



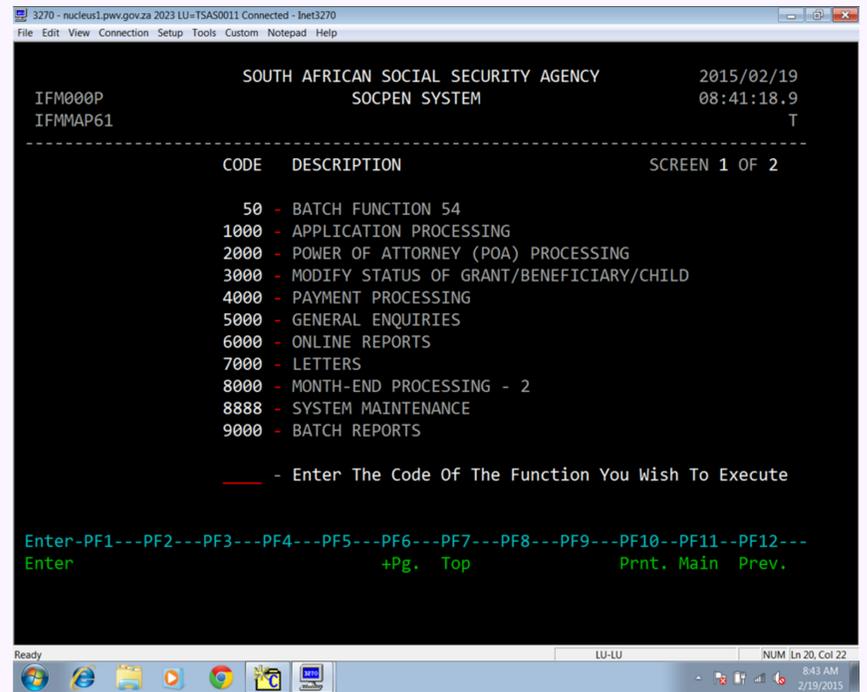
South Africa's SOCPEN: a legacy system which still delivers

Virginia Petersen, Caesar Vundule and Carin Koster



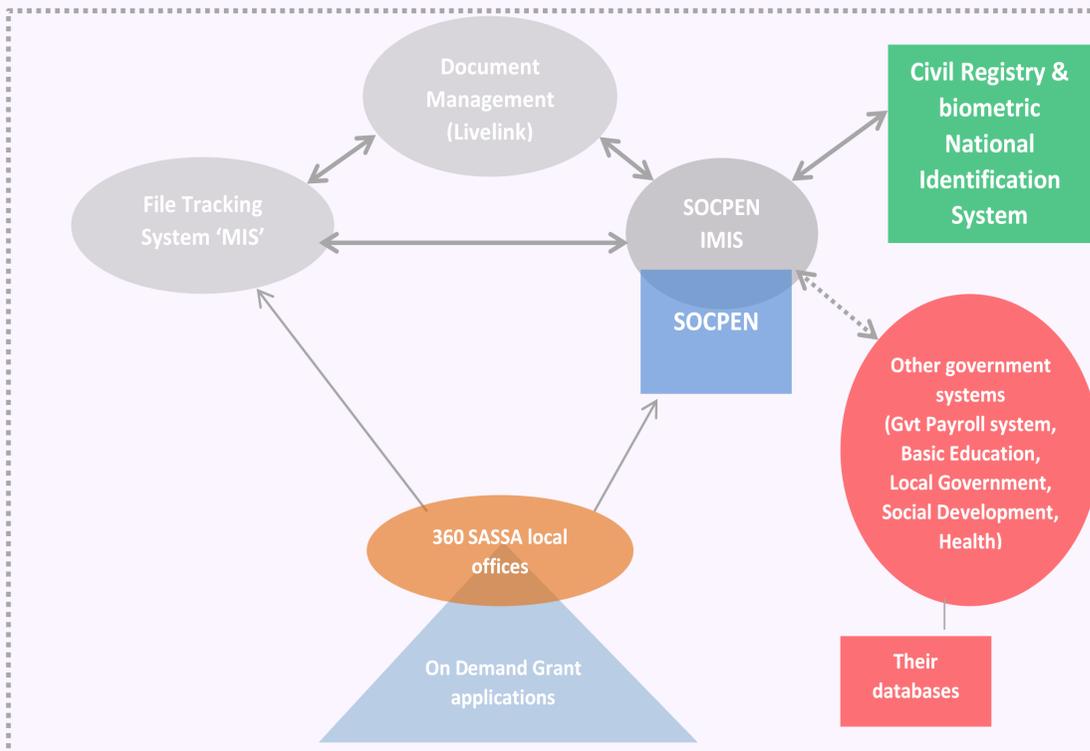
BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

- The Republic of South Africa's Department of Social Development (DSD), together with the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), run a comprehensive system of social assistance grants (for old age, war veterans, people with disabilities, children, etc.) and processes over **16,500,000 grants monthly**.
- The grants are processed using a **legacy information management system called SOCPEN, which started in the 1980s**.
- The system's database, Adabas, manages more than **2300 concurrent users** and holds a register of more than **16.5 million beneficiaries**.
- SOCPEN is mainly used for:
 - processing applications for the old age, disability, war veterans, child support, foster care and care dependency grants;
 - generating a pay file monthly for >16 million grants; and
 - automatically producing a list of beneficiaries due to be re-assessed.



SOCPEN screenshot

OVERALL DATA STRUCTURE



KEY COMPONENTS OF THE INTEGRATED DATA SYSTEM

- **SOCPEN acts as a primary database for beneficiary information management**, but is also linked to other internal data sources, including:
 - ⇒ Data from a **file tracking system** that provides real-time information on the status of social grant applications.
 - ⇒ Data from **Livelihood, a records management system** that manages all letters sent to grant recipients and other electronic records.
 - SOCPEN also interfaces with other government MISs, including:
 - ⇒ the database of the **Department of Home Affairs**, which provides real-time information from the **population register** e.g. name and ID number, status (alive/dead); establishment of beneficiary status (for example, age cut-offs).
 - ⇒ an online interface with **PERSAL (government payroll system)**, to cross-check income data.
 - ⇒ Other **ad-hoc data sources** (not linked online): the Unemployment Insurance Fund; Government Employees Pension Fund; payroll system of the Defence Force; National Treasury (to verify beneficiary banking details); Department of Basic Education's learner database; and Special Investigations Unit (to identify fraudulent grants).
- Innovatively, **biometric systems (fingerprints and voice recognition)** are in place for beneficiaries to prove their identity and to collect their money.

CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

- Legacy application using old technology
- Many processes still manual
- Not an organisation-wide system covering all of SASSA operations
- Duplication of data storing (making reporting, monitoring and evaluation difficult)
- Changes and updates to the system are cumbersome to apply and implement
- No real-time interfaces with other MISs
- Not being set up to integrate data and information management, which means its overall focus is on managing operational processes for grant delivery rather than on policy coordination and oversight.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

Barca and Chirchir (2014) Single Registries and Integrated MISs, Demystifying Data and Information Management Concepts. Case Study 2



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Workshop on Integrated Data and Information Management for Social Protection:
Bridging the Gaps between Theory and Practice

Jakarta, 11-12 March, 2015



Oxford Policy Management