying groceries from the money for them to eat, and I can't say I'm paying for the rent with that money. I must plan to get additional money to cover the other costs (CSG A_R_F_30).

All the recipients who took part in the study strongly denied that they deliberately had children to access the grant. They highlighted that the material benefits of the CSG are too little to have or create a decent living for themselves and their children. The quote above shows that the inadequacy of the grant, also discussed in Section 7.2 of this chapter, is therefore not a motivating or pulling factor to become “welfare dependants”. The notion of welfare dependency is therefore contested. This sentiment was echoed by a DA Member of Parliament during an interview. She said that CSG recipients are poor and mostly unemployed and these circumstances should be taken into account and understood as a complex issue. There are currently many misconceptions about grant dependency (Jooste, 2019). The CSG recipients were well aware of the widely held negative assumptions and rather uninformed allegations towards those who receive the CSG. Speaking to this topic, the 30-year-old recipient from Nkqubela township in Robertson pointed out that falling pregnant was not intended to receive a social grant, and consequently, be dependent on the government. She explained that having three children had nothing to do with receiving money from the state, but rather that her financial dependence on the social grant system is rooted in unemployment and other social constraints, such as a sickly husband who is unable to find work.

In the same vein, this CSG recipient shared a story of traditional marriage, where it is “expected” to have children to show your “worth” as a wife. She said the following:

Most of the people in my community know that in our culture you must have children to prove that you are wife enough. So, I have three kids and I had those three kids when my husband was still well. But now he is sick. We don't know where life is going to take us. So, that is my reason for the three children. It is not that we get children because we want to receive the grant. It is not that easy (CSG A_R_F_30).

Another recipient from Bella Vista in Ceres who also has three children, of whom two are boys (14 and 7 years old) and who are both beneficiaries of the CSG. This respondent also has a daughter who, at the time of the focus group discussion, was not a beneficiary of the CSG yet because the grant application still had to be processed by SASSA. This mother challenged public opinions about younger women, like herself, falling pregnant for “All Pay” money, asserting that they are incorrect and that way of thinking needs to change to achieve a more dignified social grant system. It thus became clear that indignity and misrecognition is not only encountered at the institutional level but also at the community and individual levels. The mother of two boys further described that individual circumstances play a massive role in grant dependency, and the community - especially the older generations - should not judge younger mothers too quickly about being reliant on social grants. In her words, she explains the following:

Today, they say that younger ladies get pregnant to receive All Pay money, but it's not about that. Older women tend to look down on the younger ladies ... but we [younger women] like to be clean and neat. We like our children to be clean and neat because when you are seen in public, people's first words are, “Doesn't she get All Pay money to take care of her children? ... look at her ... look at her child!” That's people's words today. People tend to look at your child if you get All Pay money. If you walk with your child or feel like having guests over, firstly, your house must be clean, you must be clean, your child(ren) must be clean, and you must make sure there's something to eat because a lot of people come and say: “Did you hear, that person is looking for something to eat but she received her money yesterday?” (CSG F_C_C_37).

This recipient further described how young(er) mothers are often faced with many difficulties due to perceptions of the CSG and how the money should be spent. She noted that while she is out of work, her husband earns a salary, but due to high living costs, the household is still heavily reliant on the “All Pay” money for basic items because the husband is the only working person. She said:

People like myself need the money. My husband earns a salary and the children's grant is received on the 1st of the month and by that time my husband must still get paid. On that day, I need the money urgently. Sometimes we need something in our house, then that money helps me out. A married lady like myself, who is also a mother of a household, can see everything that is needed in the house (CSG C_F_C_37).

Surprisingly, a few OPG recipients who took part in the focus groups also referred to public opinions and criticisms in South Africa that the CSG creates welfare dependency. These OPG

recipients expressed their discontent that teenagers and young females are falling pregnant to cash in on the child support grant. While several studies have found that there is no association between early child-bearing and the access to the child support grant, negative public discourses still remain that this specific grant leads to state dependency. Consequently, these negative assumptions and interpretations of the social grant can lead to feelings of becoming disillusioned with the state and the CSG itself. Some of the factors mentioned by the OPG recipients are beyond the state's control, such as not using birth control devices – such as contraceptives and condoms – and absent fathers. It should be reiterated that many of the CSG recipients of this study are financially vulnerable with very limited material livelihood resources to draw on. It is therefore crucial to highlight that there are other factors that should and can be mitigated by the state, such as the high levels of unemployment and the monthly social grant amount per child.

Other recipients from Bella Vista in Ceres similarly expressed their concerns about the negative perceptions within their community towards the CSG. Everyone agreed that they feel immense pressure when the CSG must be collected. Indeed, the feelings of pressure and being judged are not only experienced during the application process (institutional level) but also during the collection of the grant (community and individual level). A CSG recipient who has a five-month-old daughter stated, “When drawing money, people are shocked to see young women also owning a SASSA card” (CSG F_C_C_22). At the time of the focus group discussion in late 2018, this mother had already been receiving the CSG for two months.

Another CSG recipient who has a one-year-old boy, explained:

People think that you can't work for your children and that you're only depending on the money that you receive from SASSA. People tend to belittle you based on the money you receive. All of us have different circumstances ... I would never know how urgently that R400 is needed. Do you understand? My son's milk is almost R300 and his nappies cost R200. What do I have left of the R400? My son is young and needs to visit the doctor if he falls ill. He must have his yoghurt, he must eat, and he must drink (CSG F_C_C_19).

This respondent, also from Bella Vista, clarified that in reality, younger mothers also need the money to take care of their households, as much as older mothers in the community. She stated clearly that all mothers with children have similar needs: “...like my child has needs, another mother's child has needs as well. Her child uses nappies and my child uses nappies. Her child

drinks milk and my child drinks milk”. In that sense, as this CSG recipient explained, it is not always about the misuse of money or being reliant on the grant, but a more complex situation of being trapped in poverty, coupled with limited employment possibilities and a lack of support from fathers. In this regard, the challenge of finding work was a common theme that emerged throughout the interviews and focus group discussions in both rural and urban settings. A CSG recipient from the Nduli township in Ceres discussed how employment would complement the CSG income, and in turn, slowly lessen their reliance on the state. The recipients from Nduli said the following:

The CSG only helps if you are working, but if you are not working at all, the grant doesn't make any difference. Mothers with small babies must buy milk and after that, the grant is finished. So, the CSG is not enough if a person is not working at all. But at least if you are working you can cover more with the money (CSG F_A_C_21).

The government must not only increase the grant money but also create job opportunities for those who are not working in Ceres. There are some people who only have that grant money and it's not making any difference without a job (CSG F_A_C_49).

I am thinking about SASSA in Ceres, for example, that only hire people from Worcester and Cape Town. They don't hire people from here because the government only wants people who have a matric. But I also know that there are many people here in Ceres who have matric but they are not working. The government should first consider people in this area for jobs (CSG F_A_C_25).

Limited employment prospects were therefore strongly linked to the overall theme of CSG dependency, choices vs circumstances, and grant recipients' perceptions of the state. Recipients felt that the government needs to do more in terms of creating opportunities for younger mothers who are trapped in a cycle of poverty and unemployment. In Montagu the cycle of grant dependency was striking, as two out of the four recipients (aged 17 and 19) were CSG recipients themselves at the time of falling pregnant. Due to their CSG status, their parents had to apply for the CSG for their babies but gave them the money on a monthly basis to administer themselves.

The issue of structural unemployment was also of great concern. Three out of four recipients had casual farm and factory work and limited prospects of finding a permanent job due to their level of education. The 19-year-old recipient, mentioned in section 7.4, who is unemployed explained that finding a job is difficult because she dropped out of school when she was in

Grade 10. She also receives no income support from the father, and is therefore at the mercy of the family. She said:

The father does not really help me, but I do get support from the people that I live with, such as my mother, cousins, and grandmother. But sometimes I need to accept that they cannot give me money or buy things for me” (CSG F_C_M_19).

Another recipient, an 18-year-old mother of a 10-month-old boy, explained that finding work is difficult because she also dropped out of school in Grade 10 and is totally dependent on the CSG and her casual job as a peach-picker in Ashton. However, both these incomes are not nearly enough for her and the child’s day-to-day expenses.

More than a decade ago, Hochfeld and Plagerson (2011a, p. 55) already described how CSG recipients viewed employment as providing a more sustainable route out of poverty in comparison with grants. Their study conducted in Doornkop in Johannesburg similarly highlighted that recipients do not want to be called or seen as poor and that there is more dignity in employment. In May 2020, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) reported that the vast majority of respondents surveyed (79%) indicated that it is better to have a job at any wage than to have no job at all. The statistics clearly show the value in work for those who are currently economically inactive. This links to a point raised by Adams (2018, p. 111), who argues that while the Constitution provides for a host of socio-economic rights, the right to work was not included. The responses from recipients anecdotally point to this gap and disconnect in the social contract.

The unemployment situation has worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic and more working-age females are jobless and becoming recipients of social assistance. The exclusion from, or lack of, job opportunities in both rural and urban areas does put immense pressure on the social contract. As explained earlier in this chapter, the CSG has remained largely inadequate because mothers still struggle to pay for the most basic household needs. Consequently, grant recipients have certain expectations of the state to create employment opportunities and when those expectations are not achieved, a lack of trust and disillusionment become prominent. Decoteau (2013, p. 16) argues that social grants are used to conceal the government’s failure to address service provision, unemployment, and increasing inequality. In this vein, it can be argued that the South African state has been systematically failing to get working-age mothers into sustainable employment to minimise the effects of poverty and in turn provide an opportunity for primary caregivers to become economically active, self-reliant, and independent.

Based on the findings of this study, many CSG recipients expressed the importance of paid work. They would rather be employed and earning a steady income instead of being reliant on a monthly grant. It is evident that unemployment, or underemployment, played a key role in how CSG recipients perceived the contribution and effects of the social grant. Being trapped in a cycle of financial vulnerability and also being faced with stigma, have shaped their feelings and attitudes towards themselves (as breadwinners) and that of the state's commitment to poverty reduction. While the issue of employment is complex and requires the buy-in power of investments from private companies, it is also a more sustainable method to boost the economic powers of CSG recipients. The social contract can therefore be strengthened when CSG recipients are acknowledged, not merely as welfare beneficiaries of the grant, but also as citizens with their own rights and entitlements, which has to date not been seriously addressed by the state. While the expansion of the social relief of distress (SRD) grant into a basic income grant will assist these categories of women, their sense of dignity, respect, and economic inclusion will be further enhanced through the creation of work opportunities.

7.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter demonstrated that, within the context of large-scale poverty and unemployment of CSG recipients who were part of the study, the CSG has been a significant help to access material benefits. It found that the grant has indeed improved the lives of children by providing them with the opportunity to attend crèche or school. Primary caregivers are able to buy school uniforms, pay for school transport fees, and purchase small food items. In that sense, CSG recipients do feel recognised and valued by the South African state. However, the chapter also demonstrated that the provision of the cash transfer is not enough to fully strengthen the social contract, as it does not meaningfully improve the lives of recipients and that of their children. Accordingly, the findings revealed that there are significant gaps associated with the CSG, specifically as it relates to the grant's (in)ability to meet the most basic needs of children.

Moreover, it was revealed that other factors also impacted the effectiveness of the grant and consequently strained the relationship between state and recipients. These stretched from the application difficulties, stigma associated with the CSG, and encounters with rude and judgemental officials at some SASSA service points. CSG recipients also acknowledged that the continuous "to and fro", long queues and waiting hours undermine their dignity and sense of citizenship. Linked to this, it was found that the CSG is not always delivered with the necessary dignity and care, as documented in the guiding principles of *Batho Pele* and the

Public Service Charter. This was another component of the social contract that was found to be a weakness in terms of the delivery of the grant.

The findings also revealed that in contrast to the challenges experienced by OPG recipients (discussed in Chapter Six) which mainly related to “payday” issues (i.e., accessing the grant at pay points), the CSG experiences largely relate to the application process (i.e., to make constitutional claims to the right to social assistance). Therefore, even though the grant does improve the lives of recipients, an array of interrelated factors has created a situation where those receiving assistance do not feel that the social contract between them and the state is being sufficiently fulfilled.



CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

8.1 Overview

This thesis demonstrates that a social contract does exist in South Africa, but there is a disconnect between the administration, service delivery, and to some extent policy, which affects the overall experience on the ground.

This chapter provides a broad overview of the main findings as they relate to the key objectives and research questions posed by the study. The main objective and the central research question were to investigate the experiences and perceptions of the OPG and the CSG recipients towards the social grant system in South Africa. This was complemented by the following sub-objectives: assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system in South Africa; exploring the day-to-day experiences of recipients at payment and service points; investigating the impact of changes to the grant payment system on recipients; better understanding the perceptions of different racial groups/identities towards social grants and the state; and exploring how the relationship between government and social grant recipients can be strengthened.

By following the logic of the main research question and guiding objectives, a key finding was that social grants are an important economic transfer from the state to those who are considered to be poor and vulnerable in South Africa due to recipients having limited financial resources to support themselves and their dependants. The literature and empirical data show that the CSG and the OPG are two of the most utilised grants in South Africa with the number of recipients who access these grants having increased year on year. It is clear from the research findings, as demonstrated below, that recipients would have experienced significantly more stress if these two grants were not available. It has enabled recipients to access basic material resources such as clothes, food, shelter, school fees, etc. The impact of both these grants has, to some extent, provided recipients an important lifeline to sustain themselves and immediate family members in a context of chronic poverty, inequality, and job scarcity. The study also delved deeper into the utilisation of these grants and explored how the social contract between government and grant recipients can be strengthened. Key challenges and issues that have weakened and fractured the social contract relate to administrative and infrastructural challenges to access the grant for these two main categories (i.e., older persons and primary

caregivers). Other issues relate to the inadequate value of the grants, which has a negative impact on the sense of dignity, trust, and accountability that recipients experience in relation to the state.

In this chapter I revisit the main findings of this thesis as well as return to the literature discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four. Thereafter, I explain the empirical data obtained from the fieldwork conducted from OPG and CSG recipients in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts in the Western Cape. Finally, I provide closing thoughts and considerations in terms of the theoretical and methodological approaches adopted to answer the central research question. The final section suggests areas for further research and concludes the thesis.

8.2 Summary of main findings of the study

Social security has evolved to include citizens that form part of the “non-working” poor, which every society has. The literature highlights the history of the North American and European evolution in government’s role in providing social security measures that have come to include social assistance to those citizens who are unable to form part of the formal economy. Over time, these governments have recognised the importance of providing social assistance to this group of people with the dominant instrument being non-contributory cash transfers. These social security frameworks were exported to South Africa, given its colonial past. The terms “rights holder” (i.e., the citizen) and “duty bearer” (i.e., the government) were useful in identifying the actors involved in this process to determine their roles and responsibilities in terms of establishing a social contract. The social contract therefore describes and establishes the duties of the state in relation to its citizens’ ability to claim their constitutional rights and entitlements.

Therefore, as seen in Chapter Two, it was important to situate social security, and in particular the component of social assistance, within a conceptual and theoretical framework that links the provision of grants to the state as a duty bearer thereof. Accordingly, when citizens become recipients of social assistance, they become implicitly and explicitly integrated into the social contract in terms of the state’s welfare provision. For the social contract to be strengthened, it was found that certain criteria must be met, which includes that it must be inclusive, have adequate coverage and benefits, have legal recourse through the justiciability as well as to be responsive and accountable to citizens. The social contract therefore links the state as a “duty bearer”, which has become a norm and expectation for governments to provide social

assistance. Importantly, this chapter provided the conceptual and theoretical foundation to analyse the lived experiences and perceptions of grant recipients. The social contract is more than the establishment of a social assistance programme, but also should cover how it is delivered and implemented.

Chapter Three explained how the relationship between the state and grant recipients evolved over time in South Africa from an historical and legislative context. This contextual chapter provided the basis and rationale for this study. It emphasised the fact that social assistance pre-1994 was largely discriminatory and based on racial categories that only catered for a small segment of the population. Not all population groups had equal access, rights, and entitlements to the public services and resources of the state. Indeed, the story of the lived experiences of social grant recipients in a democratic dispensation cannot be told without understanding the institutional oppression and discrimination that “people of colour” encountered at every level of their existence under apartheid. It is undeniable that institutionalised racism greatly attributed to the persistently high levels of poverty and inequality among the majority of black households in South Africa today, which explains why so many are dependent on social assistance. The unequal and racially fragmented social grant system under the white-dominated governments was therefore a critical limitation of the social contract that had to be ratified to bring the majority of South Africans, who were previously marginalised, into the fold. This provided the contextual foundation to explore the motivations for a renewed social contract in a democratic South Africa. The South African government has implemented new social welfare policies and programmes since 1994 in an effort to help the nation’s poor and disadvantaged citizens better their socio-economic living situations. Importantly, Chapter Three also showed that the South African social contract does have shortcomings, because only certain categories of individuals qualify for social assistance. Yet, the depth of poverty in South Africa means that grants such as the OPG and the CSG end up being utilised by immediate and extended family members who fall within the missing middle, that is currently not being supported by the government. This limitation in the social contract also came across in the empirical data.

The thesis does not discount the fact that much has been achieved in the South African context. Chapter Four therefore provided an overview of the social security structure and implementation framework in a democratic South Africa. Social security comprises of social insurance and social assistance components, with the latter reaching the largest proportion of the population. In terms of social assistance, non-contributory cash transfers, also referred to

as social grants, is the primary focus of this thesis. The South African government has contributed considerable fiscal resources to provide grants to those who qualify. Accordingly, the social grant system has shown successes and opportunities through the expansion of coverage and benefits since the dawn of democracy. This demonstrates that building a renewed social contract in terms of social assistance is a core focus of the South Africa government. However, it was found that the social grant system is faced with challenges and weaknesses in terms of delivery and implementation, which weakened recipients' perceptions of the social contract between them and government. It was found that a key weakness of the system currently is in its operational failures. For example, the tender irregularities around the Cash Paymaster Services (CPS) contract, the unauthorised deductions under the CPS contract, the decommissioning of pay points, and the inadequate infrastructure at certain SASSA offices, to name a few. All these shortcomings amount to violations of the social contract around the right to social assistance in South Africa.

Based on the contributions of the above-mentioned chapters, it can therefore be concluded that there are several factors that contribute to the strengths and weaknesses of the social grant system and how these factors subsequently impact the social contract.

The key findings of the empirical chapters (i.e., Six and Seven) demonstrate the impact of positive and negative factors in relation to the lived experiences of CSG and OPG recipients within the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts. The empirical data that was gathered during the researcher's fieldwork through observation, focus group discussions, as well as interviews with grant recipients and members of civil society provided a real-world sense of the lived experiences of recipients when collecting their grants.

8.2.1 Experiences and perceptions of OPG recipients

8.2.1.1 A strong sense of recognition and entitlement

An important contextual finding is that there is a stronger sense of entitlement to receiving a grant among the OPG recipients, in relation to their CSG counterparts. They have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in terms of the eligibility and their claim as a "rights holder" towards accessing social assistance. Grant recipients in this category were found to be more aware of the constitutional, legal, and political contexts in providing the OPG to them.

Accordingly, this has shaped their understanding and expectations of the state, in other words, what the social contract entails and ideally should deliver in terms of social assistance. They see the state as the key provider and distributor of the cash transfer, thereby reinforcing the role of the state as duty bearer. In stark contrast to CSG recipients, older persons do not face issues around stigma and ill-treatment from SASSA and the community in claiming their grants. They feel a sense of recognition and value (i.e., being seen by the state) which has significantly improved their view and image of the South African government. As such, the vast majority of OPG recipients who took part in this study definitely expressed a strong relationship with and intrinsic understanding of the social contract. However, their strong sense of entitlement to the social contract in terms of accessing the grant has also made them critical of the state. This is due to operational challenges, the lack of responsiveness and accountability from political and public representatives, and the buying power of the grant.

8.2.1.2 Costs associated with accessing benefits and reduced value of the grant

While the vast majority were grateful to receive financial support from the government, several recipients also discussed how accessibility of the grant remains a challenge for older people residing in the rural and farming areas. This study's findings have revealed that, in particular older people, are dissatisfied with the decommissioning of the traditional pay points. Under the hybrid payment model social grant recipients are required to collect their monies each month from either the post office, retailers, or ATMs. OPG recipients expressed concerns about the long waiting times and often the lack of prioritisation of older people at the ATMs and supermarkets where the money is collected. Furthermore, shortcomings were experienced in collecting the OPG at the post office (that is supposed to be the primary distributor of social grants); these include closure of some branches, system glitches, security concerns, and running out of money while distributing grants, leaving older persons to find an alternative pay point. In this regard, the social grant system is at risk since SASSA has not taken adequate steps to ensure that the post office fulfils its contractual obligations. Limited (or the absence of) SAPO branches, and even retailers and ATMs have been cited as a serious challenge in the rural areas and townships. One can deduce from the findings that the new payment system post the CPS contract has not been as effective and inclusive, which has had a negative impact on the constitutional claim that rights holders have to access their grants.

The fact that OPG recipients who reside in rural farming areas and townships in these locations are required to travel far distances to claim their grant creates issues of accessibility. The lack

of accessibility in terms of SASSA infrastructure, retailers, and ATMs (i.e., grant distribution points) within these areas threaten the inclusivity of the grant. The research also shows that OPG recipients who could not walk or get public transport, and had no family member with a vehicle, had to hire private transport to get to a distribution point within the town centre. Within this context, many OPG recipients expressed concerns about the high costs associated with accessing payments, which subsequently reduced the net value of the grant. Accordingly, the grant's "buying power" is drastically reduced depending on the travel distance and the public or private transport costs involved to access the grant. Those who reside in Kaaimansgat and High Noon in Villiersdorp and Elsenburg Farm in Stellenbosch were found to experience this challenge of accessing grants in the town centre. Furthermore, the study found that recipients living in townships such as Nduli in Ceres, Nkqubela in Robertson, and Goniwe Park in Villiersdorp are also negatively impacted by this challenge of the closure of local pay points. The travelling alone from these remote areas added financial pressure on older people who more often than not share the money with the entire household.

The literature presented in Chapter Four and the empirical findings of Chapter Six emphasise that the OPG is shared among unemployed children and grandchildren who are also in desperate need of financial support and care. OPG recipients from Bella Vista raised concerns about the high cost of living, while also being responsible for paying municipal rates and burial covers; all these expenses make them more susceptible to poverty. The rising cost of food, and the OPG constantly increasing below inflation, have consequences for the degree to which the social grant has been economically and socially transformative. While the grant has enabled recipients to put food on the table and to some extent invest in the wellbeing of the household, it also has proven to have limited long-term effects on improving their standard of living.

To strengthen the social contract within this context requires greater involvement of the government in terms of monitoring and oversight of how the distribution of the OPG has affected the lives of older people. In particular, the opportunity costs related to claiming the OPG need careful consideration by SASSA and DSD in rural and township areas. The amount, according to the recipients, is not adequate to cover travelling as well as meeting basic needs for their day-to-day survival. More research is needed in terms of increasing accessibility and inclusivity in rural areas, which are faced with less-developed physical and technological infrastructure. However, a potential solution is that grant recipients could collect their monies

every two or three months to minimise direct and opportunity costs for both the government and recipients.

The study also found that a few participants were not able to rely on their children for support because in most cases the children were not in the financial position to assist. Some were either unemployed or CSG recipients themselves. Senior citizens were expected to assume the role of caregivers because many family members within the household were without jobs. The OPG recipients within this context found themselves to be the sole breadwinners because their grant value is greater than that of the CSG. As such, the introduction of a basic income grant could lessen the burden on the OPG, which consequently will further strengthen the primary intention and purpose of the grant. The same rationale applies to the CSG, which is discussed in the subsequent section. The expansion of the social grant system in the form of a basic income grant could then directly expand the social contract, while also providing financial relief to those who have indirectly become “beneficiaries” of the OPG and the CSG. Notwithstanding these potential opportunities, the study acknowledges that the fiscal commitment to such an extension of the grant system will not be an easy task especially with sub-optimal economic growth and reduced tax base.

Moving forward, the government could consider to start delivering a lower amount of money, as with the CSG, to bring those who are currently not covered under the social grant system into the fold. Although the amount was small, the R350 Social Relief of Distress Grant introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic had several benefits for the non-working poor (Matthews, et al., 2022). The need of the R350 grants also endorsed the idea of the basic income grant. The basic income grant should therefore be considered as an additional component of the broader social security policy framework to realise the right to social assistance to “everyone” who needs a safety net against financial difficulties in South Africa. From a social contract perspective, introducing some form of social assistance that specifically targets the non-working poor and low-income workers will not only strengthen the state’s constitutional commitment, but also bring much-needed socio-economic stability for individuals who are constantly faced with the triple challenge of poverty, inequality, and unemployment.

8.2.2 Experiences and perceptions of the CSG

8.2.2.1 The struggle for access, dignity, and recognition

Differences between the experiences and challenges faced by the CSG recipients, as opposed to OPG recipients, in relation to how they perceive and experience the social contract, are evident. The study found that claiming the CSG and the bureaucratic processes associated with applying strained the relationship between the state as the duty bearer and recipients as the rights holders. Insufficient information regarding the required documentation in applying for the grant was a notable challenge for many recipients. This was compounded by generally unhelpful frontline SASSA officials, who also seemed to apply the requirements for application and processing thereof, differently. Staff also treated the CSG applicants – who as mentioned previously were mostly young and unmarried women – not with the necessary respect and dignity to the point where they (recipients) did not feel comfortable to even interact with them.

The hostility experienced at some SASSA service points during the application process is a barrier to accessing and claiming the grant. There is overwhelming experience recounted of not always feeling supported by SASSA officials. Many recipients are rather confronted by a system that seems to undermine their inherent dignity, which can be detrimental in promoting state–citizen relations. The back and forth to SASSA and the ill-treatment encountered by some officials, have also undermined the claim-making process not only for the caregiver, but also the child(ren), as the primary beneficiary. Accordingly, many recipients often felt misrecognised and stigmatised as being “welfare dependants” who are claimants of “government charity” and subsequently “draining state resources”. These negative discourses were not only experienced within the community, but also encountered at SASSA when recipients were often interrogated whether they were deserving of the grant. These non-material barriers and challenges negatively impacted their sense of dignity and rightful entitlement to the grant.

To restore dignity to grant recipients cannot be understood only in the monetary sense but should also consider the conditions in which the redistribution takes place. The lived experiences in terms of the application and delivery process are therefore internalised and subsequently have impacted the attitudes that recipients have towards the state, grant system, and their sense of citizenship. While the CSG does offer them dignity in terms of accessing their most basic needs, it also puts them in a position where they may need to actively defend

their dignity from pervasive negative discourses. The findings that have emerged from Chapter Seven clearly demonstrate the need for a social grant system that is more people-centred and shows empathy to the most stressful conditions under which most grant recipients live. The intervention of the DSD is needed to bring greater awareness of the *Batho Pele* principles in the application and delivery processes of the grant system. There is also a need for more inclusive monitoring and oversight on the application and delivery process.

8.2.2.2 *The opportunity to work and earn a living wage*

The majority of CSG recipients who participated in the study were from low-income families with few employment prospects. The CSG had therefore become a crucial economic transfer for mothers to afford some basic daily necessities for their children. The study has shown that the regular and predictable monthly cash transfers to CSG recipients provides some financial relief to poor and vulnerable people, primarily caregivers who are young, jobless, or employed part-time in their local towns. The “promise of payday”, as stated by Granlund (2020), therefore represents an important act of redistribution and recognition that strengthens the state to beneficiary relationship. While the grant has become an important lifeline, the modest amount of R480 is not enough to buy the most basic items for the child. The majority of recipients therefore articulated a strong desire to secure employment with the aim to become “less dependent” on the social grant. The recipients expressed their concerns that the CSG is insufficient to address their poverty-related issues, whereas paid labour would offer greater income support and socio-economic benefits for themselves and the child(ren). As such, the negative stereotypes towards the CSG coupled with the high cost of living have placed even greater urgency on CSG recipients to find alternative ways to keep their heads above water.

Accordingly, the CSG recipients have implicitly asked: Who does the social contract in relation to social assistance belong to? The CSG is primarily intended for the upkeep of the child while the primary caregiver cannot claim the same welfare benefits. Posing this critical question provides a starting point for CSG claimants to articulate their right to access social assistance, and importantly, gaining recognition within a context of high unemployment especially in rural and township areas, which are often faced with low economic activity and growth. The exclusionary categorisation in the current social grant system does, therefore, challenge the inclusivity of the social contract. For instance, not all poor and vulnerable groups who cannot take care of themselves and their dependants, as stated in the Constitution of 1996, are included in terms of social security coverage and benefits. Drawing on Chapter Three, the current system

of social security benefits is still narrowly categorised in terms of children, the elderly, people with disabilities, and those in formal employment. The good intent of the CSG is severely impacted if one considers that the money is in real terms used not only for the child, but also the caregiver. A similar trend was observed for OPG recipients who have to share their grant with the household.

While the provision of the CSG has provided a much-needed safety net, many recipients have in the same vein, often blamed the state for their continued economic vulnerability. They expressed the belief that the state has the moral duty to deliver job opportunities as a possible solution to the problem of “welfare dependency”. The opportunity to work will address the issues of stigmatisation and humiliation of constantly feeling poor, disadvantaged, and also having to prove their poverty to state officials. In this regard, CSG recipients noted that the “right to work” will ensure dignity and social recognition at the individual, household, and community levels. Not only will it strengthen the state - citizen relationship, but also change community perceptions towards the CSG. Employment, according to recipients, would also entail a higher social position as they will become more productive members of society. Consequently, the CSG recipients’ expectations of the state have grown beyond the scope of the grant. It is important to note that the “right to work” is not explicitly stated in the South African Constitution. The state can only facilitate job creation through economic growth with the help of the private sector.

However, this does not lessen pressure on the state to act in accordance with the other constitutional provisions that are intrinsically linked, such as the right to food, shelter, and an adequate standard of living. Arguably, without a job, the CSG in its current form can be seen as inadequate in delivering of the social contract to primary caregivers. CSG recipients feel unable to sustain a livelihood because the grant value is too small to make any long-term impact. The unemployment problem, especially among the missing middle (18 - 59), can therefore potentially manifest into a fracturing social contract. Research has shown that there is growing concern that South Africa has been unable to absorb large parts of the population into the formal economy. The lack or absence of welfare support to this group of people has added another layer to an already pressing issue.

In this context, if the CSG is not significantly increased and the basic income grant is not provided, CSG recipients will continue to feel disillusioned and alienated from the state. It

could create a situation where recipients might feel that their claim to the social contract is not heard and not given the proper social and political recognition that it deserves. The social contract in terms of social assistance needs to be reconsidered and renegotiated taking into consideration the above-mentioned challenges. However, and as mentioned in Chapter Seven, an expansion of the current social grant system will require strong political will and fiscal commitment from all government stakeholders. The expansion of social assistance measures will realize the commitments of the Bill of Rights, and in turn, strengthen the social contract between the state and those who are in receipt of a social grant.

8.3 Concluding remarks, recommendations, and opportunities for future research

This thesis contributes to the broader body of literature on the experiences and perceptions of social grants and how these non-contributory and unconditional cash transfers have become a primary contact point between the government and citizens. Although there is extensive literature on the provision of social grants pre- and post-apartheid, no prior research has explicitly looked at the provision of social grants, especially within the categories of OPG and CSG, within the social contract framework in South Africa. Using the social contract as an analytical tool uniquely placed this research to investigate both monetary and non-monetary aspects associated with the grants, and whether the state is fulfilling its constitutional obligation to those who receive the OPG and the CSG. To answer the research question, “What are the experiences and perceptions of the Older Person’s Grant (OPG) and the Child Support Grant (CSG) recipients of the social grant system in South Africa?” required an analysis from the social contract perspective.

This research has found that the provision of social grants has a wide range of beneficial and developmental impacts on society. However, the findings indicate that the system is also faced with shortcomings that require the government’s careful attention and response to strengthen the social contract between the state and citizens. Accordingly, the social contract is experienced and interpreted differently by OPG and CSG recipients. While they might face similar challenges in terms of the administrative and delivery aspects of the grant, these two categories of grant holders are also faced with different challenges based on the individual contexts and situations they find themselves in.

For the majority of CSG recipients the key issue is finding meaningful employment to be less dependent on the state, and there is an expectation towards the state to facilitate these economic

opportunities on their behalf. In the context of high unemployment, this study recommends the introduction of a basic income grant for individuals between the ages of 18 and 59, with no or little income support. The expansion of the social grant system in this way will provide some form of financial relief and economic protection to the most poor and vulnerable in society who currently have no means of support and have become indirect beneficiaries of the OPG, CSG, and possibly other social grants not covered in this study. While the expansion of the social security framework also strengthens the social contract, the study is aware of the fiscal constraints and implications of this proposal. The financing of the basic income grant, however, was not part of the scope of this research and this is possibly an opportunity for further research. Notwithstanding this recommendation, uncovering the fact that CSG recipients are not necessarily happy to be reliant on the state and would prefer to be able to support themselves through decent work opportunities is a finding that could have far-reaching policy implications.

The research has also shown that a stronger social contract requires public officials and representatives to promote and respect the inherent dignity of both OPG and CSG recipients. Accessing social assistance is a primary way that both rights holders are making fundamental claims to the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), and by extension, their citizenship. In terms of the OPG, the physical infrastructure available needs careful consideration and improvement to make the payment process easier. Infrastructure in terms of public transport and SASSA pay points closer to the rural and township areas are important, especially for those who are faced with ill-health and are too frail to travel to ATMs and retailers on a month-to-month basis. This study recommends that grant recipients have the option of collecting their monies every second or third month to reduce the accessibility costs. Notably, the administrative constraints and limitations to implement such an arrangement between SASSA and OPG recipients should be further investigated.

Moreover, an already strained social contract is a result of a disconnect between governmental frameworks for providing quality public services and recipients' actual lived experiences at SASSA and pay points. If the government does not attend to the above-mentioned issues, the relationship between the government and recipients will become severely strained as many recipients across both grants have already lost trust in the government, especially SASSA and DSD, in terms of responding to their needs and concerns. This study therefore recommends that effective oversight is exercised by SASSA and DSD over the entities that have been tasked with its delivery, notably post offices, supermarkets, and commercial banks in the form of

ATMs. To strengthen an already tenuous social contract, recipients need a government that is accountable and responsive, visible in terms of monitoring and oversight of “privatised” payment sites, and that upholds the *Batho Pele* principles. The study found that this function is primarily carried out by civil society, who has played a pivotal role in community-based monitoring and oversight. In many ways these NGOs – most notably Black Sash and its community partners – have become mediators between the state and grant holders who would not necessarily have the agency to voice their concerns and hold government accountable for the shortcomings experienced.

The empirical data gathered in the Cape Winelands and Overberg Districts have demonstrated how the daily lived experiences of individuals receiving the OPG and the CSG can result in a broken or strained social contract in terms of the delivery and implementation of these grants. While the value of the grant is perceived to be too small and inadequate to improve the standard of living, non-monetary factors do have a significant impact on how recipients experience the social grant system.

Finally, given that the patterns of poverty and inequality remain as a stark challenge in South Africa, it is clear that there is an urgent need for the government to ensure a more effective and efficient administration and delivery of social grants, thus maintaining the social contract. This is especially important as recipients remain vulnerable and are reliant on the government to provide an effective and efficient service.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Focus group discussions – OPG recipients



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How do you perceive social grants?

- 1.1 What are your views about social grants?
- 1.2 In your opinion, who provides social grants and why?
- 1.3 In the event that the ANC loses the 2019 elections, do you think social grants will continue? (*probe whether respondents feel that social grants are an ANC initiative*)
- 1.4 By receiving a social grant, do you feel more valued as a citizen and why do you say so?
- 1.5 Social assistance is seen by many as a constitutional right and an obligation which government must fulfil. What is your view on this?
- 1.6 Do you think the OPG promotes constitutional principles like (i) right to equality (ii) right to dignity (iii) rights to basic nutrition, shelter, etc.?

2. Access to and design of OPG

- 2.1 Are there any challenges to access social grants? If yes, please elaborate on them.
- 2.2 How did the process of applying for the grant make you feel? (*probe for positive or negative feelings*).
- 2.3 What it is like to go and fetch the grant every month, how does the process make you feel? (*probe for positive or negative feelings*).
- 2.4 What, in your opinion, should be done in order to improve the OPG?

3. What is your experience and perception of SASSA

- 3.1 Do you think SASSA is doing a good job in administering grant payments?
- 3.2 What do you think about the overall services provided at pay and service points? Here you can comment on queues, staff, waiting areas, etc.
- 3.3 Are there complaints mechanisms in place? In other words, do you know how and where to report a problem related to your social grants?
- 3.4 How does SASSA staff respond to a complaint if you make one? Are you satisfied with their response?

3.5 Based on your answers above, do you feel the services rendered to grant recipients are citizen-centred? Explain your answer.

4. Perceptions of government

4.1 Do you think there is public accountability and responsiveness towards grant holders?

4.2 Has the on-going media reporting in relation to SASSA influenced your perception of government's commitment to you as a citizen and grant beneficiary?

4.3 SASSA has recently migrated the grant payments from CPS to SAPO (Post Office). What impact has the changes to the grant payment system have on you?



APPENDIX B: Focus group discussions – CSG recipients



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. How do you perceive social grants?

- 1.1 What are your views about social grants?
- 1.2 In your opinion, who provides social grants and why?
- 1.3 In the event that the ANC loses the 2019 elections, do you think social grants will continue? (*probe whether respondents feel that social grants are an ANC initiative*)
- 1.4 By receiving a social grant, do you feel recognised and valued as a citizen and why do you say so?
- 1.5 Each social grant has a different amount. How do you feel about the amount that you receive and why?
- 1.6 In what ways has the CSG transformed or changed your socio-economic circumstances?
- 1.7 How and to what extent does the grant protect you and the child from poverty? (*probe if the grant protects them from male breadwinner dependence*).
- 1.8 Social assistance is seen by many as a constitutional right and an obligation which government must fulfil. What is your view on this?
- 1.9 Based on your answer above, do you think the CSG promotes constitutional principles like (i) right to equality (ii) right to dignity (iii) rights to basic nutrition, shelter, etc.?

2. Access to and design of CSG

- 2.1 Are there any challenges to access social grants? If yes, please elaborate on them.
- 2.2 How did the process of applying for the grant make you feel? (*probe whether respondents feel intimidated, ashamed, scared or empowered and entitled*).
- 2.3 What it is like to go and collect the grant every month, how does the process make you feel? (*probe whether respondents feel intimidated, ashamed, scared or empowered and entitled*).
- 2.4 Where do you prefer to collect your grant and why?
- 2.5 Looking back at the last 5 to 10 years, do you think the social grant system (in terms of access and design) has improved or not? Please motivate your answer.
- 2.6 What, in your opinion, should be done in order to improve the CSG?

3. What is your experience and perceptions of SASSA

3.1 Do you think SASSA is doing a good job in administering grant payments?

3.2 What do you think about the overall services provided at pay and service points? Here you can comment on queues, staff, waiting areas, etc.

3.3 Are there complaints mechanisms in place? In other words, do you know how and where to report a problem related to your social grants?

3.4 How does SASSA staff respond to a complaint if you make one? Are you satisfied with their response?

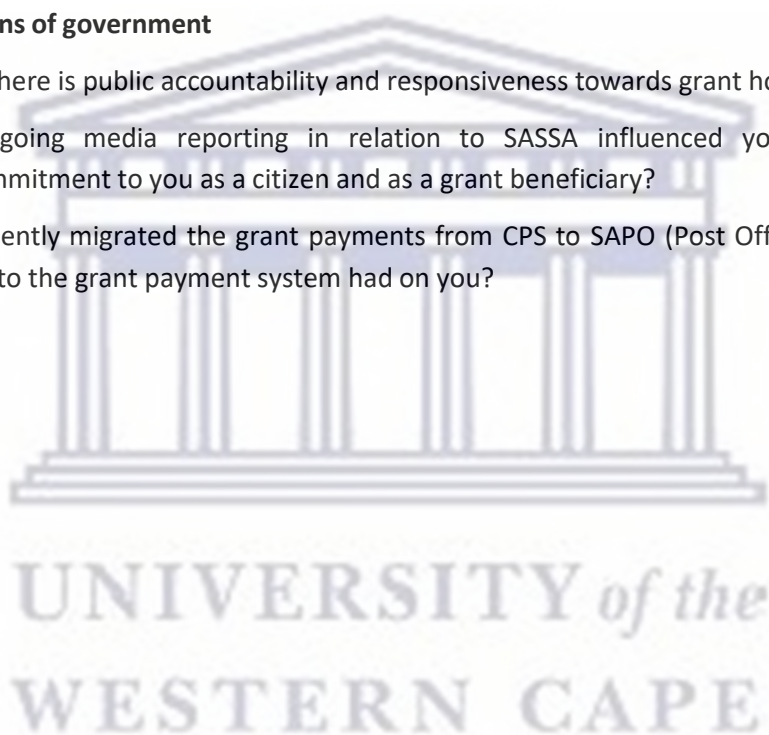
3.5 Based on your answers above, do you feel the services rendered to grant recipients are citizen-centred? Explain your answer.

4. Perceptions of government

4.1 Do you think there is public accountability and responsiveness towards grant holders?

4.2 Has the on-going media reporting in relation to SASSA influenced your perception of government's commitment to you as a citizen and as a grant beneficiary?

4.3 SASSA has recently migrated the grant payments from CPS to SAPO (Post Office). What impact have the changes to the grant payment system had on you?



APPENDIX C: Information sheet (OPG and CSG)



**Private Bag X17, Bellville 7535, Cape
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Project Title:

Strengthening the social contract between government and social grant recipients: A case study of the Older Person's Grant and Child Support Grant in the Cape Winelands District, Western Cape Province.

What is this study about?

This research project is being conducted by Meshay Moses, a student at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. This research is about social grants. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Older Person's Grant and Child Support Grant recipients towards the social grant system in South Africa. The study further investigates how grant recipients from different racial identities understand the relationship between government and citizens in relation to social assistance. It also explores how (or ways) the relationship between the government and social grant recipients can be sustained and strengthened.

What is the Focus Group Discussion about?

If you agree to participate in this research project, you will be asked to answer questions pertaining to the current social grant system in South Africa. This is to gain insight into your experiences and perceptions towards the social grant system and how it influences your attitude towards the government, in general, and SASSA in particular.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

All your personal information (including your name) will be kept confidential and will remain anonymous. The researcher will only make use of pseudonyms in the final report, future publications and presentations. All information obtained from the focus group discussion will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only. Please note that the focus group discussion will be audio-recorded so that I can accurately transcribe the conversations. This will also involve record keeping (such as taking notes) of comments and

observations. All information such as observation notes, transcriptions and audio recordings from the focus groups discussion will be kept in a locked cabinet in my department that will only be accessed by me. You will be required to sign a consent form to protect your privacy and confidentiality while participating in this study.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no risks involved in participating in this research project. From the beginning, the aims and objectives will be clear.

What are the benefits of this research?

There are no material benefits for you. However, this research will gain useful insights into the day to day experiences of ordinary citizens who participate in the social grant system. This research aims to create awareness of possible weaknesses and challenges in the system and explore ways to how government can strengthen public accountability with the aim to improve the experiences of grant recipients in the process.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in the focus group discussion. If you do decide to participate, you can stop or withdraw at any time without any consequences. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

How long will the focus group discussion take?

It will be approximately between 60 to 90 minutes long.

Do I need to bring anything to the focus group discussion?

No, the researcher will provide the necessary material.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

There are no negative effects that could happen from participating in this study. However, if you do feel it might affect you in any negative way, please feel free to say so.

What if I have questions?

- If you have any questions about the research study, please contact the researcher Ms Meshay Moses, a student at the University of the Western Cape. Her contact number is 0838739843 or alternatively you can email: 2756089@myuwc.ac.za or meshayleemoses@gmail.com.
- If you have any questions that need direct university response pertaining this research study, please contact my supervisor Professor Stephen Devereux at The Institute for Social

Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape. His telephone number is 021 959 3858 and email is s.devereux@ids.ac.uk

- Alternately, you can contact my co-supervisor, Prof Cherrel Africa, Department of Political Studies, University of the Western Cape on 021 959 3228 and cjafrika@uwc.ac.za
- This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee. HSSREC, Research Development, UWC, Tel: (021) 959 2988, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za



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APPENDIX D: Letter of consent to participate in focus group discussion



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I....., have had the opportunity to ask any questions related

to this study, and received satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I have read the information regarding this research study on “Strengthening the social contract between government and social grant recipients: A case study of the Older Person’s Grant and Child Support Grant in the Cape Winelands District, Western Cape Province”.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary. I am free not to participate and have the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to explain myself.

I agree not to divulge any information that was discussed in the Focus Group Discussion.

I am aware that the information I provide in this Focus Group Discussion might result in research which may be published, but my name will not be used.

I am aware that this Focus Group Discussion will be audio recorded and that the recording will be kept in a safe place.

I understand that my signature on this form indicates that I understand the information on the information sheet regarding the structure of the questions.

I agree to answer the questions to the best of my ability.

I understand that if I don’t want my name to be used that this will be ensured by the researcher. I may also refuse to answer any questions that I don’t want to answer.

I understand that I will receive no rewards, gifts or compensation for participating in this research. I understand that I am entitled to ask for a copy of the research at the end of the project.

By signing this letter, I give free and informed consent to participate in this research study.

Date: _____

Participant Name: _____

Participant Signature: _____

Interviewer name: _____

Interviewer Signature: _____

This research is being conducted by **Meshay Moses**, a student at the University of the Western Cape. Her contact details are as follows:

Cell: 083 873 9843

Email: 2756089@myuwc.ac.za or
meshayleemoses@gmail.com

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact **Prof Stephen Devereux** at The Institute for Social Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape. His contact details are as follows:

Tel: +27 (021) 959 3853

Email: s.devereux@ids.ac.uk

APPENDIX E: Information Sheet: Interviews



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Project Title:

Strengthening the social contract between government and social grant recipients: A case study of the Older Person's Grant and Child Support Grant in the Cape Winelands District, Western Cape Province.

What is this study about?

This research project is being conducted by Meshay Moses, a student at the University of the Western Cape, South Africa. This research is about social grants. The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences and perceptions of Older Person's Grant and Child Support Grant recipients towards the social grant system in South Africa. The study further investigates how grant recipients from different racial identities understand the relationship between government and citizens in relation to social assistance. It also explores how (or ways) the relationship between the government and social grant recipients can be sustained and strengthened.

What is the interview about?

If you agree to participate in this research project, you will be asked to answer questions pertaining to the social grant system in South Africa. More specifically, you will be asked to give insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and whether the government is fulfilling its constitutional obligation towards social grant recipients.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

All your personal information (including your name) will be kept confidential and will remain anonymous. The researcher will only make use of pseudonyms in the final report, future publications and presentations. All information obtained from the interview will be treated with strict confidentiality and will be used for research purposes only. Please note that the interview will be audio-recorded so that I can accurately transcribe the conversations. This will also

involve record keeping (such as taking notes) of comments and observations. All information obtained from this interview will be kept in a locked cabinet in my department that will only be accessed by me. You will be required to sign a consent form to protect your privacy and confidentiality while participating in this study.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no risks involved in participating in this research project. From the beginning, the aims and objectives will be clear.

What are the benefits of this research?

There are no material benefits for you. However, this research will gain useful insights in to the day to day experiences of ordinary citizens who participate in the social grant system. This research aims to create awareness of possible weaknesses and challenges in the system and explore ways to how government can strengthen public accountability with the aim to improve the experiences of grant recipients in the process.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate in the interview at all. If you do decide to participate, you can stop or withdraw at any time without any consequences. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

How long will the interview take?

It will be approximately between 40 to 60 minutes long.

Do I need to bring anything to the interview?

No, the researcher will provide the necessary material.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

There are no negative effects that could happen from participating in this study. However, if you do feel it might affect you in any negative way, please feel free to say so.

What if I have questions?

- If you have any questions about the research study, please contact the researcher Ms Meshay Moses, a student at the University of the Western Cape. Her contact number is 0838739843 or alternatively you can email: 2756089@myuwc.ac.za or meshayleemoses@gmail.com.

- If you have any questions that need direct university response pertaining this research study, please contact my supervisor Professor Stephen Devereux at The Institute for Social Development (ISD), University of the Western Cape. His telephone number is 021 959 3858 and email is s.devereux@ids.ac.uk.
- Alternately, you can contact my co-supervisor, Prof Cherrel Africa, Department of Political Studies, University of the Western Cape on 021 959 3228 and cjafrica@uwc.ac.za.

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee. HSSREC, Research Development, UWC, Tel: (021) 959 2988, email: research-ethics@uwc.ac.za



APPENDIX F: Semi-structured interview schedule: Black Sash and community partners



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Section 27 of the Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right to have access to social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependents, appropriate social assistance.

Reflecting on the Community Based Monitoring (CBM) exercises, have you encountered any practical difficulties or contradictions in terms of the above statement in terms of accessing social assistance, in general, and Older Person's and Child Support Grants in particular? What are these difficulties and contradictions?

2. Social security is a human right, and this is made explicit in Article 22 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Do you think social assistance in its current form (specifically the OPG and CSG) promote principles like (i) right to equality (ii) right to dignity (iii) rights to basic nutrition, shelter, etc.? Give as many examples of how it promotes or undermines these principles.

3. In the White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery it is stated that: "Public servants are expected to treat all citizens with courtesy, respect and dignity" (RSA, 1997: 5). The Department of Social Development has produced a Customer Service Charter (DSD, 2013). The Charter states that people have the right to be treated with dignity in adequate conditions, and to expect friendly and helpful service from respectful, responsible and competent officials.

Based on your involvement in CBM, does the government, for example, SASSA and Department of Social Development uphold these principles outlined above? Give examples to motivate your answer.

4. Based on all the media reporting in recent months about SASSA, do you think there is public accountability and responsiveness from government and SASSA in particular towards grant holders?
5. What are your views regarding third parties being contracted for the distribution of grants?
6. Based on your answers above, do you feel the services rendered to grant recipients are citizen- centred? Explain your answer.
7. Do you think grant holders from different racial identities experience the social

grant system differently in terms of access? Why?

8. To what extent is the state living up to the expectations of the voters and the constitution in terms of providing social assistance to the people and why you say so?



APPENDIX G: Semi-structured interview schedule – SASSA Officials



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges facing social grants in South Africa?
2. Social assistance is seen by many as a constitutional right and obligation which government must fulfil. What is your view on this?
3. To what extent is the state living up to the expectations of voters and the constitution in terms of providing social assistance to the people and why do you say so.
4. Department of Social Development has produced a Customer Service Charter (DSD, 2013). The Charter states that people have the right to be treated with dignity in adequate conditions, and to expect friendly and helpful service from respectful, responsible and competent officials.
5. In your opinion, do SASSA officials, as public servants, uphold these principles outlined above?
6. Do you think SASSA has good relations with the community where you work?
7. What are the major obstacles, if any, to delivering an effective service in this community?
8. What is/are the causes of the above?
9. Based on the media reporting in recent months, do you think there is public accountability and responsiveness towards grant holders? In other words, is government, in general and SASSA in particular, doing its best to improve services and to deal with issues such as long waiting periods, unexpected cancellations of grants, debit deductions, etc.?
10. Based on your answers above, do you feel the services rendered to grant recipients are citizen-centred? Explain your answer.
11. What improvements would you like to see in terms of the overall administration and delivery of social grants?

Appendix H: Semi-structured interview schedule – Politicians: Member of the National Parliament (MP) and Western Cape Provincial Legislature (MPL)



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GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. What, in your opinion, are the main challenges facing social grants in South Africa?
2. Based on the negative reporting in recent months about SASSA, do you think there is public accountability and responsiveness from government and SASSA towards grant holders?
3. Social assistance is seen by many as a constitutional right and obligation which government must fulfil. What is your view on this?
4. To what extent is the state living up to the expectations of voters and the constitution in terms of providing social assistance to the people and why do you say so.
5. What in your opinion, should be done in order to improve the OPG and CSG?
6. What improvements would you like to see in terms of the overall administration and delivery of social grants?
7. What are your views regarding third parties being contracted for the distribution of grants?
8. What impact would the proposed changes to the grant payment system have on grant recipients?

* *These are preliminary guiding questions. The researcher would like the identified MP and MPL to respond to emerging themes resulting from the Focus Group Discussions. Hence, the researcher might amend or incorporate additional questions based on the findings from the Focus Group Discussions.*