

Social Grants Impact on Household Livelihoods: Empirical Evidence from International Migrants in Cape Town, South Africa



Jonas Nzabamwita¹  & Emmanuel Ndhlovu² 

¹ NRF-DSI South African Research Chair in Industrial Development University of Johannesburg, South Africa; Department of International Development Studies, Faculty of Environmental Studies, University of Lay Adventists of Kigali, Rwanda.

² School of Public Management, Governance and Public Policy, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg, South Africa.

ABSTRACT

South Africa has rolled out several social protection programmes targeted at various categories of people, including children, the elderly, the disabled, and the unemployed. Migrants also access social assistance as a livelihood mechanism. However, while existing studies link the country's social protection initiatives with reductions in poverty, inequality, and unemployment, much of the data used to back these claims are drawn from quantitative surveys that rarely incorporate the livelihood plight of migrants. This has enormous policy and practical implications. This article seeks to close this gap by examining the role of social grants in migrants' livelihoods in Cape Town, South Africa. Underpinned by exploratory and descriptive research designs, this mixed research methods study used primary data drawn from migrant household heads receiving social grants and key informants from migrant-serving organisations and focus group discussions. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for quantitative data, while thematic data analysis was used for qualitative data. The results showed that besides the traditional short-term protective role of consumptive expenditure, social grants play a long-term promotive role in facilitating access to education and health and improving access to accommodation, water, and energy for migrants. To maximise social grants' protective and promotive roles in migrant communities, this article recommends deploying proactive steps, including raising the value of grants, providing financial literacy training, and combining social grants with other programmes. The study adds to ongoing debates on the quality and effectiveness of social protection strategies in South Africa. It also flags policy directions for policymakers and other stakeholders working on social protection in South Africa.

Correspondence

Emmanuel Ndhlovu

Email:

manundhl@gmail.com

Publication History

Received: 9th July, 2024

Accepted: 1st November, 2024

Published online:

28th November, 2024

Keywords: Households, International Migrants, Social Grant, Poverty, Refugees, Livelihoods, South Africa

INTRODUCTION

Despite remarkable progress since the advent of democracy in 1994, South Africa remains plagued by poverty, unemployment, and inequality. The World Bank (2020) reports that 55.5% of South Africans still live below the Upper National Poverty Line (UNPL) of R1268, while another 25% experience food

poverty.¹ When using an international standard of R28 (\$ 1.90) per person per day in 2014/15 prices, an estimated 37.6% of South Africans live below the international poverty line respectively.²

Regarding unemployment, Statistics South Africa reports that the number of unemployed persons reached 14,5 million in the fourth quarter of 2021, placing the official unemployment rate at 35,3% in the country.³ If an expanded definition of unemployment that includes discouraged workers and those who want work but are not actively looking for it is used, the unemployment rate soars to 46.2% in urban areas and over 50% in rural areas.⁴

Concerning social and economic inequality, South Africa remains among the countries with the highest income, wealth and gender inequality globally. The World Bank report (2022) reports that in South Africa, the rich are super rich and the poor are very poor, such that only 10% of the population – the majority are whites – control or own more than 80% of the country's resources and aggregate wealth.⁵ Regarding gender inequality, South Africa has a Gender Gap Score of 0.78.⁶ This score means South Africa ranks 20th globally out of 146 countries where men outnumber women in access to economic, educational, health and political opportunities.⁷

International migrants who journey to South Africa are not exempt from socioeconomic challenges. While it is difficult to determine the exact number of poor and unemployed migrants in South Africa, as most of them lack the necessary documents to register in the government database, several studies have reported that migrants live more precariously and are proportionally poorer than their South African counterparts.⁸ Napier et al. found that up to 96% of asylum seekers and refugees in major cities in South Africa, such as Durban, live below the poverty line.⁹ In addition, with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in late December 2019, an estimated 2 million migrants of working age (18 to 64 years) in South Africa were driven into abject poverty and misery, with four out of six migrants either having lost their jobs and income or their livelihoods due to COVID-19 response restrictions.¹⁰

Widespread poverty among South Africa's migrant population is often accompanied by food insecurity at the household level and hunger at the individual level. At the individual level, empirical observations by the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) found that 47 % of adult migrants from middle-income households in two major South African cities– Cape Town and Johannesburg – did not have the purchasing power to meet their minimum food needs.¹¹ Further, at a household level, nearly half of the migrant household heads could not afford a decent daily meal for themselves and their dependents or provide their children with an acceptable diet.¹² At worst, more than half of migrants from lower-income households often go to bed hungry or resort to cheaper, saltier, and less nutritious or expired foods due to the excessive rise in food and commodity prices in South Africa.¹³

¹ World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Brief: Sub-Saharan Africa," *South Africa*, April 2020.

² World Bank, "Poverty and Equity Brief: Sub-Saharan Africa."

³ StatsSA, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey," *Media Release*, 2022, [http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Media release QLFS Q4 2021.pdf](http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Media%20release%20QLFS%20Q4%2021.pdf).

⁴ StatsSA, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey."

⁵ Aroop Chatterjee, Léo Czajka, and Amory Gethin, *Estimating the Distribution of Household Wealth in South Africa*, vol. 2020 (UNU-WIDER, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2020/802-3>.

⁶ World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report," *Insight Report*, 2022, https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf.

⁷ World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report."

⁸ Jonas Nzabamwita, "African Migrants' Characteristics and Remittance Behaviour: Empirical Evidence from Cape Town in South Africa," *African Human Mobility Review* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1226–54; Chatterjee, Czajka, and Gethin, *Estimating the Distribution of Household Wealth in South Africa*; Desawi Kiros Gebrekidan, Abate Mekuriaw Bizuneh, and John Cameron, "Determinants of Multidimensional Poverty among Rural Households in Northern Ethiopia," *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 16, no. 1 (2021).

⁹ Carin Napier, Wilna Oldewage-Theron, and Beryl Makhaye, "Predictors of Food Insecurity and Coping Strategies of Women Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Durban, South Africa," *Agriculture & Food Security* 7, no. 1 (December 25, 2018): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40066-018-0220-2>.

¹⁰ Fatima Khan and Mikhail Kolabhai, "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa," *African Human Mobility Review* 7, no. 2 (2021).

¹¹ J. Crush and G. Tawodzela, "Migration and Food Security in South Africa: Zimbabwean Migrants in Urban South Africa," *AFSUN Food Security Series* 23 (2016).

¹² Feyisayo A Odunitan-Wayas, Olufunke A Alaba, and Estelle V Lambert, "Food Insecurity and Social Injustice: The Plight of Urban Poor African Immigrants in South Africa during the COVID-19 Crisis," *Global Public Health* 16, no. 1 (2021): 149–52.

¹³ Carren Ginsburg et al., "The Impact of COVID-19 on a Cohort of Origin Residents and Internal Migrants from South Africa's Rural Northeast," *SSM-Population Health* 17 (2022): 101049.

Moreover, when poverty is proxied by both individual food (in) security indicators and nutritional outcomes, it has been found that many migrant children are unable to meet their daily needs.¹⁴ This has resulted in many migrant infants suffering from chronic malnutrition.¹⁵ In addition, due to the effects of poverty, migrants in South Africa face a variety of other problems related to social insecurity, discrimination, and xenophobia, and many suffer from multiple forms of deprivation, stress, risk, shock and vulnerability.¹⁶ Children without legal guardians, female refugees, and asylum seekers were the most affected by these unfortunate events.¹⁷ The lives of most unaccompanied migrant children are characterised by homelessness, i.e., loitering and wandering the streets and sleeping in the taxi ranks or in the bush.¹⁸ Migrant women are exploited or paid a pittance in the agriculture sector and service industries, and their conditions of work are frequently marked or accompanied by racism, violence, and abuse.¹⁹

To mitigate the effect of poverty among both South Africans and the migrant population, the South African government has implemented several programs, initiatives, and interventions. One form of intervention that has attracted growing scholarly interest is social assistance through social grants. However, studies that specifically focus on migrants are still developing. This article adds to the existing debate to highlight the role of social grants in migrant livelihoods in Cape Town, South Africa.

The article is organised as follows. The next two sections review the literature related to the study and outline the conceptual framework. The research methodology, presentation, and discussion of study findings follow this. Lastly, conclusions are drawn from the findings and discussion.

Social Grants in South Africa: A Literature Review

There exists abundant literature that documents the impact of social grants on poverty in South Africa.²⁰ Most studies agree that social grants provide relief and enable beneficiaries to move closer to the poverty line or improve their ability to work out of poverty.²¹ The primary study was a national survey by Kohler and Bhorat, which applied quantitative and descriptive data to evaluate whether social grants are successfully aimed at the neediest households.²² This survey found that, in general, receiving social grants increased the per capita income of the poorest South African households by about 60%.²³ Previous studies, such as Armstrong and Burger, used Income Decomposition Techniques to assess the impact of grants on poverty and inequality among South Africans.²⁴ They found that social grants reduced the severity and depth of poverty among households, mainly black female-headed households in rural areas. In percentage terms, Armstrong and Burger reported that the social grant reduced the poverty headcount ratio by approximately 12 percentage points, roughly from 47% to 35%.²⁵

¹⁴ Ruth D Carlitz and Moraka N Makhura, "Life under Lockdown: Illustrating Tradeoffs in South Africa's Response to COVID-19," *World Development* 137 (2021): 105168.

¹⁵ A A Adetoro, M S C Ngidi, and Gideon Danso-Abbeam, "Towards the Global Zero Poverty Agenda: Examining the Multidimensional Poverty Situation in South Africa," *SN Social Sciences* 3, no. 9 (2023): 148.

¹⁶ David Mhlanga and Emmanuel Ndhlovu, "Explaining the Demand for Private Healthcare in South Africa," *Interdisciplinary Journal of Economics and Business Law* 10, no. 2 (2021): 98–118; Eric Blanco Niyitunga, "Xenophobia: A Hindrance Factor to South Africa's Ambition of Becoming a Developmental State," *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 6 (May 3, 2024), <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2024.1337423>.

¹⁷ Victor H Mlambo et al., "Undocumented Migration, Xenophobia and The Struggle for Employment in South Africa," *JISR Management and Social Sciences & Economics* 21, no. 3 (2023): 118–35.

¹⁸ David Addae and Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour, "Afrophobia, 'Black on Black' Violence and the New Racism in South Africa: The Nexus between Adult Education and Mutual Co-Existence," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2130458>.

¹⁹ Claudine Burton-Jeangros et al., "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Lockdown on the Health and Living Conditions of Undocumented Migrants and Migrants Undergoing Legal Status Regularization," *Frontiers in Public Health* 8 (2020): 596887.

²⁰ Adetoro, Ngidi, and Danso-Abbeam, "Towards the Global Zero Poverty Agenda: Examining the Multidimensional Poverty Situation in South Africa"; Burton-Jeangros et al., "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Lockdown on the Health and Living Conditions of Undocumented Migrants and Migrants Undergoing Legal Status Regularization"; Crush and Tawodzela, "Migration and Food Security in South Africa: Zimbabwean Migrants in Urban South Africa."

²¹ Khan and Kolabhai, "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa"; Mlambo et al., "Undocumented Migration, Xenophobia and The Struggle for Employment in South Africa."

²² Tim Köhler and Haroon Bhorat, "COVID-19, Social Protection and the Labour Market in South Africa: Are Social Grants Being Targeted at the Most Vulnerable?," 2020.

²³ Köhler and Bhorat, "COVID-19, Social Protection and the Labour Market in South Africa..."

²⁴ Paula Armstrong and Cobus Burger, "Poverty, Inequality and the Role of Social Grants: An Analysis Using Decomposition Techniques," *University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town*, 2009.

²⁵ Armstrong and Burger, "Poverty, Inequality and the Role of Social Grants: An Analysis Using Decomposition Techniques."

In another related study that used data from the Income and Expenditure Surveys of 2005/06 to assess the long-term impact of income support from social grants, Bhorat & Thorton found that on a per capita expenditure basis, overall income inequality in South Africa continued to rise over the period between 1995-2005.²⁶ However, when income from social grants was included in the calculations, and the Gini coefficient was used to measure inequality, the shift in inequality was significant in that the weighted value of the Gini coefficient decreased by 0.2, from 0.77 to 0.75. Further analysis of these data revealed that the severity of inequality decreased across all population groups, implying that social grants reduced overall income inequality and mitigated its impact on the lowest-income South African households.

Bhorat et al. moved away from poverty and inequality in other studies.²⁷ They used bottom-up and top-down macroeconomic modelling approaches to investigate the impact of social assistance grants on employment at the household level. These researchers report that social grants increased the probability of employment by 15% on average and labour force participation by 9% for South African mothers living in informal settlements.

Regarding food (in)security, the receipt of social assistance directly and positively impacts household food security indicators and individual nutritional outcomes. Devereux and Waidler evaluated the impact of social grants on various indicators of food insecurity using panel data from the first wave of the 2008 National Income Dynamic Survey (NIDS).²⁸ They found that as the number of grant beneficiaries increased, food insecurity decreased substantially in the households. Further analysis revealed that the number of people and families experiencing hunger in the last 12 months of the survey was reduced. Nevertheless, no significant eradication of chronic malnutrition through social grants in South Africa has been reported.²⁹ Coetze conducted an estimation of the Anthropometric impact of social grants on children's well-being using a Propensity Score Matching Approach and found that social grants, particularly the Child Support Grant (CSG), had a small and unobservable effect on the child's growth, i.e. the standard deviation in height relative to age and weight relative to age increased by only 4%, meaning that a child receiving social grant grew only five inches taller than non-recipient.³⁰

In another study, Devereux found that the amount of income from the CSG is low and has only moderate success in improving the nutritional status of children.³¹ The number of stunted and wasted children in South African beneficiary households decreased only from 24% to 21%.³² This is consistent with an earlier econometric analysis of anthropometric survey data, where Aguero et al. argued that social grants lead to moderate nutritional outcomes among children who received grants in the first three years as they gained 3.5 cm on average in height as adults.³³

Despite a wide body of literature that highlights that social grants reduce the severity and depth of poverty, prevent inequality from worsening, and mitigate the incidence of food insecurity in South Africa, a common thread among studies in this context is that they are purely quantitative and data come from surveys that rarely visit migrant households and consider their circumstances. As a result, limited research examines grants on non-monetary measures of migrants' well-being from their perspectives, personal feelings, perceptions and lived experiences.

South Africa is currently home to at least three million people of foreign origin.³⁴ Some of these migrants receive social grants (see Table 1). These grants consist mainly of public-funded monthly direct

²⁶ H Bhorat and A. Thorton, "The Employment Tax Incentive in South Africa: A Brief Assessment of the Initial Impact." (Development Policy Research Unit; University of Cape Town, 2016).

²⁷ Haroon Bhorat, Ravi Kanbur, and Benjamin Stanwix, "Estimating the Impact of Minimum Wages on Employment, Wages, and Non-wage Benefits: The Case of Agriculture in South Africa," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 96, no. 5 (2014): 1402–19.

²⁸ S Devereux and J Waidler, "Why Does Malnutrition Persist in South Africa despite Social Grants," *Food Security South Africa Working Paper Series* 1 (2017).

²⁹ Wanga Zembe-Mkabile, "Social Protection and Care: Does the Child Support Grant Translate to Social Justice Outcomes for Female Beneficiaries Who Receive It on Behalf of Their Children?," *South African Journal of Science* 118, no. 9/10 (September 29, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2022/14688>.

³⁰ M. Coetze, "Finding the Benefits: Estimating the Impact of the South African Child Support Grant," *South African Journal of Economics*, 81(3), 427-450. 81, no. 3 (2013): 427–50.

³¹ Stephen Devereux, "Is Targeting Ethical?," *Global Social Policy* 16, no. 2 (2016): 166–81.

³² Devereux, "Is Targeting Ethical?"

³³ Juan Aguero, M. Carter, M. Robert and Ingrid Woolard, "The impact of unconditional cash transfers on nutrition: the South African child support grant. International Poverty Centre," *Working Paper no. 39* (2007), 1–25.

³⁴ StatsSA, "Quarterly Labour Force Survey."

cash transfers provided by the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) and administered by the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to the poorest and most marginal of the poor population of migrants and citizens of South Africa.

Table 1: Number of migrant beneficiaries of social grants by types

Social grant types	Type of migrants		
	Refugees	Permanent residents	Total
Child Support Grant (CSG)	10589	12236	22825
Foster Care Grant (FCG)	15	259	274
Care Dependency Grant (CDG)	244	270	514
Disability Grant (DG)	231	961	1192
Old Age Grant (OAG)	496	25852	26338
Grant-in-Aid (GIA)	436	27	463
Total	11602	40014	51606

Authors' calculations based on the SASSA report (SASSA, 2020).

To ensure that grants are awarded to the neediest, means-testing and targeting methods based on the income and financial situations of the applicants are used. If an individual or couple's combined income and asset value fall below the legally stipulated threshold, that person or household is deemed poor and eligible to receive the social grant.

Social grants prescribed for children are given to their mothers, foster parents or caregivers on behalf of a child from birth to 18 years of age. These grants include the CSG, FCG, and CDG. The CSG consists of R480 per child paid to poor households to cover the costs of raising children, redistribute income and alleviate child poverty.³⁵ As illustrated in Table 1, the CSG is the second most popular grant among migrants. By the end of July 2021, 22,825 migrants will have benefitted from this grant.³⁶

On the other hand, the FGC is given to foster parents to cover the cost of raising children who are not their own.³⁷ To qualify, the court should have addressed the foster care case or the children involved were orphaned.³⁸ The FCG is relatively higher than the CSG; a monthly amount of R1,070 is paid per foster child, and 274 migrants received this subsidy by July 2021.³⁹ Both the CSG and FGC are complemented by the CDG, which consists of a monetary value of R1,990 awarded to anyone who provides full-time care to a minor suffering from a mental or severe physical disability (World Bank, 2021). According to the Department of Social Development, by July 2021, 514 migrants received the CDG.⁴⁰

Adult-targeted social grants are paid to adult recipients aged 18 years and older or their assigned procurators – a person authorised by beneficiaries to sign up for grants or to collect social grants on their behalf. These grants include the Disability Grant (DG), the Old Age Grant (OAG), the Grant-in-Aid (GIA), and a Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRDG).⁴¹ The DG is an amount of R1,990 given to adults with a disability, curtailing their workability.⁴² Usually, when a beneficiary of a DG reaches the age of 60, the grant automatically becomes an OAG.

The OAG is a state pension grant consisting of an income of R1,890 and R1,900 per person offered to beneficiaries older than 60 years and 70 years, respectively.⁴³ To avoid the 'double-dipping effect' in which the State incurs a double cost, the beneficiaries of OAG must not be housed or cared for in

³⁵ RSA, "Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG). DSD, SASSA/NDA on COVID19 Challenges and Responses with the Minister," 2020, <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/31591/>; Falilou Fall and Andre Steenkamp, "Building an Inclusive Social Protection System in South Africa," 2020.

³⁶ RSA, "South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). You and Your Grants 2020/2021. Social Grant Booklet in English," 2020, <https://www.sassa.gov.za/publications/Documents/You and Your Grants 2020 - English.pdf>.

³⁷ RSA, "Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG). DSD, SASSA/NDA on COVID19 Challenges and Responses with the Minister."

³⁸ Department of Social Development, *Comparison of Social Grant Recipients in South Africa from 1994 to 2020* (Pretoria: Department of Social Development, 2021).

³⁹ World Bank, "South Africa: Social Assistance Programs and Systems Review," *World Bank*, 2021.

⁴⁰ Department of Social Development, *Comparison of Social Grant Recipients in South Africa from 1994 to 2020*.

⁴¹ RSA, "South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). You and Your Grants 2020/2021. Social Grant Booklet in English."

⁴² SASSA, "Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance," Department of Social Development, 2024.

⁴³ SASSA, "Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance."

government institutions. The OAG has the broadest reach among migrants. At the end of July 2021, about 26,228 foreigners received the OAG (see Table 1).

GIA recipients receive an amount of R480 to care for themselves. This grant is usually applied as a supplemental income to recipients of disability, old-age, and veterans' benefits who require regular care from another person because of their mental condition and physical disability.⁴⁴ GIA applicants must not be receiving care in a state or state-subsidised facility. At the end of July 2021, there were a total of 463 migrants who received this grant.⁴⁵

The SRDG is a form of cash transfer of R460 or food parcels given to people in crises and catastrophes.⁴⁶ By the end of July 2021, 463 migrants received this grant.⁴⁷ Since the SRDG is for emergencies, it can be awarded to any migrant regardless of immigration status. The most recent assistance of this type is the emergency cash-based grant – the COVID-19 SRDG of R350. Initially introduced in 2020 as a six months temporary measure to cushion the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (with repeated extensions), during the State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa announced that the relief grant is likely to become a permanent feature of the South African social assistance system for adults without income.⁴⁸

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this article, 'social protection' is defined as **a set of policies and programmes designed to reduce and prevent poverty and vulnerability during our lives** (Devereux & Nzabamwita, 2018).⁴⁹ It represents interventions that protect lives and guarantee a minimum of survival in times of crisis. It is a system to help people with serious problems and no other form of help. It consists of non-contributory assistance to improve the lives of vulnerable families and individuals experiencing poverty and deprivation. Social assistance is public funding that comes entirely from the State. It refers to 'social grants' provided to people incapable or unable to work, such as people with disabilities, older people, children, etc.⁵⁰ Social security is, from time to time, used interchangeably with social protection. However, social security is more focused on providing a stable income from contributory forms of social insurance and needs-based assistance from public funds. These usually come in the form of medical insurance, unemployment, sickness, and old age benefits.⁵¹

The conceptual framework adopted in this study is built on the Social Policy Framework (SPF) recommendations by the African Union (AU).⁵² The SPF was to provide AU member states with a general policy structure that could be adapted to develop their national social policies or social policy frameworks to promote human empowerment and development. This is part of the region's continued commitment to encourage countries to address the numerous social challenges facing societies. The SPF rationalises social development as a goal in its own right. The framework admits that while economic development is a key condition of social development, it does not exclusively or adequately address the challenges posed by the diverse socioeconomic and political forces that collectively generate the challenges of social development on the continent.

The interventions that fall under social protection, as detailed in the SPF, are summarised in Figure 1. These include social security measures, income security, job creation, social welfare, health services access, and education. These interventions are based on recognising that investment in and access to social protection remains low in many African countries, including South Africa. The AU framework was

⁴⁴ Fall and Steenkamp, "Building an Inclusive Social Protection System in South Africa."

⁴⁵ SASSA, "Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance."

⁴⁶ World Bank, "South Africa: Social Assistance Programs and Systems Review."

⁴⁷ SASSA, "Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance."

⁴⁸ J. Felix, "SONA 2023: Poverty Deepening so R350 Social Relief of Distress Grant Will Continue, Says President Ramaphosa," News24, 2023, <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/sona-2023-poverty-deepening-so-r350-social-relief-of-distress-grant-will-continue-says-ramaphosa-20230209>.

⁴⁹ Laís Abramo, Simone Cecchini, and Beatriz Morales, "Social Programmes, Poverty Eradication and Labour Inclusion," *Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean*. Santiago: CEPAL, 2019.

⁵⁰ Emmanuel Ndhlovu, "Social Protection Instruments and Strategies in Southern Africa." *International Journal of Innovation in Management Economics and Social Sciences*, (2024) 4(2), 44-59.

⁵¹ D. Ntseane and K. Solo, *Social Security and Social Protection in Botswana* (Gaborone: Bay Publishing, 2007).

⁵² African Union, "The First Session of the AU Conference of Ministers in Charge of Social Development Windhoek, Namibia," October 2008, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30218-doc-social_policy_framework_for_africa_-_final_-_18_nov_2008.pdf.

adopted to guide the study of South Africa's social protection response during COVID-19, focusing on refugees.

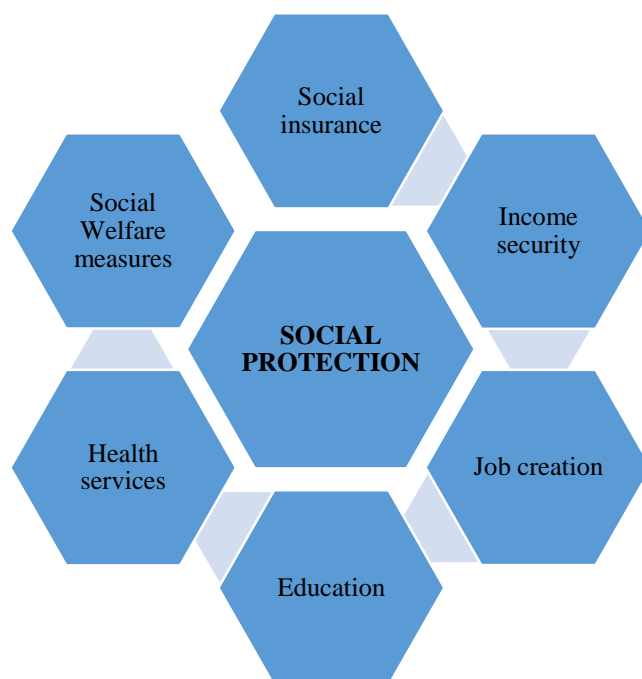


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
Source: Authors, Adapted from African Union (2008)

METHODOLOGY

This mixed methods research study utilised both primary and secondary empirical data. Primary data was collected through survey questionnaires administered to 103 migrant household heads who received social grants in Cape Town. Household heads were assigned numbers from HH1-103 where HH represented 'household head'. Ethical clearance was obtained from one organisation that dealt with migrants. Additionally, as adults, participants also gave their personal consent. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five key informants from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that assist migrants. Key informants were assigned code numbers from KI 1-5 for easy analysis, where KI represented 'Key Informant'. A focus group discussion was also held with 12 social grant recipients. Focus group discussions were coded as FG for ease of analysis. All codes were linked to the year in which the data were collected. Cape Town was chosen for several reasons: Firstly, it has a gentrifying and fast-growing economy and hosts hundreds of thousands of poor migrants, as well as vulnerable refugees in South Africa.⁵³ Secondly, data from the 2011 Census indicate that Western Cape had the country's highest number of foreign-born people.⁵⁴ Thirdly, in the 2015/16 fiscal year, the province of Western Cape accounted for the second largest number of migrant grant recipients after Gauteng Province.⁵⁵ Fourthly, the Western Cape has historically been the province that has had municipalities with the highest number of complaints about social grant rejection in South Africa.⁵⁶

Secondary data was collected from various literature sources, including textbooks, online journal articles, government publications and policy documents, and research reports from national and international organisations.

⁵³ Greg Ruiters, Felicia Lombard, and Denys Uwimpuhwe, "Turning a Blind Eye to African Refugees and Immigrants in a Tourist City: A Case-Study of Blame-Shifting in Cape Town," *African Human Mobility Review* 6, no. 1 (2020): 27–49.

⁵⁴ Africa Check, "Do 'Vast Numbers' of Refugee and Migrant Children Rely on SA Social Services?," 2016, <https://africacheck.org/reports/refugee-migrant-children-social-services/>.

⁵⁵ Africa Check, "Do 'Vast Numbers' of Refugee and Migrant Children Rely on SA Social Services?."

⁵⁶ StatsSA, *The State of Basic Service Delivery in South Africa: In-Depth Analysis of the Community Survey 2016 Data* (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2017).

A non-probabilistic sampling strategy was used to select all participants purposively or conveniently.⁵⁷ For household heads, 15 were initially purposively chosen as an entry point. The initial sample then suggested other potential participants that met the selection criterion (snowballing). Key informants were selected purposefully based on their expertise and availability. Focus group members were selected in a stratified manner. Efforts were made to include participants from various households with different characteristics – age, gender, nationalities, and types of social grants received.

Quantitative data from household heads was captured, coded and entered into the statistical software for social sciences (STATA version 14). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used for quantitative data. The descriptive statistics revolved around the socio-economic characteristics of migrant households. Since the study approached livelihood on multidimensions of poverty and vulnerability of migrants in South Africa, the dependent variable of livelihood outcome was disaggregated into six dimensions, namely: access to education, training and skills; access to employment and labour; access to accommodation and energy; access to healthcare services and facilities; access to food security and nutrition; and access to water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). These were considered the endpoints of the livelihood security system in humanitarian settings. The Pearson chi-square statistical tool was used to determine whether there is an association between each social grant and each livelihood outcome. At the same time, a logistic regression analysis was performed to determine the strengths and directions of the relationship between income from social grants and livelihood outcomes in migrant households.

Thematic data analysis – a strategy in which dominant aspects of the data are identified as themes was used for qualitative data.⁵⁸ The findings are then presented through summaries and direct quotations.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Impact of Social Grants on Migrant Livelihoods

Using the data contributed by the participants, four key themes emerged from the analysis. These themes revolved around the potential of social grants to protect and promote livelihoods. These themes are discussed in four sub-sections. The first sub-section focuses on the demographic details of participants.

Demographic Characteristics

The majority of the migrant participants in the study were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) (33.04%), followed by Rwanda (15.53%), Burundi (13.59%), Somalia (10.68%), Zimbabwe (7.77%), and Uganda (3.88%). The remainder of the sample, i.e., 15.51%, were from other nationalities, including Angola, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Eswatini, Lesotho, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, and Zambia. About 53.40% of the respondents were male, while 46.60% were female. Participants also received different types of grants, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Social grant types received by households

Grant Type		Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Child Support Grant	No	23	22.33	22.33
	Yes	80	77.67	100
	Total	103	100.00	
Care Dependency Grant				
	No	95	92.23	92.23
	Yes	8	7.77	100.00
	Total	103	100.00	100.00
Disability Grant				
	No	82	79.61	79.61
	Yes	21	20.39	100.00
	Total	103	100.00	
Old Age Grant				

⁵⁷ E. Ndhlovu, “Qualitative Data Collection under the ‘New Normal’ in Zimbabwe,” in *Researching in the Age of COVID-19: Response and Reassessment*, ed. H. Kara and S. Khoo, vol. 1 (Bristol University Press, 2020), 51–60.

⁵⁸ Mhlanga and Ndhlovu, “Explaining the Demand for Private Healthcare in South Africa.”

	No	86	83.50	83.50
	Yes	17	16.50	100.00
	<i>Total</i>	103	100.00	

Source: Nzabamwita.⁵⁹

Livelihoods Protection

The study found that social grants played a significant role in protecting migrant livelihoods in South Africa. All the participants in this study confirmed that social grants support household consumption and production, protecting household members against consumptive “*poverty and helps to generate better livelihoods*” (KI 2, 2019). Survey data also showed that more than 70% of participants confirmed that social grants protected their incomes and smoothed their consumption needs. Most of the household head participants (30.10%) confirmed that grants ensured resilience, survival, and adaptation of their households to the current environment; 21.36% felt that their households were struggling to cope with migration-related poverty, shocks, and vulnerability; 21.35% were extreme or ultra-poverty; 18.45% felt that their households were just poor; while the remaining 8.74% regarded themselves as better off. The CSG was the most received grant. Out of 103 households, the CSG was received by 77.67% of the households, DG (20.39%), the OAG (16.50%), and the CDG (7.77%). Overall, social grants enabled households to meet their basic needs. The survey also showed that grants helped to support households’ meagre budgets. One participant expressed it as follows:

Let me tell you something that you need to be made aware of. No matter how small the grant amount is, even the CSG is significant to us. It is an extra-something that enters our home, and we are grateful to the government of South Africa. This money is like manna from heaven to the Israelites. We use it for various purposes in our homes. Therefore, the grants help us overcome this (FG, 2019).

It was also revealed that social grants were stretched further to realise the consumption effect and maximise the household protection effect. Members of the FGD indicated that when a grant was received, migrant recipients used different strategies to make it last longer and sustain them until the next payday. One of the strategies mentioned was to prioritise the purchase of foodstuffs. This was narrated as follows:

Upon receipt of grant money or an SMS notification from the bank that my grant money has been deposited into my account, we must behave strategically. First, I rushed to the Epping market and visited various fruit and food stalls to buy groceries for the entire month. We usually buy from Epping, at the Taxi ranks, or on the sides of the roads because things from the supermarkets are often more expensive (FG, 2019).

It was also revealed that grants protected households against “*the pervasive effect of shocks and provided some form of income insurance that helped household members to navigate through short-term stress and calamities*” (HH 22, 2019). Key informants and members of the FG explained that in chronically poor and vulnerable households, such as those who are single, elderly, women, children, and disabled-headed, social grants provided guarantee and relief against deprivation in the face of livelihood shocks. For example, it was mentioned that in times of xenophobic violence and natural disasters such as storms, which usually result in the displacement of migrants to community centres or police stations, social grants remained the only stable household income which sheltered migrants from plunging into destitution and shattered livelihoods (FG, 2019). Key informants from NGOs also noted that social grants relieved their humanitarian efforts in difficult situations and reduced livelihood-threatening shocks for migrants (KI 4, 2019). This confirms the argument that social grants improved household security and were used to mitigate the impact and prevalence of vulnerability among migrants.⁶⁰

The study also shows that social grants offered protection “*against the sale of household productive assets [and] contributes to the creation of temporary employment*” (HH 14, 2019). For the former, social

⁵⁹ J. Nzabamwita, “International Migration and Social Welfare Policies: Assessing the Effect of Government Grants on the Livelihoods of Migrants in Cape Town, South Africa” (University of Cape Town, 2021), 157.

⁶⁰ Khan and Kolabhai, “Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa”; SASSA, “Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance.”

grants prevented members from trading away, selling off or liquidating their livelihood and productive assets such as household utensils to buy basic needs. Instead, household heads indicated that social grants enabled them to afford foodstuffs without selling their belongings (HH 36, 2019). By providing a larger resource buffer in the households, which they would have otherwise been unable to access, key informants argued that in the absence of social grants, migrants would have opted for negative coping strategies such as prostitution, drug consumption and peddling, pulling children out of schools, and stinting or cutting consumption (KI 3, 2019). FG members reported that social grants were invested in economically productive livelihood activities such as trading and hawking, thus releasing resources for productive investment. In the latter, social grants smoothened income streams and strengthened “*livelihood investment support for migrant entrepreneurs and provide an opportunity for investment in high-return activities and productive assets and entry into the informal sector*” (KI 4, 2019). According to the FGD members, the cash value of social grants enhanced the creation of temporary employment and loan acquisition and facilitated labour market engagement. In the reviewed literature, social grants enable migrant recipients to harness risks in more lucrative activities and businesses in the informal sector.⁶¹ Such transfers compensate for poor people’s lack of access to markets for insurance gains.

Social grants are seed or operating capital for small enterprises for new migrants or their immediate relatives. This was narrated in the following excerpts:

Many migrants were involved in the informal sector. Income from social grants is the only regular income. Because of the certainty and regularity of grants, migrant beneficiaries in the informal settlement strategise and use grant income to secure loans and credits, hire land for poultry, and recycle (HH 17, 2019).

Members of the FG noted that migrants used grants to inject liquidity into businesses. Social grant recipients indicated that they routinely saved their income from social grants through various informal mechanisms, including participating in small vending businesses (HH 29, 2019). This confirms previous studies that migrant grant recipients are diligent, productive, flexible and innovative.⁶² Migrants use their energy, skills, and limited resources to navigate their daily socioeconomic challenges of poverty and unemployment and earn their livelihoods.⁶³ Pathways to livelihood protection roles of social grants revolve around the effects grants have on poverty and consumption. Protection is fundamentally a response to poverty that ravages recipients’ households. In this regard, it was established that social grants also played myriad other minor roles in responding to poverty and helped to attack the source of poverty and deprivation.⁶⁴

The chi-square test results indicate that the CSG was significantly and statistically associated with access to education, skills and training ($\chi^2=11.0002$, $P=0.001$), access to healthcare services and facilities ($\chi^2=4.6941$, $P=0.030$), access to accommodation and energy ($\chi^2=5.5436$, $P=0.019$) and access to water, sanitation and hygiene ($\chi^2=9.4313$, $P=0.002$). There was also a significant relationship between the DG and access to education, skills and training ($\chi^2=5.4208$, $P=0.020$) and access to water, sanitation and hygiene ($\chi^2=10.2658$, $P=0.006$). Similarly, the OAG was significantly related to access to healthcare services and facilities ($\chi^2=5.2143$, $P=0.022$), access to accommodation and energy ($\chi^2=4.9933$, $P=0.025$), access to labour markets, and employment ($\chi^2=5.2160$, $P=0.022$), as well as access to water ($\chi^2=10.2658$, $P=0.001$), sanitation and hygiene ($\chi^2=10.2658$, $P=0.001$).

The data also showed that the CSG was the only social grant promoting all livelihood outcomes, excluding food security and nutrition access. This is not by a coincidence. Although the CSG is less in amount in comparison to other grants, its up-take rate in migrants was high (77.67%). The CSG also accounted for 70% of the grants disbursed in South Africa.⁶⁵ Furthermore, by targeting the lowest income

⁶¹ Fall and Steenkamp, “Building an Inclusive Social Protection System in South Africa.”

⁶² Köhler and Bhorat, “COVID-19, Social Protection and the Labour Market in South Africa: Are Social Grants Being Targeted at the Most Vulnerable?”; Odunitan-Wayas, Alaba, and Lambert, “Food Insecurity and Social Injustice: The Plight of Urban Poor African Immigrants in South Africa during the COVID-19 Crisis.”

⁶³ Varsha Maharaj et al., “Food Insecurity and Risk of Depression among Refugees and Immigrants in South Africa,” *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 19 (2017): 631–37; Zembe-Mkabile, “Social Protection and Care: Does the Child Support Grant Translate to Social Justice Outcomes for Female Beneficiaries Who Receive It on Behalf of Their Children?”

⁶⁴ Ginsburg et al., “The Impact of COVID-19 on a Cohort of Origin Residents and Internal Migrants from South Africa’s Rural Northeast.”

⁶⁵ StatsSA, *The State of Basic Service Delivery in South Africa: In-Depth Analysis of the Community Survey 2016 Data*.

and poorest households, the CSG is accredited for its multiple positive impacts, such as increasing assets for job-hunting,⁶⁶ reducing school dropout, improving enrolment, and grade promotion;⁶⁷ facilitating renting and leasing;⁶⁸ offering protection against risks and strengthening household resilience to shocks; as well as increasing productivity.⁶⁹

The important role played by social grants in migrant livelihoods is emphasised by many studies conducted around the world. For instance, the World Bank posits social grants account for an average of 10% of beneficiaries' consumption needs in low-income countries.⁷⁰ In South Africa, Khan and Kolabhai found that grant recipients invested their grant money to grow their income to meet and sustain their households' livelihood needs amid high poverty rates.⁷¹ Based on the literature and interviews, it can be concluded that social grants protect the livelihoods of migrants in Cape Town.

Livelihood Promotion

The study also found that social grants promoted migrant livelihoods. This was found when migrants could use their grants to engage in other income activities that allowed them to augment their grants. Scholars such as Devereux and Waidler argue that when short-term poverty consumption needs are met, direct cash transfers trigger second-order needs and satisfy the long-term developmental objectives of the recipients.⁷² In support of this hypothesis, this study found that income from social grants influenced the pursuit of other livelihoods means by migrants. Access to employment is one of the crucial dimensions of the livelihoods system. It is directly linked to the diversification of livelihoods since labour participation is essential for economic inclusion, resource acquisition and promotion of long-term self-sufficiency and sustainability.⁷³ Among migrants in South Africa, very few individuals are absorbed in the formal economy, while most are involved in businesses and income-generating activities in the informal sector.⁷⁴ About 83.5% revealed that social grants enabled them to access the labour market, while 16.5% indicated that grants did not affect labour access. The logistic regression coefficient of grants and labour participation was 1.238, and the p-value was 0.03. This shows that social grants are positively co-related with access to labour and employment. This positive relationship between grants and labour participation is disputed by scholars who posit that grants promote passivity and laziness and thwart beneficiaries' efforts to seek employment.⁷⁵

Key informants also reported that participants used grant income to access other income-generating activities that ranged from hairdressing (plaiting, braiding, and hair cutting), street trading and hawking, clothing and food vending, construction, mechanics, panel-beating and car repairs, car-guarding, parcel and food delivery, taxi, passenger transportation and asset removal businesses, and refuse collection and disposal. Focus group members revealed some females who received disability and old age grants were also involved in other livelihood activities, including small-scale backyard vegetable gardens or backyard farming and animal husbandry such as chicken-rearing, caring for the sick and patients in their homes, and caring for children when their parents were at work. Focusing on informal livelihood activities was due to the lack of documentation and segregation in the formal labour market. One participant reported this mentioned that:

Let me tell you my story; you will find it pitiful and stressful. I applied for a job in these big organisations and went through the interview process. When the time came to sign a contract of employment, I pulled out my A4 refugee status [document], which was about to expire, and

⁶⁶ Servaas Van der Berg, Krige Siebrits, and Bongisa Lekezwa, "Efficiency and Equity Effects of Social Grants in South Africa," 2010.

⁶⁷ Rochelle Beukes et al., "Exploring the Eligibility Criteria of the Child Support Grant and Its Impact on Poverty," *Social Indicators Research* 134 (2017): 511–29.

⁶⁸ Jonas Nzabamwita and Mulugeta Dinbabo, "International Migration and Social Protection in South Africa," *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2144134>.

⁶⁹ Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu et al., "Assessing the General Equilibrium Effect of Social Grants in South Africa," 2014.

⁷⁰ World Bank, "South Africa: Social Assistance Programs and Systems Review."

⁷¹ Khan and Kolabhai, "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa."

⁷² Devereux and Waidler, "Why Does Malnutrition Persist in South Africa despite Social Grants."

⁷³ StatsSA, *The State of Basic Service Delivery in South Africa: In-Depth Analysis of the Community Survey 2016 Data*.

⁷⁴ Nzabamwita, "African Migrants' Characteristics and Remittance Behaviour: Empirical Evidence from Cape Town in South Africa."

⁷⁵ Köhler and Bhorat, "COVID-19, Social Protection and the Labour Market in South Africa: Are Social Grants Being Targeted at the Most Vulnerable?"

they asked, 'What type of document is this and who issued it?' I replied that it was my identification document, and the DHA issued it. They then denied me employment on that basis. Since then, I have decided to become self-employed and never applied for a job in SA again (HH 49, 2019).

Despite having academic and professional qualifications, other participants attributed their motive to pursue income-generating activities in the informal sector to poverty, lack, desperation, fear of hunger, and wanting to complement their income from social grants and afford their basic needs. One participant narrated that:

Although I have diplomas and degrees from my home country and extensive experience in many industries, my qualifications cannot put food on the table. So, out of desperation and hunger, I had to initiate something to bring in money, so I bought the horse I use in the scrap metal collection, which I sell to the recycling companies (HH 86, 2019).

The focus group members mentioned that migrants engaged in the informal sector for investment purposes, where grant money was invested in the expectation of more significant returns. Two FG participants mentioned that:

Of course, we receive paltry social grants from the SASSA, but one cannot sit and cross their hands and wait for the government to provide everything. One needs to improvise to avoid being a total burden to the State. The reason is that social grant money must be invested to generate more shortly (FG, 2019).

Even in the Bible, it is clearly stated that if a person is entrusted with one talent, he or she must invest it so that it generates many more in the future. So, we invest our social grant money to make a profit and survive (FG, 2019).

One key informant also mentioned that:

Foreign nationals usually compete with SA citizens for few jobs in the formal labour market. In many cases, non-citizens are not fluent in English or are sometimes discriminated against by employers who do not recognise qualifications obtained outside of South Africa (KI, 2019).

Overall, the study found that reasons pushing migrants to pursue livelihoods in the informal sector include insufficient money from social grants, lack of proper documents, deprivation, poverty and desperation, xenophobia and discrimination, preferences for South African citizens, closedness of the labour market to foreigners, language and communication problems. Reviewed literature revealed that ecological, social, economic, and political environments in the country of immigration force foreign migrants to behave more rationally like strategic managers and pursue certain kinds of livelihood activities in challenging circumstances.⁷⁶

Improved access to Education and Training

Access to education and training is an essential livelihood dimension closely connected to the livelihood security system. Education, training, and skills significantly and positively contribute to human capital development, enabling poor households to access various livelihood resources and become self-reliant.⁷⁷ About 83.5 household head participants confirmed that social grants improved access to education and training, while 16.5% reported no impact. The logistic regression results showed a coefficient of .310 and a p-value of 0.04 for grants and education. There is a positive relationship between income from grants and access to education. A percentage increase in the revenue from the social grants would lead to a 31% chance of attending schools and acquiring new skills and training. However, since the p-value of 0.04 was less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the relationship between social grants and access to education was statistically significant. This is supported by previous studies that found that social grants

⁷⁶ Rachel Sabates-Wheeler, "Mapping Differential Vulnerabilities and Rights: 'Opening' Access to Social Protection for Forcibly Displaced Populations," *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 38.

⁷⁷ E. Ndhlovu, "An Analysis of Household Livelihoods under the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe" (University of South Africa, 2017); Emmanuel Ndhlovu, "Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme," *Africa Insight* 47, no. 4 (2018): 83–98.

provided material and financial support which enhanced household members' capabilities required for educational development through the payment of school fees and the purchase of school uniforms and equipment.⁷⁸

Receipt of social grants is associated with elevated educational outputs (increased school enrolments and attendance and reduced dropout level) and improved academic outcomes (raised performance levels). The impact of income from social grants on education outputs was reported by participants from migrant households that received the CSGs and OAGs. They noted that receiving grants facilitated their household members to access educational and training facilities and enabled their children to attend schools. According to the heads of households, a few months into the programmes, they were empowered to purchase school uniforms, stationary materials and other supplies for their children. One respondent reflected thus:

In our township, children must attend school, not only because it is required of us by the SASSA for the child to continue receiving the social grant but because we want a better future for our children. When a child is taken care of by the State, that child must also be educated so that he/she can contribute to the country later in life (HH 59, 2019).

In addition, participants from the FGD, especially those from households that received the OAG and the DG, reported that social grants empowered them to buy school items for their children and provide them with transport money to school and healthy meals before going to school.

These findings, which show that social grants enable migrants to access education, acquire new skills, and improve academic performance, are in congruity with the results of the research on CSG conducted among South Africans. Scholars such as Armstrong and Burger and Beukes et al. found that the CSG plays a significant role in children's access to education.⁷⁹ These findings also correspond with those of studies conducted in Ghana, Brazil, and Peru where social grants facilitated access to educational and training institutions, thus contributing to the promotion of human capital development.⁸⁰

Better Access to Healthcare Services

The study found that social grants improved access to healthcare facilities, with 75.49% of the respondents using public hospitals and government clinics, 22.27% consulting traditional healers, and only 2.34% using private healthcare facilities. Access to healthcare services and facilities is associated with livelihood enhancement and promotion. This is because proxy indicators such as the use of health facilities are potential driving forces for sustainable livelihoods, particularly when other physical resources have been made easily accessible (Nzabamwita & Dinbabo, 2022). About 71.61% of household head participants indicated that social grants allowed them to access healthcare services and facilities. Logistic regression results of social grants and healthcare revealed a coefficient of .190 and a p-value of 0.00. The p-value of 0.00 was less than the significance level of 0.05. Therefore, a positive coefficient implies that social grants predict access to healthcare facilities and services. One FG participant advised that:

The importance of social grants in our health should not be underestimated. I need to consult my traditional doctor at least once a month. I must borrow money from my child's social grant for transport and doctor's payments (FG, 2019).

Previous studies confirmed the relationship between grants and access to healthcare and argued that social grants benefited not only the targeted recipients but entire households.⁸¹ In addition, besides increasing

⁷⁸ Khan and Kolabhai, "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa"; Niyitunga, "Xenophobia: A Hindrance Factor to South Africa's Ambition of Becoming a Developmental State."

⁷⁹ Armstrong and Burger, "Poverty, Inequality and the Role of Social Grants: An Analysis Using Decomposition Techniques"; Beukes et al., "Exploring the Eligibility Criteria of the Child Support Grant and Its Impact on Poverty."

⁸⁰ Callistus Agbaam and Mulugeta F Dinbabo, "Social Grants and Poverty Reduction at the Household Level: Empirical Evidence from Ghana," *Journal of Social Sciences* 39, no. 3 (2014): 293–302; Nicola Jones, Rosana Vargas, and Eliana Villar, "Cash Transfers to Tackle Childhood Poverty and Vulnerability: An Analysis of Peru's Juntos Programme," *Environment and Urbanization* 20, no. 1 (2008): 255–73; Gala Diaz Langou, "Validating One of the World's Largest Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes. A Case Study on How an Impact Evaluation of Brazil's Bolsa Família Programme Helped Silence Its Critics and Improve Policy," *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 5, no. 4 (2013): 430–46..

⁸¹ Devereux, "Is Targeting Ethical?"; Fall and Steenkamp, "Building an Inclusive Social Protection System in South Africa"; Khan and Kolabhai, "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa."

investment in health in grant beneficiary households, frequenting healthcare facilities and utilising healthcare services such as child immunisation is a soft condition for receiving the CSG in South Africa.⁸²

Discussion Summary

This article explored the impact of social grants on migrant household livelihoods in Cape Town, South Africa. It shows that although insufficient, the social grants given to migrants wield enormous positive implications for their livelihoods, including improving livelihood quality, diversification of livelihoods, and safeguarding livelihoods. Social grants also motivated households to enrol their children in schools and other institutions of learning and training and improved access to healthcare facilities, accommodation, and sanitation. Through grants, migrants were empowered to engage in various economic activities, including hairdressing, street trading and hawking, clothing and food vending, construction, mechanics, panel-beating and car repairs, car-guarding, parcel and food delivery, taxi, passenger transportation and asset removal businesses, and refuse collection and disposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To enhance the role of social grants in protecting and promoting migrant livelihoods, proactive steps to maximise the role and impact include increasing the payment level/value of CSG social grants, providing financial literacy and training on entrepreneurship, and linking social grants with other services. Although the Department of Social Development (DSD) adjusts the amount of social grants annually, the increases have not kept up with inflation, which has risen faster than the grants.

Social grants also need to be linked with other social services. Beneficiaries should be linked to other complimentary livelihood support programs and services. The DSD should harmonise social grants with other livelihood programmes and integrate them with wide-ranging interventions such as the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). Grants should also be accompanied by training to run a successful informal business. In essence, being a beneficiary of social grants should be a criterion for qualifying for NSFAS. SASSA must remove citizenship criteria that prevent deserving refugees from accessing other services.

Interventions should also include providing beneficiaries with financial literacy and entrepreneurship training. Most of the refugees in this study could not budget or plan for future expenses. Even those running small businesses could not articulate their gross or net income. They also needed to keep records of payments. Developing financial literacy, including entrepreneurship, marketing and pricing, would enhance refugees' success in operating small businesses and managing budgets so they could at least plan for anticipated expenses, such as rent.

Social protection should also be linked to national service providers. Local government agencies, such as the Social Development Department and Gauteng Enterprise Propeller, offer business development services and activities that improve cooperation. However, these are not available to migrants.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the impact of social grants on migrant livelihoods in South Africa. It shows that although South Africa prides itself on a clear and robust social protection framework, migrants continue to face myriad challenges that threaten their lives and livelihoods. Unlike social protection beneficiaries with citizenship status, such as the South African urban poor, migrants in South Africa do not have access to other social services to help them develop and sustain their livelihoods. The study posits that the added challenges migrant populations face compared to the urban poor often require diverse interventions to address economic and non-economic constraints. Migrants should be connected to services, either in the formal or informal sector, that target their skills and economic vulnerability based on their poverty level. Impoverished households should receive material support for immediate needs and longer-term investments in financial services. Struggling and above-average households require opportunities for small business growth through job training, business development services, market linkages and access to

⁸² Nzabamwita and Dinbabo, "International Migration and Social Protection in South Africa."

microfinance. All wealth groups need access to savings and micro-insurance products, which help to manage risk and reduce reliance on harmful coping strategies.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abramo, Laís, Simone Cecchini, and Beatriz Morales. "Social Programmes, Poverty Eradication and Labour Inclusion." *Lessons from Latin America and the Caribbean*. Santiago: CEPAL, 2019.
- Addae, David, and Kofi Poku Quan-Baffour. "Afrophobia, 'Black on Black' Violence and the New Racism in South Africa: The Nexus between Adult Education and Mutual Co-Existence." *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2130458>.
- Adetoro, A A, M S C Ngidi, and Gideon Danso-Abbeam. "Towards the Global Zero Poverty Agenda: Examining the Multidimensional Poverty Situation in South Africa." *SN Social Sciences* 3, no. 9 (2023): 148.
- Africa Check. "Do 'Vast Numbers' of Refugee and Migrant Children Rely on SA Social Services? ," 2016. <https://africacheck.org/reports/refugee-migrant-children-social-services/>.
- African Union. "The First Session of the AU Conference of Ministers in Charge of Social Development Windhoek, Namibia ," October 2008. https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30218-doc-social_policy_framework_for_africa_-_final_-_18_nov_2008.pdf.
- Agbaam, Callistus, and Mulugeta F Dinbabo. "Social Grants and Poverty Reduction at the Household Level: Empirical Evidence from Ghana." *Journal of Social Sciences* 39, no. 3 (2014): 293–302.
- Aguero, Juan., Carter, M. Robert., and Woolard, Ingrid. The impact of unconditional cash transfers on nutrition: the South African child support grant. International Poverty Centre, *Working Paper no. 39* (2007), 1–25.
- Armstrong, Paula, and Cobus Burger. "Poverty, Inequality and the Role of Social Grants: An Analysis Using Decomposition Techniques." *University of Stellenbosch, Cape Town*, 2009.
- Berg, Servaas Van der, Krige Siebrits, and Bongisa Lekezwa. "Efficiency and Equity Effects of Social Grants in South Africa," 2010.
- Beukes, Rochelle, Ada Jansen, Mariana Moses, and Derek Yu. "Exploring the Eligibility Criteria of the Child Support Grant and Its Impact on Poverty." *Social Indicators Research* 134 (2017): 511–29.
- Bhorat, H, and A. Thorton. "The Employment Tax Incentive in South Africa: A Brief Assessment of the Initial Impact." .Development Policy Research Unit; University of Cape Town, 2016.
- Bhorat, Haroon, Ravi Kanbur, and Benjamin Stanwix. "Estimating the Impact of Minimum Wages on Employment, Wages, and Non-wage Benefits: The Case of Agriculture in South Africa." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 96, no. 5 (2014): 1402–19.
- Burton-Jeangros, Claudine, Aline Duvoisin, Sarah Lachat, Liala Consoli, Julien Fakhoury, and Yves Jackson. "The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Lockdown on the Health and Living Conditions of Undocumented Migrants and Migrants Undergoing Legal Status Regularization." *Frontiers in Public Health* 8 (2020): 596887.
- Carlitz, Ruth D, and Moraka N Makhura. "Life under Lockdown: Illustrating Tradeoffs in South Africa's Response to COVID-19." *World Development* 137 (2021): 105168.
- Chatterjee, Aroop, Léo Czajka, and Amory Gethin. *Estimating the Distribution of Household Wealth in South Africa*. Vol. 2020. UNU-WIDER, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2020/802-3>.
- Chitiga-Mabugu, Margaret, Ramos Mabugu, Ismaël Fofana, B Abidoeye, and Vandudzai Mbanda. "Assessing the General Equilibrium Effect of Social Grants in South Africa," 2014.
- Coetze, M. "Finding the Benefits: Estimating the Impact of the South African Child Support Grant." *South African Journal of Economics*, 81(3), 427-450. 81, no. 3 (2013): 427–50.
- Crush, J., and G. Tawodzela. "Migration and Food Security in South Africa: Zimbabwean Migrants in Urban South Africa." *AFSUN Food Security Series* 23 (2016).
- Department of Social Development. *Comparison of Social Grant Recipients in South Africa from 1994 to 2020*. Pretoria: Department of Social Development, 2021.
- Devereux, S, and J Waidler. "Why Does Malnutrition Persist in South Africa despite Social Grants." *Food Security South Africa Working Paper Series* 1 (2017).
- Devereux, Stephen. "Is Targeting Ethical?" *Global Social Policy* 16, no. 2 (2016): 166–81.

- Diaz Langou, Gala. "Validating One of the World's Largest Conditional Cash Transfer Programmes. A Case Study on How an Impact Evaluation of Brazil's Bolsa Família Programme Helped Silence Its Critics and Improve Policy." *Journal of Development Effectiveness* 5, no. 4 (2013): 430–46.
- Fall, Falilou, and Andre Steenkamp. "Building an Inclusive Social Protection System in South Africa," 2020.
- Felix, J. "SONA 2023: Poverty Deepening so R350 Social Relief of Distress Grant Will Continue, Says President Ramaphosa." News24, 2023. <https://www.news24.com/news24/southafrica/news/sona-2023-poverty-deepening-so-r350-social-relief-of-distress-grant-will-continue-says-ramaphosa-20230209>.
- Gebrekidan, Desawi Kiros, Abate Mekuriaw Bizuneh, and John Cameron. "Determinants of Multidimensional Poverty among Rural Households in Northern Ethiopia." *Journal of Rural and Community Development* 16, no. 1 (2021).
- Ginsburg, Carren, Mark A Collinson, F Xavier Gómez-Olivé, Sadson Harawa, Chantel F Pheiffer, and Michael J White. "The Impact of COVID-19 on a Cohort of Origin Residents and Internal Migrants from South Africa's Rural Northeast." *SSM-Population Health* 17 (2022): 101049.
- Jones, Nicola, Rosana Vargas, and Eliana Villar. "Cash Transfers to Tackle Childhood Poverty and Vulnerability: An Analysis of Peru's Juntos Programme." *Environment and Urbanization* 20, no. 1 (2008): 255–73.
- Khan, Fatima, and Mikhail Kolabhai. "Bureaucratic Barriers to Social Protection for Refugees and Asylum Seekers during the COVID-19 Disaster in South Africa." *African Human Mobility Review* 7, no. 2 (2021).
- Köhler, Tim, and Haroon Bhorat. "COVID-19, Social Protection and the Labour Market in South Africa: Are Social Grants Being Targeted at the Most Vulnerable?," 2020.
- Maharaj, Varsha, Andrew Tomita, Lindokuhle Thela, Mpho Mhlongo, and Jonathan K Burns. "Food Insecurity and Risk of Depression among Refugees and Immigrants in South Africa." *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health* 19 (2017): 631–37.
- Mhlanga, David, and Emmanuel Ndhlovu. "Explaining the Demand for Private Healthcare in South Africa." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Economics and Business Law* 10, no. 2 (2021): 98–118.
- Mlambo, Victor H, Xolani Thusi, Mandisa Sunshine Melanie Makhathini, Sbonelo Gift Ndlovu, and Muzi Shoba. "Undocumented Migration, Xenophobia and The Struggle for Employment in South Africa." *JISR Management and Social Sciences & Economics* 21, no. 3 (2023): 118–35.
- Napier, Carin, Wilna Oldewage-Theron, and Beryl Makhaye. "Predictors of Food Insecurity and Coping Strategies of Women Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Durban, South Africa." *Agriculture & Food Security* 7, no. 1 (December 25, 2018): 67. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40066-018-0220-2>.
- Ndhlovu, E. "An Analysis of Household Livelihoods under the Fast-Track Land Reform Programme in Chiredzi, Zimbabwe ." University of South Africa, 2017.
- . "Qualitative Data Collection under the 'New Normal' in Zimbabwe' ." In *Researching in the Age of COVID-19: Response and Reassessment*, edited by H. Kara and S. Khoo, 1:51–60. Bristol University Press, 2020.
- Ndhlovu, Emmanuel. "Relevance of Sustainable Livelihood Approach in Zimbabwe's Land Reform Programme." *Africa Insight* 47, no. 4 (2018): 83–98.
- Ndhlovu, Emmanuel. Social Protection Instruments and Strategies in Southern Africa. *International Journal of Innovation in Management Economics and Social Sciences*, (2024) 4(2), 44-59.
- Niyitunga, Eric Blanco. "Xenophobia: A Hindrance Factor to South Africa's Ambition of Becoming a Developmental State." *Frontiers in Human Dynamics* 6 (May 3, 2024). <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2024.1337423>.
- Ntseane, D., and K. Solo. *Social Security and Social Protection in Botswana*. Gaborone: Bay Publishing, 2007.
- Nzabamwita, J. "International Migration and Social Welfare Policies: Assessing the Effect of Government Grants on the Livelihoods of Migrants in Cape Town, South Africa." University of Cape Town, 2021.

- Nzabamwita, Jonas. "African Migrants' Characteristics and Remittance Behaviour: Empirical Evidence from Cape Town in South Africa." *African Human Mobility Review* 4, no. 2 (2018): 1226–54.
- Nzabamwita, Jonas, and Mulugeta Dinbabo. "International Migration and Social Protection in South Africa." *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2144134>.
- Odunitan-Wayas, Feyisayo A, Olufunke A Alaba, and Estelle V Lambert. "Food Insecurity and Social Injustice: The Plight of Urban Poor African Immigrants in South Africa during the COVID-19 Crisis." *Global Public Health* 16, no. 1 (2021): 149–52.
- RSA. "South African Social Security Agency (SASSA). You and Your Grants 2020/2021. Social Grant Booklet in English," 2020. <https://www.sassa.gov.za/publications/Documents/You and Your Grants 2020 - English.pdf>.
- . "Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG). DSD, SASSA/NDA on COVID19 Challenges and Responses with the Minister," 2020. <https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/31591/>.
- Ruiters, Greg, Felicia Lombard, and Denys Uwimpuhwe. "Turning a Blind Eye to African Refugees and Immigrants in a Tourist City: A Case-Study of Blame-Shifting in Cape Town." *African Human Mobility Review* 6, no. 1 (2020): 27–49.
- Sabates-Wheeler, Rachel. "Mapping Differential Vulnerabilities and Rights: 'Opening' Access to Social Protection for Forcibly Displaced Populations." *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 1 (2019): 38.
- SASSA. "Statistical Report 2023/4: Eleventh Social Assistance." Department of Social Development, 2024.
- StatsSA. *The State of Basic Service Delivery in South Africa: In-Depth Analysis of the Community Survey 2016 Data*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2017.
- . "Quarterly Labour Force Survey." *Media Release*, 2022. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0211/Media release QLFS Q4 2021.pdf>.
- World Bank. "Poverty and Equity Brief: Sub-Saharan Africa." *South Africa*, April 2020.
- . "South Africa: Social Assistance Programs and Systems Review." *World Bank*, 2021.
- World Economic Forum. "Global Gender Gap Report." Insight Report, 2022. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2022.pdf.
- Zembe-Mkabile, Wanga. "Social Protection and Care: Does the Child Support Grant Translate to Social Justice Outcomes for Female Beneficiaries Who Receive It on Behalf of Their Children?" *South African Journal of Science* 118, no. 9/10 (September 29, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2022/14688>.

ABOUT AUTHORS

Jonas Nzabamwita holds a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Western Cape, South Africa. He is a Senior Research Fellow at the DSI-NRF South African Research Chair Industrial Development, at the School of Economics, the University of Johannesburg in South Africa. He also teaches economics and international development courses at the University of Lay Adventists of Kigali. Jonas has worked for various development organizations in refugee camps in Tanzania and has volunteered in numerous refugee and migrant communities of Zambia, Uganda, Malawi, and South Africa. His research interests cover a wide range of topics, including migration and remittances, social protection, food security and poverty, informal economy, and other areas of macroeconomics and labour economics.

Emmanuel Ndhlovu holds a PhD in Development Studies from the University of South Africa, South Africa. He is currently a Research Fellow within the College of Business and Economics at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. His research interests cover a wide range of development topics including political economy, land reform, food systems, agriculture peasant livelihoods, and social protection. Emmanuel has published numerous journal articles and book chapters and has co-edited eight books.