

From Paper to Electronic Records: How MIS Contributes to Improved Outcomes?

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Business Services offered by a good MIS

- A good electronic MIS: backbone of a well-functioning social protection program
- It can provide services to the program at every step in the service delivery chain:
 - identification and enrollment of potentially eligible beneficiaries;
 - storage of beneficiary information in a database system;
 - validation or checks of eligibility through cross-checks with other databases or registries;
 - derivation of lists for payment purposes;
 - production of reports to inform policy making;
 - registration of complaints and follow-up; and case management

Transition from paper to electronic MIS-es in ECA region

- Gradual process:
 - pensions; unemployment benefits – cca 1990'
 - social assistance – after 2000'
 - Incomplete MIS system in many countries: electronic system from Center to Regions
 - Paper-based MIS from Regions to Frontline units
- Results of the implementation studies of paper-based MIS-es in social assistance programs:
 - Worked relatively well
 - Social assistance programs without electronic MIS'es were quite good at targeting the poor; or covering other vulnerable groups

Why migrate to electronic MIS-es?

Reduces transactions costs to beneficiaries.

Reduce the private costs of beneficiaries associated with eligibility determination or recertification.

Documentation required for eligibility criteria poses a high time cost by the beneficiary in obtaining the certifications and complying with this requirement, compounded by the obligation by all family members to appear physically to certify and sign. These costs can be reduced if the program MIS is either a part of, or communicates with, other public databases that can supply some of this information already stored elsewhere and thus free applicants of the need to reproduce it.

Reduces transaction costs to government

Improves the process of verification of information supplied by beneficiaries by reducing the cost and extending the scope of information cross-checks across different public databases.

For example, the Ndihma Ekonomike (NE) program in Albania uses a complex system of cross-verification of information in paper-based systems, relying on exchanging letters with different agencies that hold information on formal incomes, assets, or family composition. This process works but is only partial, takes significant administrative resources, and has a significant response time. Cross-checking through manual verification sometimes takes more than the allowed 10 days, resulting in the beneficiary not receiving the benefit until the following month.

An electronic MIS reduces the response time, increase the coverage of the cross-checking process to the whole caseload, and transform this effort from an ad hoc response to a routine process.

Why migrate to electronic MIS-es?

Facilitates planning, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation

Paper-and-pencil systems make production of statistics and reports and aggregation of information needed to constantly track program performance and identify trouble spots in a timely fashion so that the management can take corrective actions difficult and time consuming.

Reduces the level of error and fraud in the program by reducing substantially the cost of detecting irregularities in eligibility status

Increased use of data matching on files allows social protection administrators to target scarce detection resources (for example, fraud investigators or social inspectors) on those cases with the highest probability of fraud.

A cost/benefit analysis of the data-matching activity of the Department for Work and Pensions in the United Kingdom estimated that for every pound (£) invested in data matching, the automated system identifies £24 of irregularities (NAO 2008). This highlights the point that investment in ICT can be cost-effective in the longer run (NAO 2006).

ICT is thus becoming an increasingly important enabler for improving governance not only by reducing the risks of EFC, but also by improving access to information and facilitating beneficiary feedback. Some of the countries in our sample—Armenia, Lithuania, and Romania—have already made significant steps in this direction.

Typical business functions of an MIS for social assistance program(s)

Module	Business services provided
Application / Eligibility Determination	Determines which families are eligible for the program. It provides system functions for data entry, validation, and creation of a database with information for program beneficiaries, including the following: (a) family demographics; (b) education; (c) employment; (d) dwelling, utility, and durable goods; (e) household assets; (f) social protection benefits received; and (g) income sources. Typically contains active as well as former beneficiaries
Benefit level and payment stream	Uses the information supplied by applicants and eligibility rules of the program to determine whether an applicant is eligible or not and his or her benefit level. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• For the Armenia Family Benefits Program, for example, this module computes the household poverty score based on household consumption and income characteristics.• For the Romania GMI, it computes the reported per capita income of the household, applies different asset filters (exclusion criteria), and then computes the benefit level as the difference between the household-specific GMI and per capita income.

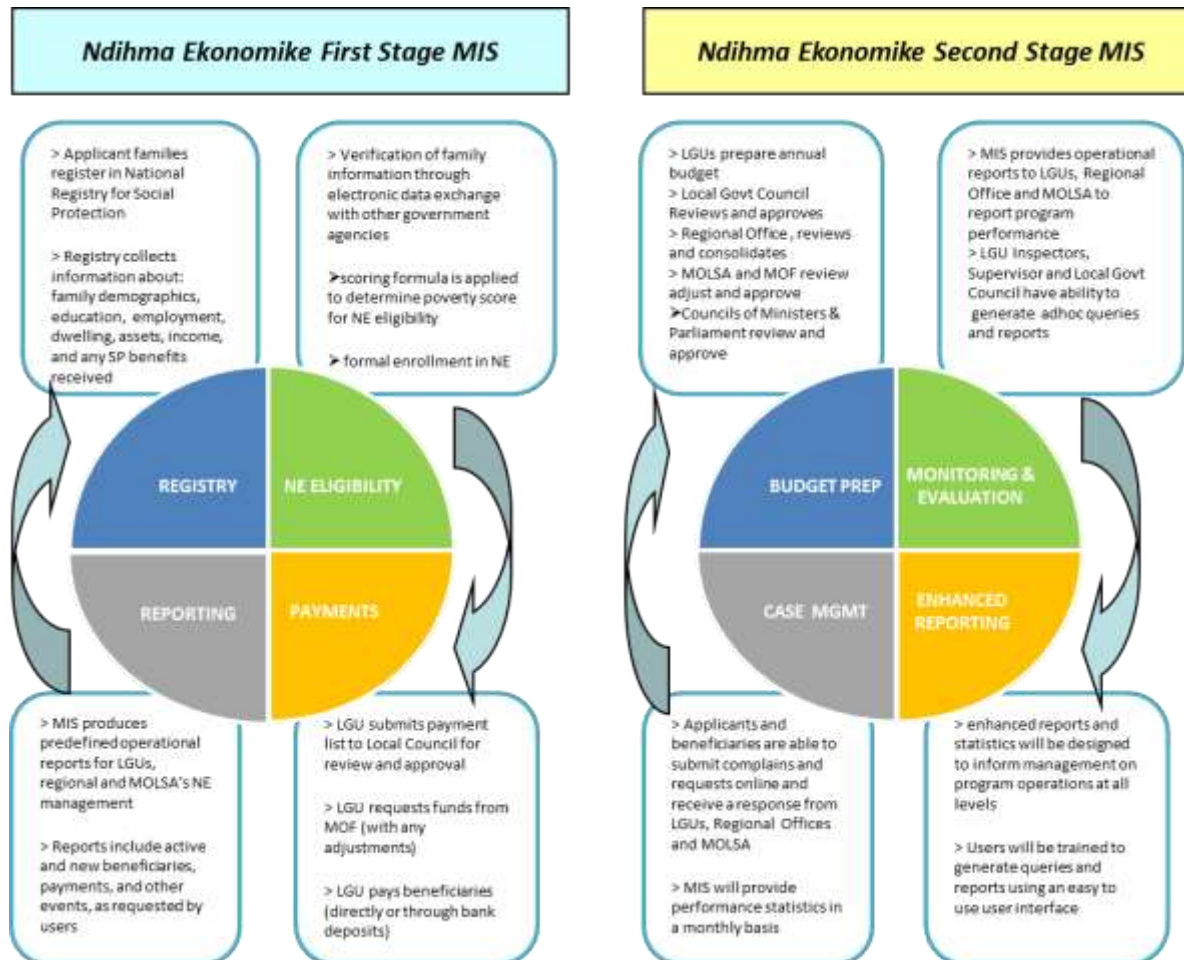
Typical business functions of an MIS for social assistance program(s)

Module	Business services provided
Payments	Provides a number of functions to accomplish the complete payment business process. The process begins with identification of households eligible to receive the (monthly) payment. A listing of families and payment amount detailing specific payment items as well as identification information is generated and submitted both to the payment agency for review and approval and to the payment agents (post offices, banks, and treasury).
Reporting / Operational level	Operational reports are designed and developed to support the administrative, financial, and management processes and activities of the program. These reports typically include listings of active beneficiaries at local government, regional, and national levels; monthly, quarterly, and annual payments; beneficiaries by age groups, by gender, and in general, by any classification based on stored data. The reports could also include statistical data as required by users.
Appeals and complaints	Manages issues presented by beneficiaries which may concern payments, errors, service quality, family changes, questions, and even reports of fraud or misuse of program funds.

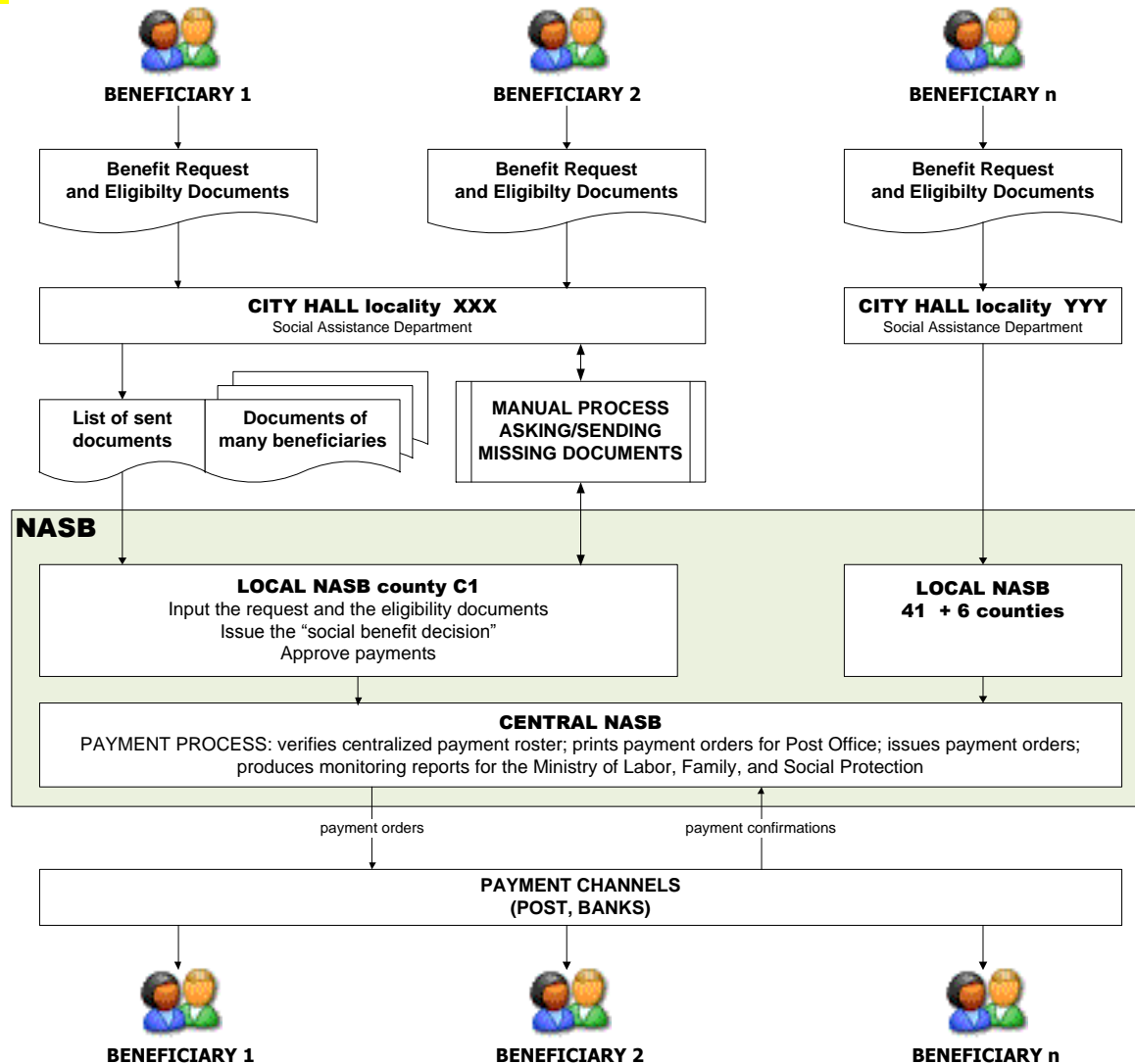
Typical business functions of an MIS for social assistance program(s)

Module	Business services provided
Case management	Enables front-line units to collect and process various types of events, requests, and related communication with beneficiaries as they submit complaints or problems associated with service delivery from the program. The MIS maintains an interactive case management database to manage individual beneficiary cases that require a follow-up or action by program.
Monitoring	This module generates program performance information, including beneficiary enrollment increase or decrease, payment and use of program funds, families that exited the program, estimated poverty reduction impact, and so on.
Control of error and fraud	Supports detection of error and fraud. documents how the sample of cases has been selected; the results of each review or inspections; the remedial recommendations and sanctions applied; the amount of over- and under-payments; and then follows up on the recommendations after a number of months.

Modular approach of migrating from paper to electronic MIS – Albania Nidhma Ekonomike program



Example of an Integrated Social Assistance MIS, Romania, cca 2012



Few lessons for migration from paper to electronic MIS-es

- **First**, no MIS is ever “ready”; it is always a work in progress.
 - After the initial development in 2009, the Romanian MIS had to be updated yearly, to accommodate changes in the program parameters and to add new programs or new business modules. Similarly, the Albanian MIS was developed in steps, with few core modules developed in the first phase and other modules in a second phase.
- **Second**, using the MIS information and improving the quality and accuracy of that information follow each other in a virtuous circle.
 - The demands for information from operational and policy-level management have expanded over time, and with them the database administrators have detected and corrected codes that were inadequate (that is, different coding for the same variable across regions) or aberrant values resulting from poor data entry or other causes
- **Third**, adequate technical support for maintenance and development is a prerequisite for efficient use of an MIS.