

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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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.

1. Introduction

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.

Given the developmental objectives of the Constitution and its recognition that Local Government will deliver the developmental mandate of government, this paper takes interest in the position of municipalities, metropolitan municipalities, in particular, in the review of the social policy framework in South Africa, as part of the post-COVID- 19 recovery process. The paper views municipalities as critical units of analysis that are central to the successful review and implementation of effective social policy measures. Metropolitan municipalities in South Africa play a vital role in delivering social welfare services, within the broad objective of attaining their Growth and Development Strategy objectives (City of Johannesburg, 2011).

Despite the national and provincial government programmes, many metropolitan municipalities in South Africa have plans and programmes to target challenges such as unemployment, reduction of social exclusion, inequality and poverty. This is complemented by interventions that have historically been implemented more prominently such as the provision of basic services and the presence of social packages. The advent of the pandemic has brought to the fore the need to relook the role of metropolitan municipalities in social policy.

Social policy must be reformed particularly at the local government level, which is at the coalface of service delivery and often experiences an increase in demands during times of reduced economic performance. The MEC of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (Cogta) was reported in the Sowetan on 10 June 2020 saying that between April and May, Gauteng municipalities overall lost approximately R4bn worth of revenue that would have been collected if not for COVID-19, with the metros being the worst hit. “Tshwane lost approximately R1.2bn in revenue not collected, Johannesburg R1.5bn and Ekurhuleni roughly R800m” (Sowetan, 2020).

However, the national government may have anticipated the impact of COVID-19 on the municipal revenues when President Cyril Ramaphosa, in April 2020, announced an R20bn allocation to municipalities for the provision of emergency water supply, sanitizing public transport facilities and supporting vulnerable communities. Going forward, the question is whether \$20 billion is sufficient given that the three metros above lost equivalent to 21% of the allocated funds, at a time when the demand for services is significant. If this is extrapolated nationally the allocated funds appear to be insufficient.

This paper, therefore, provides insights into how metropolitan municipalities can play an increasing role in the design and delivery of the next social policy framework. The paper starts with a brief outline of the socio-economic strategies that have influenced social policy in South Africa since 1994. It then acknowledges why municipalities, metropolitan municipalities in particular, should be the next battleground for social policy reform, how they can be better leveraged for social policy success through improved institutional capacity, possible innovations and experiments for innovative social policy. The paper illustrates how social development policy must be an enabler of social equity and inclusion and why food security and access to health must be considered core determinants of a socially secure society. Last, the paper sets out conclusions and recommendations.

2. Methodology

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.

3. Socio-economic development strategies and social development

The South African government's social policy is based on sound principles, such as putting people first, pro-poor, involving communities in their development, combining government efforts with those of civil society to address needs and problems, and especially linking social policy with economic development. Given the existence of a link between social policy and socio-economic goals of the State, to sufficiently understand the social development discourse in South Africa, the several shifts in South African economic policy must be noted (Grey, 2006). Several socio-economic development approaches have been adopted since 1994. A common characteristic of these approaches is that they all recognised poverty, inequality and unemployment in the South African population and sought direct and indirect interventions to deal with these challenges.

In 1994, the post-apartheid ANC government launched the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). The RDP was the policy instrument which attempted to direct the progress of the transformation by offering a unique opportunity to bring about renewal, peace, prosperity, reconciliation and stability (Republic of South Africa, 1998). From a social policy perspective, the RDP was focused on alleviating poverty and improving social services based on the recognition that post-apartheid South African population was characterised by deep inequality and poverty which required an urgent state intervention.

In 1996, the government launched the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) which was intended to stabilize and rescue the economy that was already in recession. This socio-economic intervention had major social policy objectives

premised on the perception that social policy will be delivered on the back of a growing economy (through foreign investment, export-led economic growth, global trade and global competition) and the subsequent skills development required to achieve these objectives (Patel & Triegaart, 2008).

In 2005 GEAR was replaced by the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) whose intention was to accelerate the growth of South Africa's economy, as well as accelerate wealth redistribution. There was significant reliance on the grant system as a tool for poverty alleviation during the AsgiSA period. In 2011, the government replaced AsgiSA with the New Growth Path (NGP) whose emphasis was on job creation by aspiring to grow employment by 5 million jobs by 2020 and reduce unemployment by 10%. In particular, AsgiSA called on social partners to achieve social change through integrated social and economic development (Lombard, 2008).

In 2012, the government adopted the National Development Plan (NDP) or Vision 2030 which is a consensus-building mechanism towards an end state; where poverty, inequality and unemployment would have been significantly reduced. On 15th October 2020, the government launched the South African Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP) in response to COVID-19 pandemic. The ERRP is hoped to culminate into the transformed social policy framework through initiating interventions and policies that energise the fight against the historical structural inequalities, unemployment and poverty.

Despite these interventions and their early, relative, success in reducing income poverty from the 2000s (due to expansion of social assistance and economic growth), inequality, poverty and unemployment remain significant challenges (Patel & Triegaart, 2008). Some of the noted criticism of these initiatives is that, unfortunately, progressively, since 1994, social security as provided by the income support (grant) system has become the major poverty alleviation measure within the developmental welfare system. These initiatives have culminated in the bulk of the welfare bill and social assistance in South Africa being largely provided through social grants, social welfare services and the provision of basic services (water, electricity etc.) (Patel, 2003). This has been described as unsustainable especially when developmental

welfare is expected to succeed in an economic system which promotes gross income disparities and a widening gap between rich and poor (Grey, 2006).

Social policy interventions have also been criticized for being disparate, lacking innovation, being primarily reactive rather than transformative such that they are leading to short-term benefits rather than long-term change and empowerment of those assisted (Lombard, 2008). An analysis of the trend of government programmes and interventions that are implemented to deal with poverty in South Africa emphasised the need to harmonize all government's development programmes under a single structure or process of social compact if their effectiveness was to be significantly improved (Isaac Azikiwe Agholor & Obi, 2013). Another challenge relates to the realities faced by economically inactive adults who are of working-age, with no dependents. Existing government support programmes have not adequately addressed these individuals' needs, with old age and child support grants increasingly used to support wider households.

The advent of COVID-19 and the implementation of the lockdown further exposed deep-seated challenges in the South African social policy framework and its interventions. With particular emphasis on metropolitan municipalities, the pandemic has shown several ways in which the social policy in South Africa can be strengthened. This paper suggests, that 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. In terms of the ERRP, suggestions (i and iii) are aligned with its intention to ensure the reconstruction and transformation of the economy by building a sustainable, resilient and inclusive economy while suggestion (ii) is aligned with ERRP objective to engage and preserve through the provision of comprehensive health response to save lives and curb the spread of the pandemic.

4. Leveraging the role of municipalities in the development and implementation of effective social policies and interventions

According to Fitzgerald, McLennan and Munslow (1995) sustainable social policy requires a functioning infrastructure network epitomised by excellent coordination

vertically and horizontally among national, provincial, municipal, local, and community-based organisations as well as between government and non-government services (Fitzgerald, et al., 1995). Coordination is also required between government and the private sector as well as between different government departments. This partly informs why at local government level there is a demand for integrated planning among departments dealing with housing, education, welfare, water and sanitation provision, health, land and agricultural reform, electrification, among other services. This is a sophisticated planning and working process that must function efficiently in times of crisis if social policy initiatives are to be effective, particularly across the threespheres of government.

The White Paper for Social Welfare recognises the role of communities. The developmental objectives of government can only be delivered through communities; hence the Local Government has a developmental mandate defined by the Constitution of the Republic. It states that together with the provision of social services, people-centred approaches and community participation are other strategies to deliver on social policy objectives. It was expected that communities would emerge out of poverty through their participation and engagement in development processes. There is a recognition that the developmental mandate of the Constitution is delivered through the sphere of government closest to communities, local government, by empowering and engaging communities. The question we pose in this paper is whether municipalities can be leveraged sufficiently to deliver on this objective before, during and during the crisis.

The Constitution has recognised municipalities as important drivers of the developmental mandate of the government and by extension economic growth and social cohesion. It is in cities where most citizens already live and by projection, the proportion of citizens living in urban areas is set to grow. It is also in cities where social challenges such as urban poverty, social exclusion, inequalities first arise. It is also in cities where some opportunities for social and economic progression (such as demographic change, digitalisation and new economic opportunities) also present themselves. Crisis and other transitional challenges such as immigration and their effects strongly impact cities and it is in cities that some challenges can be addressed

through innovative thinking in policy development interventions and possible partnerships.

Our view is that leveraging access to services will be key during the phase 3 recovery plan. We further argue that improved access to municipal services reduces the costs of doing business and creates an enabling environment for economic growth. South African metropolitan municipalities like other municipal categories are responsible for providing a wide range of social welfare policies that range from infrastructure (bulk infrastructure and housing) and basic services (water, electricity, and waste management) to the provision of social packages such as the Expanded Social Package (ESP) and the Food Bank in the City of Johannesburg. While local governments in general and metropolitan municipalities in particular, have done exceptionally well in delivering basic services to communities (Statistics South Africa, 2017). However, our experience from CoJ, it appears when communities consider poverty alleviation measures most beneficial to them, grants are perceived more capable of getting them out of poverty as compared to access to basic services. The differential impacts on communities viz-a-viz business implore municipalities to strengthen both the provision of services and their social safety nets.

We still see evidence that individuals that reside in better-capacitated municipalities have better access to municipal services (Mutyambizi, et al., 2020) (R.C, 2013) (Statistics South Africa, 2017). The Municipal Structures Act divides South African municipalities into three broad types (a) metropolitan municipalities which are big cities, (b) local municipalities which are towns and their surrounding rural areas and (c) district municipalities which coordinate a number of local municipalities in a region (Republic of South Africa, 2000). These types of municipalities in South Africa mirror different levels of poverty and vulnerability which demand specific strategies to be designed that reflect these inequalities when delivering services.

It has been proven that municipalities, in this case, metropolitan municipalities (such as the City of Johannesburg) can be the primary drivers of the development and implementation of social policies and initiatives. A study conducted by Jeffrey 2020 concluded that cities can provide added value to local welfare provision through their strategy development, strategic leadership, intelligence gathering and service delivery (Jeffrey, 2020). The study identified the following key attributes that cities can

contribute to the solutions for complex social welfare problems and which we use to advocate for cities to be leveraged in the pursuit of effective social policy and initiatives (Jeffrey, 2020). First, metropolitan cities such as Johannesburg can be relevant sites for piloting and testing innovative and experimental approaches to social welfare policies. Being a dense environment, they can also allow for integrated policies to be developed around specific communities and personalised services to be offered. This allows solutions to welfare problems to be targeted to those who require them. This is why despite limited national social policy guidance, metropolitan cities are developing and implementing positions in their GDS on social policy. It could also be that due to the absence of a national policy position, the success of these interventions is also limited.

Second, compared to the provincial and national government at local government level, metropolitan cities belong to many networks of similar cities, such as Cities' Network, Integrated Pilot Cities, among others. This enables them to more easily share their results and lessons with other cities through mutual learning. This allows for activation and stimulation of policy transfer and replication of good practice. Third, given their proximity to communities, city administrations can bear witness to circumstances on the ground, easily gather relevant information directly from residents about their challenges and needs. All relevant information can be utilised to implement policy change. Leveraging these attributes in cities will enable the government to adopt an adaptable approach to developing social policies.

Third and last, given the worldwide city networks and partnerships, metropolitan cities have access to a variety of sources of funding as well as programmes and initiatives that could add value to government's programmes and initiatives on social policy. However, the ability of cities to tap into these funding sources, partnerships to augment local budgets to support local welfare provision is directly linked to the flexibility provided by the regulatory frameworks such as the MFMA. We see evidence elsewhere of mayoral platforms and city council partnerships being utilised to link the city administration, business sector and citizens - and to mobilise partners to develop capacity at the local level to deliver effective targeted services. This includes public and private partners, NGOs, not-for-profit organisations and local communities. Cities

are not exploring the opportunities that a partnership approach can bring to local welfare provision.

Under these circumstances, we recommend the national government to consider increasing its focus on municipalities as critical drivers of the next phase of the recovery and to placing its best brains in more deprived municipalities. For this to be a reality, the national government is therefore correct to adopt the district development model which ensures that national priorities such as economic growth and employment; improvements to living conditions; the fight against crime and corruption and better education outcomes are attended to in various localities concerned. Even within metropolitan councils, there will be a need to adopt the new governance system of delegating some responsibilities to sub councils. Sub councils are much smaller, regionalized areas that are intended for focused service delivery. Such areas must be given autonomy to make and execute decisions in the interest of those areas that they represent. In most instances, the voices of the elite carry the day and the above governance proposition could provide more voice to the vulnerable groups.

We note that the ERRP argues for building a capable state during recovery. While a capable State requires effectively coordinated state institutions with skilled public servants, we argue for building capabilities in communities. Thus, to build resilient communities municipalities will need to ensure that they build on people's capabilities when intervening on certain specific groups. Borrowing from Sen's capability approach (Roybans, 2006), when targeting specific demographic groups as stated above, the municipalities will need to recognize the capabilities of the different demographic groups so that the beneficiaries are not left discouraged.

South African communities require innovative ways of thinking and cooperative ways of working. It is, therefore, important to provide the correct balance of skills within community-led initiatives. In order to foster positive change in communities, municipalities must objectively recognize beliefs, attributes, abilities, expertise, habits and attitudes that are useful to have, learn or amplify. In doing so, the municipalities will be establishing shared local visions that drive action and change, taking advantage of existing strengths and assets in communities.

We also need to approach building capabilities in communities with a long term perspective. In this instance, we select the emphasis on improving the functioning of the early childhood development sector to develop adaptive and resilient future generation as key. We have seen during the pandemic that this sector was missing in the early raft of emergency solutions propounded by the government. During the pandemic, while the government acted swiftly to establish guidelines for operations in what was deemed essential services, the essential service of early childhood development was missing and as a result, remained shut down for a very long time. Looking ahead, we need to rethink investments in this sector and how to make this sector function as an antecedent for building capabilities in the future generation.

5. Social Policy must act as an enabler of social equity and inclusion

First, COVID-19 pandemic has shown that the current social policies inadvertently promote social inequality, yet social policy ought to promote social equity and inclusive development as enshrined in Chapter 10, section 195(1) of the Constitution of 1996. Despite current policies recognising this social equity objective, the pandemic revealed that, in practice, current requirements and factors that are considered for one to qualify to receive social support are exclusionary. A broader definition of beneficiaries will result in a policy framework that will promote social equity by ensuring access to support mechanisms for recipients that are exposed but would not qualify in the current policy dispensation. This will allow the social policy to be both pro-poor as well as inclusive. To be able to successfully do this the social policy framework must be based on an inclusive definition and understanding of the structure of poverty in South Africa.

One of the critical observations in this paper is that due to the existing social policy framework being centred on ‘pro-poor’ focus, poverty alleviation is identified as the main objective/criterion of social policy. This has narrowed the focus of social policy significantly and enhanced the perception that poverty alleviation is the primary purpose of delivering social security and people-centred policy as compared to the provision of social services broadly. This has had an unintended consequence in that the framework does not include the middle-class who have been exposed to the risk of regressing into poverty in times of crises such as the current COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the UNDP report on the impact of COVID-19 In South Africa (2020)

estimates that 54% of households that have been pushed out of permanent jobs to informal or temporary contracts, as a coping mechanism for businesses affected by COVID-19, are likely to fall into poverty after the six-months stimulus package is over (UNDP, 2020). As a result, 34% of households are likely to exit the middle class into vulnerability. Those who were already vulnerable are expected to regress into poverty, therefore increasing pressures on the need to access social safety nets.

This paper therefore, argues that the existing social policy framework primarily focuses on the poor and provides social networks to the poor. The existing policy framework is centred around pro-poor policies and interventions which could be described as a narrow focus when compared to the possibility of progressive social policies. Research has established that pro-poor policies have a possible negative aspect to the extent that they sometimes destroy confidence in the communities while contributing to a somewhat polarized understanding of social policy.

The drive for pro-poor growth as evident in municipalities has, for a long time, focused growth to benefit the poor at least as much as or more than the rest of the population. Pro-poor policy approach has been targeted at improving the lives and capacities of the poor whose income is within the indigent threshold while attempting not to undermine economic growth. However, the existing pro-poor social policy is not geared to accommodate the middle class who are at risk of sliding into poverty in the time of a crisis. This paper, therefore, argues that the current existing framework needs to be improved by recognizing the broad structure of poverty in South Africa and that social policies need not be broadly targeted with the assumption that they can serve everyone equally (Mushayanyama, 2020). Different classes will require different solutions.

For example, when delivering housing, the poor and vulnerable may prefer to live closer to workplaces and schools while the upper class may prefer to live in secluded areas but with better security while they drive to places of work or business. In municipalities, while the focus has traditionally been on the poor, now the middle class ought to be prioritized too as they will be paying service bills and therefore the source of income for municipalities. Traditionally, those that are aspiring to become the middle class have not been targeted with policy interventions yet it would be in the best interest of the municipalities for the aspirants to graduate into the middle class and

become part of the tax base (Mushayanyama, 2020). This is in line with sustainable development post-COVID-19. The current assumption that every household that earns income above the indigent threshold is not poor and so may not benefit from social policies is wrong.

Also, making a distinction between pro-poor growth and growth that increases the size and command of the middle class has implications for social policy due to the existence of trade-offs between those policies that favour specific classes (Birdsall, 2010). Therefore, municipalities need to ensure that as people begin to reassert themselves in various classes that are higher than where they have been subjected to by COVID-19, social policy reforms are necessary to ensure that these people are supported along the transitory path till they become resilient.

Birdsall (2010) further argues that the concept of inclusive growth should go beyond the traditional emphasis on the poor and take into consideration changes in the economic power and the size of those that are usually considered as neither poor nor rich (Birdsall, 2010). Thus, growth in municipalities that is driven by and benefiting all classes is more likely to be economically sustainable. For example, municipalities will be able to manage and avoid rent-seeking associated with highly concentrated gains to growth (Mushayanyama, 2020). Politically it is easier for the municipalities to manage conflict and horizontal inequalities between racial and ethnic groups. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2008) confirms that if pro-poor growth is not backed by a clear long term strategy, then given the complexity of how economies and societies operate, it is unlikely to be successful. Therefore, social policy developers in municipalities must embrace the inclusive social policy and establish a system to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the growth of the economy, the reduction of poverty and equality and governance for all classes.

The recovery plan that is pro-poor approach will be insufficient, especially in the absence of a strong focus on infrastructure investment and growing the local economy. There is limited evidence of a deliberate policy effort concerning other social policy initiatives apart from income support and the provision of basic services. Policy initiatives on job creation e.g. EPWP, and skills development as part of municipal social services portfolio are inadequate to bring about transformative social policy. Despite cities like Johannesburg being in a good position to devise integrated

“approaches to combine people-based solutions with area-based policies to improve the situation of vulnerable people and the conditions in deprived neighbourhoods”, this has not been leveraged fully. The paper also recommends that the relationship between developmental social welfare services, social security and employment creation programmes such as the Expanded Public Works Programme at actual implementation level, be further reviewed, expanded within the context of an integrated social–economic development plan for reducing actual poverty on the one hand, and empowerment for escaping poverty on the other (Lombard, 2008).

There exists an opportunity as part of the development of innovative social policy to allow cities, in future, to deliver active inclusion social policies by maximising a combination of income support, with labour market activation measures and access to social services. Infrastructure development should not focus on short term job creation but rather a long term job creation or a long term economic growth. It is therefore pointless to be pro-poor if the economy is not growing. Currently, the social policy efforts are largely focused on income support alone and while many cities acknowledge the other dimensions, there isn't a defined policy position to enable cities to do so. In this way, cities enable all citizens, notably the most disadvantaged and furthest away from the labour market to participate in society. Thus municipalities must also focus on infrastructure which has the potential to sustain the pro-poor programmes. This is an important issue to sway the pro-poor approach away from creating dependence on the State.

As highlighted before, COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown as implemented in South Africa hit both the poor and the middle class. Yet, it is a common fact that the middle class is historically concentrated around metropolitan areas and that one of the most common challenges for cities all over the world is that when a crisis happens, it is cities that face a growing demand from citizens for welfare. During the pandemic, it was clear that municipalities were not taking significant initiatives outside of the broad national intervention process to proactively and actively respond to the pandemic. Yet they faced high numbers of residents that were affected by the pandemic. This raises the question of whether the full potential of municipalities is being exploited in the social policy framework, to improve the delivery of effective social interventions for targeted groups during and after the pandemic.

Municipalities are critical for improved social policy targeting. In their policy document on targeting and reaching the poor, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) (2008) also agrees on the targeting strategy for appropriate policy implementation. According to IFAD (2008), it is imperative to appreciate the dynamics, intricacies and diversities of the vulnerability of different classes, and the elements that impact on the capability of persons to pursue their own goals or to participate in collective action (International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2008).

These elements may relate to unequal relations and asset inequalities that may prevent options and freedom of choice. Thus, for the municipalities to leverage post- COVID-19 recovery, more resources and new policy instruments are not adequate without significant improvement in the targeting of those policy instruments, resources and actions. So, municipalities must be better positioned within their development context by making a clear statement about their focus and comparative advantage in policy targeting. Improved social policy targeting will create a comparative advantage in the implementation of policies. Thus municipalities must provide clear definitions of their target groups for various social policies, establish a shared conceptual understanding of how such targeting is arrived at for various policies and must be clear on how targeting will be addressed in the context of the municipal operational instruments.

Sometimes targeted social policy does result in unintended consequences when the target group interprets the move as being regarded as incapable and relegated. As such, the State needs to ensure that everyone is motivated and has hope. Municipalities will need to give a sense, through their policies, that whether someone is poor or vulnerable, they are capable and can also do things on their own. Thus, appropriate policy targeting must still leave people motivated to do their own things. Social policy will need to treat different demographic groups the same if they are in a similar circumstance in terms of vulnerability.

In addition to the inclusive class approach to policy targeting advocated above, it is also important to consider different vulnerable groups such as women, youth and persons with disabilities. Considering that COVID-19 forced the majority of South African people down the social mobility ladder (Economist, 2020), these ascribed characteristics will play as key determinants of upward mobility post-COVID-19. The

CoJ provides a good example of how ill targeting of specific groups will result in policy failure.

Data from the City of Johannesburg indigent register (the Expanded Social Package) indicates a low uptake of the ESP by the youth because they do not regard its services (free basic services) a priority to them (City of Johannesburg, 2018). Yet the CoJ has long regarded the ESP as a tool to comprehensively target all vulnerable people including the youth. In discussions with the youth, it was evident that they need economic opportunities such as jobs more than access to social safety nets provided by the ESP. The perception by the youth that the CoJ has, for long, not delivered on jobs could explain why the youth have since lost confidence and are no longer coming back to re-register for the program. This is a typical example of a situation in the CoJ where policy failed because it is not properly targeted.

Currently, the ESP database consists of mostly the elderly people in the majority because they see value in having access to free services (City of Johannesburg, 2018). This raises the question of who should be the appropriate targets and beneficiaries of indigent policies. In our view, the ESP just like any other indigent policy should be targeted at the very poor, child-headed households and the elderly. Other vulnerable groups such as the youth, women and persons with disabilities require a different package of assistance that is in line with motivating them and recognizing their capabilities. The paper proposes that the following factors be considered as part of the review of the Social Policy Framework in South Africa post COVID-19.

6. Food Security and Access to Health as Critical Determinants of a Socially Secure Urban Society

In its Growth and Development Strategy, the City of Johannesburg, among other matters, recognized the centrality of access to food and health services. According to the City, if it is to deliver improved quality of life and development-driven resilience for residents of Johannesburg, it would have to deliberately intervene and expand the social support already provided beyond the basic services provided by the City and income support provided by other spheres of government to include access to food and health services. The City aspires to develop a city that presents a significantly improved human and social policy reality through a targeted focus on poverty

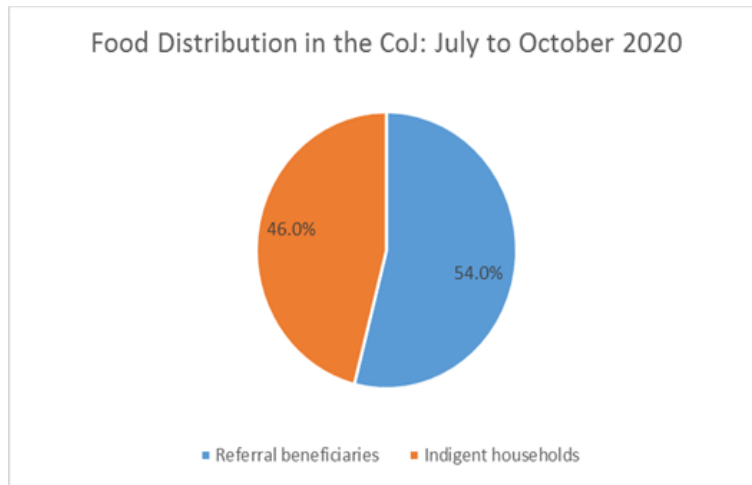
reduction whereby food security and improved health and life expectancy are critical precursors.

There is a relationship between this aspirational position contained in the GDS 2040 and the broader objectives of the national social policy framework because as the City suggests, the quality of life experienced by citizens when living in an urban setup, is tied to their ability to access food and health services (City of Johannesburg, 2011). While cities have been providing to a large extent on the infrastructure needs (transportation, water, sanitation), the advent of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown and its effects demonstrated why metropolitan cities should consider, formally (by way of policy) access to food and health services as part of their social policy interventions.

6.1. Access to Food

COVID-19 has shown the centrality of food security to socially secure society. Food insecurity indeed has a negative impact on human capital with the potential to raise municipal costs and spending. COVID-19 re-emphasised the need to increase the basket of services that constitute a safety-net for the indigent in municipalities. This conclusion is drawn from an assessment of two critical factors; the state of food insecurity and health in South Africa. During the lockdown, it became apparent that access to food is a critical success factor in fighting the pandemic.

It is critical that new policy proposals actively integrate this factor to already existing social development and social inclusion objectives of social policy. Data from the CoJ support the above notion that the impact of COVID-19 on food security has been severe. Most of the food beneficiaries are traditionally from the indigent databases of municipalities, where beneficiaries go through screening and means-testing for eligibility. However as can be seen in the figure below, there has been a shift towards referral beneficiaries (referred by councillors and other stakeholders) as COVID-19 disaster intervention. The referral food beneficiaries normally would not have been in the indigent register, but due to COVID-19 had their situation turned to face hunger.



Municipalities must put food security as central to both their short- and long-term economic growth strategies. High rates of food insecurity result in a loss in gross value added by approximately 4 to 5 percent (UN Food and Agriculture Organization). Municipal strategies on economic growth must include food and nutrition security targets. Municipal policies need to have clear targets and proper monitoring and evaluation strategies for measuring progress in the fight against hunger (Torero, 2014). It is important to note that improving food security will demand food security policies to interface with other multi-sectoral policies aimed at reducing inequalities and targeting vulnerable populations. Therefore, municipal investments aimed at achieving food security, especially in municipalities facing budgetary constraints and barriers to growth on multiple fronts, such as poverty and inequality, need to be incorporated into the wider public policy debate.

The paper recommends that formal policy guidance be provided to guide cities in how they can implement a multi-pronged approach to support urban agriculture for example, including how cities can; designate land for the sole purpose of food production; actively support and provide incentives for small-scale growers to provide steady supplies of fresh produce for the urban food system; work with large food retailers, distributors and manufacturers to create localised systems through which to ensure food security; and, work alongside national governments to minimise the negative impact of food cartels and retail oligopolies – and to develop and provide protected food markets and productive supply chains. There is inadequate policy guidance for such innovative processes, leaving it to different city governments to attempt different strategies. Recognition of these interventions in national policy and

an obligation for cities to implement these could bring access to food into mainstream social policy discourse. Critically it could empower residents and enable them to move from reliance on income support from government to be self-reliant to a degree.

We encourage municipalities to strengthen the safety nets and efforts toward building resilient communities in line with inclusive growth strategies that will marshal the recovery plan as outlined by the ERRP. However, safety nets and support must depart from pure relief in the form of hand-outs to the impartation of life skills, knowledge and attitudes for sustainable decent livelihoods. As the food parcels are being handed out, the municipalities must take advantage of such databases to intervene through skills development, improving knowledge and attitudes towards suitable urban agriculture. Thus policies to improve access to land for urban farming are key.

While an extensive analysis of the food distribution in the CoJ between July and October 2020 indicates a decline in the number of beneficiaries of food parcels, there is no sufficient evidence that this is accompanied by improved security. If anything is to go by, this decline could be equated to withdrawal by the private sector in participating in improving food systems. Thus, municipalities need policies that are enabling for private-public partnerships in improving food systems. The COVID-19 exposed municipalities as many willing partners found stringent rules and regulations that ended up being prohibitive for partnering with the government. In order to attract partners and in the endeavour to improve food security, the municipal food policies need to be reviewed to respond to disasters, ensuring that processes and procedures are streamlined. This observation which relates to the inability of municipalities to tap into available private and non-governmental support defeats what would have been a normal and mainstay of interventions during a pandemic. Typically, in ordinary times, and more so, in times of crisis, the government relies significantly on partnerships with the private sector and non-governmental organisations to deliver much-needed interventions. It is a cardinal point of an effective social policy initiative, that there should be close collaboration between nongovernmental organisations in the social welfare sector on the one hand, and national, provincial and local government on the other, to provide the information and infrastructure to enable NGOs to intervene.

While this was apparent at the national level, with interventions from several donor organisations that contributed to the national intervention effort, there was little

evidence of similar partnerships between municipalities and NGOs or the private sector. This meant at a local level the challenge of providing a social safety nets to residents became the primary responsibility of the state alone, with limited interest from NGOs and the private sector. However, because municipal processes such as the procurement processes and the regulations relating to private-public partnerships do not easily facilitate partners coming on board. As part of leveraging the ability of municipalities to bring on board other partners to support social policy efforts inside and outside of times of crisis, one area of potential review is the existing processes that must be followed to enable other actors to come on board.

Another observation in relation to food security is the several media reports of the involvement of councillors in the food distribution chain in most municipalities that highlighted allegations of corruption and nepotism. An analysis of the food bank data indicates that some wards had disproportionately higher access to food parcels compared to others regardless of levels of deprivations. This is a reflection of weak food policies that municipalities must now consider for review to strengthen food policy implementation gaps and ensure that no individuals take advantage. Food policy reviews must also address flawed beneficiary recruitment procedures that by design may disadvantage legitimate and deserving food-insecure families. Thus, various municipalities may need to reconsider the eligibility criteria in terms of accessibility, amiability and the red tape to improve the process.

6.2. Access to health services

Closely linked to centrality of access to food is the issue of access to health care. Universal health coverage (UHC) means that everyone everywhere can access health services without experiencing financial hardship. The process towards this objective is firmly underway in South Africa with the development of the relevant legislative framework. COVID-19 fundamentally disrupted health systems, societies and economies and has demonstrated that ensuring the right to health of all citizens in all countries is a matter of utmost urgency. The pandemic proved that no one will be safe until everyone is safe, demonstrating why government involvement in ensuring universal access to health is a necessity because the impacts of the pandemic are not felt equally across and within societies.

The opportunity to review social policy could not have come at a better time where major government decisions and policy interventions are required to reset the very foundations of health systems. This includes governance; financing; improving access to medicines, vaccines and health services; and building up the health workforce to strengthen the capacity to prevent and respond to health emergencies. Government intervention through ensuring universal access to healthcare as part of its social policies and interventions will ensure no one is left behind in the response and recovery. One of the strategies that are recommended in response to the effects of the pandemic is that governments must build stronger health systems for universal health coverage, invest in stronger health systems, protect people from future health threats and strive to make health for all a reality.

This paper confirms that the new social policy post the pandemic should be firm on the need for universal access to health care. The paper emphasises that local governments and in particular metropolitan cities should play a bigger role in this process of ensuring universal health coverage by ensuring that their residents have access to health services as part of their social policy interventions. An accessible health system will be a critical social determinant for urban residents. Municipalities' health interventions will potentially and positively influence health and the prevention of illness at the individual, community and national level. Pro-active health interventions at a city-level will be impactful because health issues culminate in problems in several domains such as in the domain of individual lifestyle choices (such as smoking, diet, exercise, sexual behaviour); community factors such as crime and unemployment; social conditions such as social inclusion and cohesion; environmental factors such as living and working conditions; and welfare policies that impact on income, food security and education. Social policy interventions in cities must focus on ensuring cities implement programmes that improve the conditions of daily life by reducing health inequities. This is achieved by improving affordable access to public healthcare; improving systems and mechanisms to monitor residents' health; measuring and evaluating health indicators; and actions towards raising public awareness about active approaches to health.

Despite different metropolitan municipalities implementing some forms of intervention that recognizes health as a social policy issue, the absence of uniformity and policy

certainty limits the ability of the interventions to achieve the desired impact. A lesson that can be learnt by other municipalities from the City of Johannesburg is that it has several interventions that promote access. For example, the City of Johannesburg extended its operating hours for health facilities and also established a single patient database which enabled it to access the patient information across the City and track patient needs. However, even though these interventions, it is not easy to link the health database to the food security database or the private sector database of patients. A single policy framework that incorporates all these dimensions will be central in ensuring the social factors known about residents are transformed into targeted public sector interventions.

7. Resilient Social Policy in Crisis Times

The resilience of social policies is directly linked to the quality of institutions, systems, and procedures within which these social policies are implemented. The existing institutions, systems, processes and procedures to deliver and monitor the effectiveness of social services in all the three spheres of government normally work in ideal environments. During the pandemic, the systems are proving to be inadequate, inflexible and unable to adapt. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are also found to be ineffective and cannot be easily adapted to function optimally in times of COVID-19 pandemic. Going ahead, this will expose beneficiaries at a time when they most require social support and will likely result in increased leakages when resources become limited.

As a result, the fourth observation to be made is that the resilience of existing institutions, mechanisms, processes and procedures that support the delivery of social policy interventions need to be strengthened if social policy interventions are to be effective in times of COVID-19 crises. There is evidence that the current social policy environment has proven not to be resilient enough as demonstrated by the inability of key processes to function during the lockdown times. This means the vulnerable will become exposed as they failed to access key support during a time they need it most. As a result, strong institutions are required for successful implementation of social policies and interventions. A programme of strengthening institutions of municipalities can improve the implementation of social policies to the benefit of everyone. Reviewing the role and capacity of municipal institutions may mean that President

Ramaphosa's bold statements on economic recovery will not be met by weak institutions, particularly at the local government level. The literature suggests that strong institutions have the propensity to level the playing field and provide all citizens with opportunities to participate in and shape public policy (OECD 2015:6).

However, strong institutions alone are not an answer without strategic planning and focus. The idea of a strong institution goes beyond compliance. Strengthening institutions in municipalities must combine real compliance and the strategic planning part of the legislation to enable municipalities to be effective in the delivery of the complete social policy value chain. Compliant institutions that lack strategic planning are vulnerable because they will not be able to withstand the shocks such as COVID-

19. This suggests that the municipalities may need, in addition to strengthening their institutions, clear strategic intents – blueprints. Adopting long term strategies can rally people towards achieving the common goals, thus complementing the work of strong institutions.

There has to be stronger monitoring and evaluation capability in institutions that develop and implement social policy interventions. Corruption and lack of capacity are evident in many municipalities. There is evidence from the outcome of the disbursement of government social assistance, that the systems are weak to detect and prevent corrupt activities. This disadvantages the ideal beneficiaries and requires strengthening of monitoring and evaluation processes as part of the review and strengthening of institutional capacity. The pandemic and subsequent lockdown exposed the limitations of the government-wide monitoring and evaluation system.

There has to be greater innovation to support flexible and adaptive social policy and processes. To illustrate this, while the pandemic demanded limited movement and social distancing, a significant number of recipients could not access their social support without movement from their homes to a point of access. At points of access, there were reports of reduced enforcement of social distancing requirements. As an example, a social policy intervention that is capable of adapting to ensure that there isn't a significant amount of travelling demanded to access social service support could have assisted in mitigating the potential effects of the pandemic. COVID-19 also exposed that existing mechanisms, systems and processes can benefit from improved technological innovation. In times of crises, the ability to identify a problem and the

nature of the interventions required are critical to providing much-needed intervention. The existing social policy framework and interventions are not supported by adequate technological intervention that can assist the government and its agencies to know where a particular problem exists and the type of government intervention is immediately required.

8. Key Recommendations and Conclusion

This paper makes 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. This rethink must focus on ensuring their social policies are designed to deliver interventions that reduce inequality and encourage social mobility. As traditionally seen, South African municipalities have been focusing their social policies around the pro-poor concept. There is now a need to refocus their social policies away from this development approach and embrace inclusive social policy, in which all citizens feel that they have a stake in the services that their taxes pay for. This is so as the covid19 has shown that in the event of shocks, vulnerability is severe across all the classes blow the affluent upper classes.

So, in this paper, we recommend that the social policy framework must re-centre itself on the developmental model that uses the social grant system as the means to transfer income to the poor immediately and swiftly. However, this should not be the only poverty alleviation and income-generating alternative. Instead, the relationship between this use of the social grant system must be strongly linked to the broader social and economic goals. This will enhance the sustainability of the social security grant system. This could lead to the development of a more sustainable and developmental system that brings about genuine social improvement is needed.

Third, municipalities require strong institutions to effectively develop and implement social policies. Fourth, building on 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. This

means the social policy framework must be complemented with cross-sectoral policy focus areas. In municipalities, in particular, there is a need for shifting the focus of social policy from a primary focus of service provision to ensuring policy coherence across sectors and thereby mitigating the negative effects associated with fragmented policymaking and sectoral planning.

This paper's recommendations for improved integration in the next social policy framework is informed by several challenges that cities experience. The effectiveness of interventions that are implemented for vulnerable groups is limited primarily because there is over-centralisation leading to a 'one-size-fits-none' planning. The ineffectiveness is abated by fragmented and duplicated efforts to deliver the interventions by different spheres and agencies of government. There is ineffective integration of efforts with a poorly capacitated non-profit sector which further complicates the outcome. This calls for increased focus on municipalities as the new site for development and implementation of social policies and interventions.

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