

The Black Sash demands that government implements permanent Basic Income Support for those aged 18 to 59 years who have little to no income!

Unemployment, poverty and inequality have been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. This crisis is not temporary and a more extensive social security programme is needed to complement job creation programmes.

Government is constitutionally obligated under Section 27 of the Constitution to progressively realise the right to social assistance for those unable to support themselves, especially for those still excluded from social protection measures. Government also ratified the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). This human rights Covenant recommended that government ensures that,

“those between the ages of 18 and 59 with little or no income have access to social assistance” and consider a universal basic income grant for everyone!

Government temporarily introduced social relief measures to buffer the negative impact of the pandemic. These included a Caregivers Grant for five months and top ups on other grants for six months, until October 2020.

The Child Support Grant was increased by R300 per child only for May 2020. The R350 COVID-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant for the unemployed, initially introduced for six months, was a significant intervention and was extended twice.

Despite urgent calls by civil society and the Minister of Social Development’s recommendation to extend the Covid-19 SRD Grant, it was terminated at the end of April 2021.

The Covid-19 SRD grant was the first step towards a Basic Income Grant. In 2020, the Department of Social Development (DSD) developed a Basic Income Grant (BIG) Discussion Document and invited civil society organisations to comment. DSD is meant to present the revised discussion document for public comment this year.

Terminating the Covid-19 grant has left the millions who are unemployed and have little prospect of finding work, to face a Covid-19 third wave and tighter lockdown regulations with no income support. Basic Income Support will not only decrease inequality and poverty levels, improve health and education outcomes and increase social cohesion, but can also help to revive our distressed economy. Government must reinstate the SRD Grant until a permanent Basic Income Support for those aged 18 to 59 years with little to no income is phased in and work towards a universal basic income!

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

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