



dRPC Participation Report: ISSA Technical Seminar on Improving Inclusiveness and Accessibility of Social Security Services through Effective Communication (Day 1)



22 – 23 April 2026

The development Research and Projects Centre (dRPC) participated in the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Technical Seminar on "Improving Inclusiveness and Accessibility of Social Security Services through Effective Communication," held from 22–23 April 2026 at the Abuja Continental Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria. The seminar was jointly organised by ISSA and the Nigeria Social Insurance Trust Fund (NSITF) under the ISSA Liaison Office for West Africa. dRPC's participation was based on its long-standing experience in social protection research, gender inclusion programming, labour market analysis, and communication for development in Nigeria and across West Africa. This background positioned the organisation as a relevant stakeholder in regional discussions on strengthening inclusive and accessible social security systems, particularly for informal sector workers and vulnerable populations.

The seminar brought together over 300 participants from across West Africa, including representatives of social security institutions, ministries of labour and social protection, employers' and workers' organisations, and international development partners. The discussions reflected shared regional challenges around expanding social security coverage, improving public awareness, and ensuring that services reach informal and hard-to-reach populations. For dRPC, the engagement provided an important platform to contribute to and learn from ongoing regional reforms focused on improving communication systems within social protection frameworks.

The opening session featured high-level remarks from key institutional leaders, including the Managing Director of NSITF, the Honourable Minister of Labour and Employment, the Secretary General of ISSA, the ISSA Liaison Office for West Africa, and the National Pension Commission (PenCom). Across all statements, there was a strong emphasis on social security as a tool for social justice, economic stability, and inclusive development. A key message was that while many countries have established formal systems, the real challenge remains ensuring effective coverage in practice, especially for informal sector workers. Communication was consistently identified as central to addressing this gap by improving awareness, trust, and participation.

The technical sessions introduced the ISSA Guidelines on Communication by Social Security Administrations, with emphasis on user-centred, accessible, and multi-channel communication approaches. Country experiences further demonstrated how institutions are translating these principles into practice through context-specific strategies. Across the sessions, participants highlighted both innovations and persistent challenges in reaching vulnerable populations, particularly in rural and informal settings.

Key observations and discussion points from Day One included the following:

- Social security communication is increasingly being recognised as a core strategic function rather than a support or public relations activity.
- Effective communication directly influences enrolment, compliance, trust, and overall system efficiency.
- Many institutions continue to struggle with low awareness of social security schemes, especially among informal sector workers.
- Language barriers remain significant, requiring translation of materials into local languages and simplification of technical terms.
- Digital platforms are expanding access but also risk excluding populations with limited connectivity, literacy, or digital skills.

- Radio and community-based communication channels remain among the most effective tools for reaching rural populations.
- Trust deficits between citizens and institutions continue to affect participation in social security systems.
- Feedback mechanisms are often weak, limiting institutions' ability to respond to user concerns in real time.
- Collaboration with community leaders, employers' associations, and trade unions enhances credibility and outreach effectiveness.
- Decentralised service delivery models are helping to bring services physically closer to users in underserved areas.
- Many institutions are adopting simplified brochures, infographics, and step-by-step guides to improve user understanding.
- Call centres, social media platforms, and complaint logs are increasingly being used to track recurring user challenges.
- There is growing recognition of the need to align communication strategies with policy and legal reforms to avoid misinformation.
- Resource and capacity constraints continue to limit the scale and consistency of communication efforts in some institutions.
- Low-cost communication strategies, when well targeted, can still achieve significant improvements in awareness and uptake.
- Regional cooperation through ISSA is enabling peer learning and adaptation of good practices across countries with similar contexts.

For dRPC, participation in the seminar was aligned with its ongoing work on social protection systems, inclusive governance, and communication for development. The discussions reinforced the importance of evidence-based and community-centred approaches to improving access to social security, particularly for vulnerable and informal sector populations. The engagement also provided opportunities for knowledge exchange with peer institutions and development partners on practical strategies for strengthening communication systems within social protection frameworks.

In conclusion, Day One of the ISSA Technical Seminar underscored that improving inclusiveness and accessibility in social security systems depends not only on institutional design and policy frameworks, but also on how effectively information is communicated and understood by citizens. Communication emerged as a central driver of trust, participation, and system effectiveness. For dRPC, the seminar reinforced the relevance of its work in supporting inclusive, evidence-driven approaches to social protection reform in Nigeria and across West Africa.