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GRAPE Media statement in support of SRD grant court case

The Global Retained Platform for Engagement (GRAPE) supports the introduction of a Universal Basic Income as a guarantee (UBIG) in South Africa to provide essential income support to individuals aged 18-59. South Africa is plagued by high levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Therefore, urgent action is needed to effectively address hunger and deprivation while at the same time advancing economic empowerment and social justice for all.

The Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant has proven effective in providing much-needed income support during the pandemic and in alleviating its negative economic and social consequences up to today. The SRD grant is a step in the right direction for a universal basic income guarantee in South Africa. The SRD grant must be administered justly and fairly for all eligible people.

In this light, GRAPE wishes to express its wholehearted support for the issues raised and remedies sought by the applicants in the Social Relief of Distress (SRD, R570) grant matter, set to be heard by the Pretoria High Court this week.

The applicants—the Institute for Economic Justice and #PayTheGrants, represented by the Socio Economic Rights Institute—are challenging the procedural barriers to access this critical lifeline which have been put in the way of eligible people. They are also challenging the real-terms retrogression of the grant value and income-eligibility threshold, which have fallen far behind inflation and the cost of meeting basic needs.

Approximately 50% of the programme's target population (adults living below the food poverty line) are unable to access it due to the fact that grant applications can only be lodged online, the government's flawed methods for assessing eligibility and disbursing payments, and an appeals process that is not fit for purpose.

The declining level of support provided by the grant runs counter to the government's Constitutional obligation to progressively realise the right to social assistance within available resources.

The government has signalled that the SRD grant will be improved and expanded into a much-needed system of basic income support for economically-excluded adults. GRAPE