



29 October 2024

GRAPE Media statement in support of SRD grant court case

The Global Reformed 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, R370) 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

supports this policy direction. However, we have yet to see concrete steps taken to implement this policy, and instead, the SRD grant continues to be limited and undermined.

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba said in July 2024: "A Universal Basic Income is the yardstick of the new government to achieve tangible results and to improve the lives of many millions of South Africans. A Universal Basic Income is the starting line a prerequisite which provides a platform to kickstart equitable and sustainable development for all South Africans." (Archbishop Thabo Makgoba 2024)

GRAPE urges the government to take the voice of the faith-based community seriously and take all necessary steps towards introducing a universal basic income. The first step is to ensure the right, fair, and equitable administration of the SRD grant and increase its level, taking account of inflation and cost of living increases.

The SRD grant court case, taking place on 29 and 30 October, represents a pivotal moment in the fight for dignity and socio-economic justice in South Africa.

Further information and resources related to the court case can be found here.

GRAPE is an advocacy programme of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and the press statement is endorsed by the following member churches of the GRAPE platform:

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA)

Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA)

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA)

Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (NGK)

Calvin Protestant Church (CPC) of South Africa

Rhenish Church South Africa (RCSA)

For media enquiries or further details, please contact:

Rev Dr Bukelwa Hans: +27 - 82 - 651 5070 or stukie@iafrica.com

For more information on GRAPE, please consult the following web pages:

Grape: www.grape-wcrc.org

WCRC: <https://wcrc.eu/>