

Rethinking Economic Policy for South Africa in the Age of Covid-19:
Innovative policy responses for the post-lockdown Phase

Post COVID-19 Social Policy Environment: Recommendations from a Local Government Perspective

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Executive Summary

The social policy framework of South Africa carries a huge responsibility of delivering on the Constitutional objectives of reducing poverty and inequality, addressing the legacy of the apartheid past, while promoting economic development and social justice (Patel & Triegaart, 2008; Govender, 2016). So central is the social policy framework to South Africa's development that it can be considered the government's central poverty reduction strategy (Patel & Triegaart, 2008). This constitutional mandate puts the social policy framework at the centre of South Africa's socio-economic development. This paper suggests, that social policy beyond COVID-19 pandemic needs to be (i) more supportive of social equity and inclusion; (ii) broad enough to recognise food security and access to health services as key determinants of a socially secure society; and, (iii) be generally more resilient so that it is most effective and adaptable during times of crises.

This paper is based on insights and experience of the authors from the City of Johannesburg (CoJ) metropolitan municipality during the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. The paper draws insights from the implementation of the CoJ Expanded Social Package Indigent Programme (for over 130 000 households); the CoJ's e-health database with approximately 800 000 individuals; the CoJ's food bank database of over 150 000 beneficiary households; and the insights from qualitative survey conducted in 2019, which interviewed beneficiaries of social services on the impact of the current mix of social services provided by the Social Policy of COJ. As a result of this approach, the issues that this policy paper presents are not of ideology, but rather the technical dimension of development and effective delivery of social policy frameworks and interventions.

This paper concludes with the following recommendations for the next interventions in social policy. First, municipalities (local government) must have a bigger role as agents for the

development and delivery of social policy and its interventions. Second municipalities must abandon the pro-poor approach in favour of the inclusive social policy if their social policies are to deliver interventions that reduce inequality and encourage social mobility. Third, municipalities require strong institutions to effectively develop and implement social policies. Fourth, building on municipal capabilities will be essential for sustainable social policy intervention. Fifth and last, the social policy framework must encourage cross-sectoral collaboration such that the social policy challenges become a multi-sectoral challenge that can respond and engage many factors outside of a single domain.