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Ndangwa Noyoo

**South Africa's Social Policy
Response to Covid-19:
Relief Measures in an
Unequal Society**



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CONTENT

ABSTRACT 3

INTRODUCTION 3

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT 4

 South Africa’s Social Policy Regime 4

SOUTH AFRICA’S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE 6

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS DURING THE PANDEMIC 7

CONCLUSION 8

REFERENCES 8

APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 BY POLICY AREA
(SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020) 10

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19
(SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020) 11

SOUTH AFRICA'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19: RELIEF MEASURES IN AN UNEQUAL SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

This report discusses South Africa's initial social policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It provides a timeline of the early stages of the pandemic and of the government's legislative interventions. South Africa's social policy response was premised on the country's post-apartheid development agenda, which is significantly informed by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). In response to the pandemic, South Africa's government rolled out a social relief and economic support package worth approximately 10% of GDP. This package funded, for instance, a special Covid-19 "Social Relief of Distress Grant" for all those individuals who were unemployed and did not receive any other form of social assistance. South Africa could roll out such a massive social relief and economic support package because the necessary institutional infrastructure was already in place. The report concludes with some reflections on the broader social implications of the pandemic.

INTRODUCTION

In late 2019, the global community was alerted to an outbreak of a deadly new virus in China in the city of Wuhan. It was identified as Covid-19 and already at the time, many Chinese citizens had been infected and lost their lives from this virus (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2021). Subsequently, in early 2020, the virus spread to other parts of the world, notably Europe and North America, and claimed many more lives. Hence, in January 2020 the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 a global health emergency. It did not take long before the virus found its way to South Africa.¹ South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) reports that the first case of Covid-19 was identified in the country on 5 March 2020, after being imported from Europe. As the numbers of Covid-19 infections increased in the country, the government was compelled to take drastic actions to curtail its spread and to bring down infection rates. Hence, on 15 March the president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa, declared a "state of national disaster". Later, on 26 March 2020, the president announced a 21-day national lockdown to bring down infection rates.

This report proffers an overview of the social policy measures that the South African government implemented at a national level to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic. In undertaking this exercise, it was borne in mind that the new social policy measures, which were employed by the government to combat Covid-19, were informed by its previous actions aimed at reducing poverty, inequality, unemployment and various social ills in the post-apartheid era. Therefore, the government was building on an already established foundation, which made things easier for it to garner a national buy-in into the measures it was implementing. Thus, the government did not create new policy and legislative instruments to respond to the needs of the citizens during Covid-19, but it merely augmented and fine-tuned existing ones.

1 South Africa's 2019 mid-year population was estimated at 58.8 million according to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2019). In 2019, the country's GDP per capita was USD 6,001 (Macrotrends, 2021).

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It is important to note that the government attempted to follow a consensus-based approach when it began to tackle the virus and this is referred to as the “social compact”. The South African Government (2020) informs us that the social compact aims to promote national unity, cohesion and nation-building. It seeks to build unity amongst South Africans, the Southern African region, African continent and the international community, while encouraging healing of individuals and communities. The strategic objectives of the compact are focused on inviting all sectors of the society to play a role in advancing constitutional democracy, human rights and equality. Through the social compact, the business sector, government, labour and civil society seek to agree to work together to bring about future change. In this regard, before the state of national disaster was declared, president Ramaphosa tried to meet all the leaders of political parties, the business sector, academia and civil society to solicit their support for this drastic intervention. The South African Medical Journal (2020) notes that multiple revisions of the country’s lockdown regulations prove that the South African government is responsive to the concerns of its people and is not tone-deaf to constructive criticism.

— SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Perhaps it is pertinent to highlight how fragile the economy was before this health crisis. Suffice it to say, the economy had been contracting for several years prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to this, South Africa was downgraded by international economic rating agencies prior to and during the pandemic. In 2019, the international economic rating agency, Standard and Poor (S&P), had reduced South Africa’s credit outlook to negative. After the country instituted a 21-day lockdown to curb the spread of Covid-19, Moody’s downgraded the country’s sovereign credit rating to “junk status”.² Another agency, Fitch, dropped the South African economy to “junk rating” during the lockdown after having downgraded it from “BB+” to “BB” status in 2019. Notably, the economy sharply contracted by 3.2% in the first three months of 2019. This decline was the biggest quarterly fall in economic activity since the first quarter of 2009, when the economy – under strain from the global financial crisis – tumbled by 6.1% according to Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) (2019b).

Critically, it is worth mentioning that when Covid-19 broke out in South Africa, the country was still one of the most highly unequal societies in the world. South Africa’s Gini coefficient was calculated at 0.69 in 2011 and this was based on income data (per capita including salaries, wages and social grants) (StatsSA, 2014). While many other countries were able to reduce inequality during the 2000s, South Africa could not (IMF, 2020). Furthermore, wealth inequality is even higher in South Africa, whereby the richest 10% of the population held around 71% of net wealth in 2015, while the bottom 60% held 7% of the net wealth (World Bank, 2019). Also, poverty was a major social problem when Covid-19 began to spread in South Africa. For instance, in 2018, nearly half of the population of South Africa was considered chronically poor. This section of the population is characterised by high poverty persistence. A second segment of the population is the one that was regarded as having an above average chance of falling into poverty (the transient poor). A third, the non-poor but vulnerable, faced above average risks of slipping into poverty if their basic needs were not met. These latter two groups made up 27% of the population. Combining these two groups with the chronic poor suggests that for about 76% of the population, poverty was a constant threat in their daily lives (World Bank, 2018).

— South Africa’s Social Policy Regime

For purposes of this report, social policy is taken as state intervention that directly affects social welfare, social institutions and social relations. It involves overarching concerns with redistribution, production, reproduction and protection, and works in tandem with economic policy in pursuit of national social and economic goals

2 Rating agencies have 7 to 10 different grades that they assign to assets. Of these, the top four are considered investment-grade ratings. The agencies differ slightly regarding what each category means, but the differences are minor. There are also some differences in notation. For example, S&P and Fitch’s top rating is AAA, while Moody’s uses Aaa. Fitch and S&P’s ratings run from A down to D, while Moody’s ends at C. Junk grades are also known as speculative or non-investment grades. These start at BB and are followed by B, CCC, CC, C, and D (One Financial Markets, 2021).

(Mkandawire, 2006, p. 1). Post-apartheid South Africa's social policy is heavily influenced by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). This was the country's first socio-economic macro-policy that was conceptualised by the government to repair the damages wrought by apartheid policies in all sectors of South Africa. It aimed to translate the government's vision of an equal, non-racist and non-sexist society into a reality, by meeting basic needs, building the economy, democratising the State and society, developing human resources, and nation-building (ANC, 1994).

The Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) macro-economic policy also left its imprints on the country's social policy. GEAR sought to rebuild and restructure the economy in line with the goals set in the RDP and foster sustained growth based on a competitive outward oriented economy. It endeavoured to attain a growth rate of 6% per annum and create 400,000 jobs per annum by the year 2000, by concentrating on capacity building to meet the demands of international competitiveness (Department of Finance, 1996). In addition, some facets of colonial and apartheid social policy that were inherited by the post-apartheid government were reformed and made more inclusive, even though previously they had responded to the needs of only the white population. Due to this, South Africa currently sits with a hybrid welfare regime that constitutes reformed features of the old colonial-apartheid welfare system, which is tax-based and non-contributory, and means-tested, such as the social assistance and public employment schemes; some class-based entitlements (affirmative action) with race connotations which owe their existence to the 'sunset clause' compromises (which are attributable to the negotiated settlement that resulted in a free and democratic society) which are contributory or subsidised by the State, and the new social welfare provisions that arose out of the contestation of the liberation struggle, known as the 'social wage' and developmental social welfare services (Noyoo, 2017, pp. 9–10).

South Africa's social policy is legitimised primarily by its Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights is enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa and is expressed via socio-economic rights which are translated into social welfare services and other social services. For example, Section 26 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. The state must take reasonable legislative and other measures, within its available resources, to achieve the progressive realisation of this right. In addition, Section 27 recognises that everyone has the right to have access to healthcare services (encompassing reproductive healthcare), sufficient food and water, and social security, including, if they are unable to support themselves and their dependants, appropriate social assistance. Furthermore, Section 28 enshrines the rights of children and notes that every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic healthcare services and social services, while Section 29 entrenches the right to education and stipulates that everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education (RSA, 1996; Noyoo, 2017). Significantly, social policy is rooted in a rights-based approach. Its goals include achieving social justice, a minimum standard of living, equitable access and equal opportunity to services and benefits, and a commitment to meeting the needs of all South Africans with special emphasis on the needs of the most disadvantaged in the society (Patel, 2005).

Also, social policy is expressed through South Africa's elaborate social assistance programme which includes the following social grants or cash transfers: Care Dependency Grant for children below the age of 18, Disability Grant, Foster Child Grant, Grant-in-Aid for mainly elderly citizens, Older Persons Grant, Social Relief of Distress, and the War Veterans Grant. These social grants are mean-tested and also extended to refugees and foreigners who are permanent residents. Many people depend on this system to sustain their livelihoods. According to Tito Mboweni, the country's Minister of Finance, there are 18 million citizens who are in receipt of social cash transfers on a monthly basis (National Treasury, 2020). Arguably, if it was not for the elaborate social assistance programme, millions of South Africans would have been rendered chronically poor and destitute. Therefore, the social protection system is regarded by the government as there to reduce poverty and inequality by providing social grants and social welfare services to vulnerable groups (National Treasury, 2019). Social insurance, which refers to contributory funded arrangements which protect workers in the event of unemployment, disability, disease, death or retirement, also forms part of social policy. The social insurance system consists of the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases (COIDA), and the Road Accident Fund (RAF). UIF and COIDA are occupational insurance, and play the role of a safety net for those beneficiaries who are in the formal labour market (Phaahla, 2015).

Given the social policy background presented above and the work that had already been undertaken by the government in this area, the government was able to quickly implement social policy measures during the initial months of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since there was already social infrastructure such as social grants pay-points of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), vulnerable populations could still access their grants while new relief measures were quickly implemented. During the lockdown, the government rolled out a massive social relief and economic support package of ZAR 500 billion,³ amounting to around 10% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Thus, a special Covid-19 "Social Relief of Distress Grant"⁴ of ZAR 350 a month, was paid out to individuals who were unemployed and did not receive any other form of social grant. Also, disbursement from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) during the pandemic and lockdown was another new response to help workers who had lost their jobs. In addition, in order to respond to the immediate needs of vulnerable citizens, the Department of Social Development partnered with the Solidarity Fund, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) to distribute 250,000 food parcels across the country. Also, all other social grants beneficiaries received an extra ZAR 250 per month (for another six months) which was further extended after the 'hard lockdown' (Ramaphosa, 2020a). Other government social policy interventions related to tax relief measures, relief funds, emergency procurements, wage support through the UIF and funding to small businesses to deal with the aforementioned challenges (Ramaphosa, 2020a).

In terms of wage support, the Temporary Employer / Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) offered funds to businesses (or directly to employees) to pay wages. These were disbursed on a sliding scale of 38% of a worker's monthly wage (for high-wage earners) to 60% (for low-wage earners). The minimum pay-out was ZAR 3,500 per month, for a period of three months. By 19 June 2020, 355,267 employers and 2.4 million employees had been paid (Fray, 2020). In the same period, the Department of Social Development increased access to food relief from an initial 1.1 million to 3.3 million to ensure food security for individuals and families impacted negatively by the national lockdown (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). Furthermore, housing was considered a key service to the citizens during Covid-19. Therefore, the Department of Human Settlements oversaw the implementation of the Transitional Residential Housing Units and the de-densification of overcrowded areas in order to contain the spread of Covid-19. The Department identified, amongst other things, the need to de-densify overcrowded areas to contain the virus. A total of 29 informal settlements were subsequently identified across the country and targeting 356,010 households (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020).

Another social policy intervention in the early phase of Covid-19 related to long-term care. There are about 1,150 residential care homes for the elderly and 1,000 private long-term care facilities for older persons in South Africa. The availability of long-term care facilities reflects urban-rural and historical racial divides. Most are managed by NGOs and faith-based organisations (FBOs), and the standard of care in these facilities is variable (Cowper, Jassat, Pretorius, Geffen & Legodu, 2020). According to Cowper et al. (2020) a preliminary analysis of data submitted by 19 long-term care facilities was conducted on 25 August 2020. These facilities included old-age homes and mental healthcare, rehabilitation and frail care facilities in the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, Western Cape, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The survey revealed that residents and staff of care facilities were vulnerable during the Covid-19 pandemic. For instance, 10% of residents and 12% of staff in 19 facilities had been infected by the virus.

Linked to long-term care during Covid-19 is the plight of people with disabilities. According to McKinney, McKinney and Swartz (2020) there is a strong link between disability and poverty, which leads to the majority of people with disabilities residing in informal settlements or institutions in South Africa. In such environments, the risks of contracting Covid-19 are high. In this regard, people with disabilities residing in institutions during lockdown were isolated from their families. In many cases, relatives were prevented from visiting their disabled family members to protect them from the spread of the virus and were only permitted to make contact telephonically, which is not suitable for some disabled people. On the extreme opposite, some care homes and institutions for people with disabilities were closed down, and many of these individuals were sent to reside with their families. Many of the relatives of people with disabilities did not have the skills or knowledge to care for them.

3 EUR 1 equals ZAR 18.62.

4 Before the pandemic, a 'normal' Social Relief of Distress Grant was already in place. The 'Covid grant' 'piggybacked' on this existing grant.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC INDICATORS DURING THE PANDEMIC

South Africa's economy suffered a significant contraction during April, May and June 2020, when the country operated under widespread lockdown restrictions in response to Covid-19. The country's GDP fell by just over 16% between the first and second quarters of 2020, giving an annualised growth rate of 51%. This contraction dwarfs the annualised slowdown of 6.1% recorded in the first quarter of 2009 during the global financial crisis (StatsSA, 2020b). Historical data from 1960, sourced from the South African Reserve Bank, show that the second quarter of 2020 experienced the biggest fall in GDP since that year, far steeper than the annualised 8.2% decline in the fourth quarter of 1982 (StatsSA, 2020b). Furthermore, household spending slumped by 49.8% in line with the closure of hotels, restaurants, transport services, recreational facilities and many stores. Spending on restaurants and hotels had ground to an almost complete halt, plunging by 99.9% (StatsSA, 2020b). As mentioned earlier, South Africa was already in recession prior to Covid-19, having experienced three quarters of continuous contractions to its GDP between Quarter 3 of 2019 and Quarter 1 of 2020. In addition, South Africa's level of unemployment was already among the highest in the world, at 30.1% as of Quarter 1 of 2020. Large proportions of the working population earn below various measures of poverty (Straus, Isaacs, Rosenberg & Passoni, 2020).

According to StatsSA (2020c, p. 2), the number of employed persons decreased by 2.2 million to 14.1 million in Quarter 2: 2020 compared to Quarter 1: 2020. This unprecedented change is the largest quarter one to quarter two decline since the survey began in 2008. Contrary to what one might expect in the face of such a large decline in employment, unemployment declined substantially as well. It decreased by 2.8 million to 4.3 million compared to Q1: 2020, resulting in a decrease of 5.0 million (down by 21.4%) in the number of people in the labour force. The largest employment decreases were observed in the formal sector (1.2 million), followed by the informal sector (640,000), the private households (311,000) and the agricultural sector (66,000) in Quarter 2: 2020. Compared to a year ago, total employment decreased by 2.2 million, the number of unemployed persons decreased by 35.5% (2.4 million) and the number of persons who were not economically active increased by 33.1% (5.1 million) (StatsSA, 2020c, p. 2).

Poverty has consistently been a national social problem since the advent of democracy in 1994. According to the Living Conditions Survey (LCS) 2014/15 of StatsSA, approximately 40.0% of South Africans were living below the Upper Bound Poverty Line (UBPL). The poverty gap (the distance away from the poverty line) and severity of poverty measures were larger for female-headed households compared to households headed by males. The proportion of females living below the UBPL was 16.9 percentage points more than that of households headed by males (49.9% versus 33.0%). Almost six out of every ten households headed by males (59.3%) compared to over seven out of every ten households headed by females (74.8%) in traditional areas were living under the UBPL (StatsSA, 2019c). The World Bank (2020) reports that approximately 55.5% (30.3 million people) of the population is living in poverty at the national upper poverty line (ZAR 992) while a total of 13.8 million people (25%) are experiencing food poverty. Similarly, poverty measured at the international poverty lines of USD 90 and USD 3.20 per person per day (2011 PPP) is estimated at 18.9% and 37.6% in 2014/15, up from 16.6% and 35.9% in 2010/11, respectively.

Inevitably, poverty has increased during Covid-19 and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020) warns that the consequences of the Covid-19 outbreak are likely to further exacerbate poverty and inequality in South Africa. Unemployment threatens further precarity – with the highest risks for informal workers and female-headed households. Specifically, female-headed households are more likely to fall into poverty than male-headed households. Also, the higher the level of education, the lower the probability of falling into poverty, with the average marginal impact being higher for tertiary level of education to secondary school not completed. In evaluating South Africa's social policy response, it can be argued that it merely helped to alleviate the harsh socio-economic effects of Covid-19. Thus, it can be concluded that the social policy response was not enough and perhaps the missing gaps can be filled in by the Reconstruction and Recovery Plan which was announced by the president in October 2020. The objectives of the plan are to create jobs, primarily through aggressive infrastructure investment and mass employment programmes; to reindustrialise the economy, focusing on growing small businesses; to accelerate economic reforms to unlock investment and growth; to fight crime and corruption; and, to improve the capability of the state (Ramaphosa, 2020b).

CONCLUSION

This report proffered an overview of South Africa's initial social policy response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In ending its discussion, it reflects on some issues which were discernible during the pandemic. Indeed, it cannot be overemphasised that Covid-19 is the first national crisis of its kind that has besieged the country in the democratic era, even if it is a global pandemic. In combatting Covid-19, some measures such as social distancing proved quite impractical as many South Africans live in densely populated informal settlements and townships. These cramped spatial patterns are a legacy of colonialism and apartheid which continue to endure in the democratic dispensation. Also, the high inequality levels discussed earlier translated into the way people managed to cope with the effects of Covid-19. Nevertheless, social solidarity increased during Covid-19. There was an outpouring of generosity from all sections of South Africa. Here, the African philosophy of *Ubuntu* was exhibited by many South Africans as they opened soup kitchens, distributed food parcels or volunteered their time to provide services to the vulnerable.

Curiously, the government seemed less averse to try out unconventional interventions or by-pass bureaucratic red tape during Covid-19. For instance, in poorer and depressed communities, especially in the rural areas, where people struggled for many years to access clean water, the government either dug new boreholes or provided them with tanks of clean water which were replenished by water tank trucks on a daily basis. Interestingly, when the pandemic broke out and the state of national disaster was declared, the government moved swiftly to remove homeless people off the streets and relocated them to shelters which were either erected or created from business spaces that were no longer operational due to Covid-19. Similarly, the government provided pre-fabricated houses in some provinces to people who had waited for subsidised houses for decades. Even though some of these interventions were criticised by some South Africans, it was interesting to see how political will was suddenly 'discovered' by government officials during the pandemic. After many years of debating and ideological posturing by various sections of the country and in some sections of the state, the government announced that it was seriously considering a universal basic income grant for poor South Africans. This announcement was made by the Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu, in July 2020 (Businesstech, 2020). In January 2021 President Ramaphosa reiterated his government's commitment to introduce the basic income grant (Businesstech, 2021). It is quite ironic that it had to take a global pandemic to make the government respond to people's needs with such a high sense of urgency, never seen before in the post-apartheid era.

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**APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 BY POLICY AREA
(SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)**

	Policy Area	Pensions	Healthcare	Long-term care and disability	Labor market	Education
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
	Policy Area	Family benefits	Housing	Social assistance	Other*	
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Yes
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	No	No	No	No

* Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection, e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection.

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (SOUTH AFRICA, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

Note: This appendix covers all major national social policy legislation published between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	Act No. 57 of 2002
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Disaster Management Act of 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002)
(3)	Name of law (English)	Not Applicable
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	15 March 2020
(5)	Date of law's enactment	01 April 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	20 April 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Yes
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	This Act serves as an integrated and co-ordinated disaster management policy that focuses on preventing or reducing the risk of disasters, mitigating the severity of disasters, emergency preparedness, rapid and effective response to disasters and post-disaster recovery; the establishment of national, provincial and municipal disaster management centres; disaster management volunteers; and matters incidental thereto.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	Yes
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	This Act covers all sections of society and seeks to regulate them during the Covid-19 pandemic ranging from agriculture, commerce and industry, education, healthcare, social security/ social assistance, sport, tourism, etc. It also regulates people's behaviour and movements, as was exemplified during the national lockdown. For instance, the banning of funerals with more than 100 individuals or of sports events were contained in this Act. The passing of a Special Covid-19 grant is expressed in this Act. New regulations were added to the Act as new challenges emerged. Therefore, the Act was not finalised but had new regulations added to it as new events or challenges emerged throughout the period it was implemented, that is, from April–September 2020.
Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) of ZAR 350 per month for 6 months to be paid to individuals who are currently unemployed, do not receive any form of income, social grant or UIF payment etc. This Social Relief of Distress Programme was confirmed in the Regulations made under Section 27(2) of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002): Measures to prevent and combat the spread of Covid-19, as amended.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Six months

Law 1: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) is a new benefit which expands on the previous existing social grants. It was introduced as a direct response to the socio-economic implications of Covid-19. It aims to ameliorate the difficulties faced by individuals who were not in receipt of a social grant. However, all the other social grants have been increased by ZAR 250.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Six months
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Six months
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Fix-term
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Six months
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The regulations and benefits that are encapsulated in the Disaster Management Act are reviewed periodically with each changing circumstance that is brought forth by Covid-19. The benefits are fixed and are dependent on the extension of the Act itself which has been extended by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	The benefits are additions to what was already existing. This means that the benefits have been expanded. No previously existing benefits have been reduced or terminated.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	ZAR 500 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	The estimated cost for 2021 has not yet been calculated. However, so far, the estimated cost of the social policy and related responses are about ZAR 500 billion.
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	ZAR 710
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The Medium Term Budget will be able to make these projections. It is set to be announced by the Minister of Finance on 28 October 2020.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree