

Registration and payments in the INAS-IP social protection programmes for emergency response^{1,2}

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The National Social Action Institute (INAS-IP) is the institution within the Government of Mozambique responsible for planning and implementing basic social security programmes aimed at reducing vulnerabilities of poor households and taking measures to respond to emergencies, mainly through cash transfers, especially via the Direct Social Support Programme Post-Emergency (PASD-PE).

The implementation of social protection programmes in response to shocks is provided and highlighted in the National Strategy for Basic Social Security (ENSSB 2016-2024). The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action (MGCAS), together with INAS-IP and the National Institute for Disaster Risk Management and Reduction (INGD), have prepared an Operations Manual for the PASD-PE that details the programme's objectives, its entry points, the beneficiary selection methods, and benefit amounts—temporarily in force and subject to adjustments, depending on the nature of the emergency and the country's socio-economic conditions.

Since 2017, PASD-PE has been activated to mitigate the effects of calamities in poor and vulnerable households. It was used as a response to: (i) the effects of the El Niño drought in the province of Gaza; (ii) the Idai and Kenneth cyclones in the provinces of Sofala, Manica and Cabo Delgado; and (iii) the COVID-19 pandemic in a nation-wide response.

In recent years, significant innovations and pilots of new implementation tools were put in place. During PASD-PE Lean Season, which started in 2019, payments of cash benefits were delivered through mobile ATMs, based on a contract with the Mozsecurity-Paycode consortium to carry out the biometric registration of beneficiaries. In the Sofala province, after the Idai cyclone (2019), lists of beneficiaries were optimised based on existing data and registries, such as INGD lists that were being used in the Beira district. Moreover, there was an improvement in the geographic targeting of the COVID-19 response that used poverty data from the 2017 Population Census, prioritising higher-risk urban and semi-urban areas.

The PASD-PE COVID-19 can be considered a potential driving force to expand and structure Mozambique's National Social Protection System and improve its shock response capacity. In addition to consolidating a significant coverage expansion of the System of Information on Beneficiaries (SIB), linked to INAS-IP's Social Registry (e-INAS), the pandemic response allowed the Government of Mozambique to consolidate the transition from manual payments to more digital mechanisms, such as the Offline Payment Application (OPA), which allows for better control through the registration of beneficiaries'

biometric data. In the Provinces of Maputo, Zambézia, Tete and Cabo Delgado electronic transfers were carried out through mobile wallets, using Vodacom/M-PESA, which allows for greater transparency and reconciliation capacity for INAS-IP payments at the national level.

Despite all this progress, there are still technical and structural challenges to ensure timely implementation of emergency programmes. For example, a delay was observed in establishing contracts with service providers, mainly in the financial sector—pre-established contracts are necessary for fast payment activation and facilitation during an emergency. Also, there is still progress to be made regarding matching the supply of financial service providers to the target groups of social protection programmes, namely vulnerable households—often lacking official identification documentation or located in remote areas. Additionally, the expansion of mobile networks and bank tellers will be crucial to consolidate digital payments for social protection and the financial inclusion of beneficiaries, especially in semi-urban and rural areas.

Finally, there persists a need to expand inter-institutional coordination mechanisms for planning and implementing social protection programmes, mainly between the INAS-IP and INGD, and to expand databases to include households located in areas prone to calamities to allow for a faster activation humanitarian assistance and social protection programmes.

One of the opportunities identified within the experiences and lessons learned from PASD-PE COVID-19's implementation is the increase in investments to digitalise the administrative processes of the Social Action sector, for both beneficiary registration (SIB and e-INAS) and payment of cash transfers. This promotes gains for beneficiaries with improved security and increased financial inclusion opportunities, in addition to more transparency and celerity in programme accountability processes.

References:

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Note:

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