

## Ten Things You Should Know About Social Registries

1. Social registries are both ***inclusion systems*** and ***information systems***.
2. As ***inclusion systems***, the primary function of social registries is to provide a “gateway” for people (individuals, families) to register and be considered for potential inclusion in one or more social programs based on an assessment of their needs and conditions. That assessment usually takes into account measures of socio-economic status, categorical factors or a combination of both, which are often factors used by programs in prioritizing eligibility for benefits and services.
3. More specifically, from a functional perspective, social registries support the **implementation phases** of outreach, intake & registration, and assessment of needs and conditions to determine potential eligibility for inclusion in selected social program(s).
4. Some social registries support ***dynamic inclusion***, meaning that access to registration is open and continuous, usually via a combination of on-demand applications plus active outreach to vulnerable populations. In countries where social programs are relatively new, coverage is small, fiscal space is constrained, and administrative capacity is limited, registration and updating are carried out less frequently, usually with significant time lapses between “census sweeps.” The risk of this more static approach is rising errors of exclusion and inclusion with the passage of time, as the information becomes out of date.
5. Many countries use “***integrated social registries***” to serve as gateways for registration and eligibility for multiple programs – not just one. This can have the advantages of reducing burden on citizens who don’t have to apply for numerous benefits and services separately, reducing administrative costs and boosting efficiency for “user programs,” and improving coordination of social policy.
6. Indeed, integrated social registries can serve as a ***powerful platform that extends well beyond social assistance programs***. Many countries use integrated social registries to support determination of potential eligibility for a range of other interventions, some targeted, some universal in nature. Examples include subsidized health insurance, social energy tariffs, education and training vouchers, subsidized child care, financial inclusion services, pro bono legal services, and so forth.
7. Operationally, Social Registries are ***information systems*** that support the flows of information on individuals and households and their socio-economic conditions to determine potential eligibility for social programs. As information systems, their basic architecture includes data intake and exchange, software applications to support both front-office and back-office functions, database management and interoperability (in some cases), and ICT infrastructure.
8. Social Registries are ***distinct from beneficiary registries*** in their purposes, population coverage, and functions. Social Registries include information on all registrants (applicants) and support the “gateway” functions of intake, registration and determination of eligibility, while Beneficiary Registries include information *only* on those enrolled in specific programs to support beneficiary and benefits administration.
9. ***Social Registries don’t operate in isolation***, and are usually part of broader information systems supporting social programs, including other complementary functions and components, such as: beneficiary registries and administration systems, payments administration, and case management systems.
10. The typology and trajectory of Social Registries varies a lot across countries. There is ***no single model*** that would fit every country’s context, structures, capacities, and needs.