



**UNIVERSITY OF<sup>TM</sup>  
KWAZULU-NATAL**

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**INYUVESI  
YAKWAZULU-NATALI**

**AN IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL COVID-19 SOCIAL  
RELIEF OF DISTRESS (SRD) GRANT IN KWAZULU-NATAL (2020-2022)**

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2023

## DECLARATION

I, **Mthobisi Mduduzi Nkabinde** declare that:

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2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to the Almighty God for his unfailing love, mercy and favour!

A special feeling of gratitude to my mother, Ntombikayise Doris Nkabinde, words can hardly describe my thanks and appreciation to you. You have been my source of inspiration, support, and guidance. You have taught me to be determined, to believe in myself, and to always persevere. I am truly thankful and honoured to have you as my mother. Without your endless love and encouragement, I would never have been able to complete my graduate studies.

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- To all my friends and colleagues who have supported me through difficult and good times throughout my academic journey, thank you. I will always appreciate your love and kindness.

## ABSTRACT

The implementation of policy or programme is a crucial step in public policymaking despite its complexity. Implementation can be regarded as policy in action or how policy is carried out. Moreover, the quality of its implementation determines the effectiveness and success of any policy. Essentially, there is a policy gap when policy expectations and perceived outcomes differ during the implementation process.

The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the SRD programme implementation issues, including accessibility, the application process, payment processes, and the distributional impact faced by the Department of Social Development in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal. The study also focuses on beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal between May 2020-December 2022.

A desktop qualitative approach to research is used to collect data in this study. Moreover, the study uses content analysis as a data collection method. The sample for this study is a selection of primary documents, including the Social Relief of Distress, Social Assistance Act (No 13 of 2004) and the South African Social Security Agency Act (No 9 of 2004). Moreover, secondary studies related to the topic and research questions will be selected, such as reports, online news articles, and academic journals.

The study found that the emergence of the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in South Africa in 2019, its corresponding impacts simultaneously posed a global health and socio-economic crisis. To curb the spread of Covid-19, South Africa implemented a five-tier lockdown strategy, with level 5 being the most drastic in terms of restrictions. The Covid-19 crisis and regulations restricting social mobility and interaction have led most governments worldwide to expand their social protection systems to provide relief to vulnerable individuals and household members. Notably, digital technology has become integral to many social security systems worldwide.

The implementation of the SRD grant in South Africa faced numerous challenges, resulting in some beneficiaries being excluded. Issues included a lack of digital access and literacy, inefficiencies in cash payments by the Post Office, and difficulties for rural and peri-urban residents. Government databases with outdated information also caused some applications to be rejected without a chance for appeal. Those receiving bank deposits experienced withdrawal

fees and inconsistent payment schedules. Additionally, poor service delivery, bribery, and corruption were reported at Post office branches where grants were collected.

It was established that public policy programs fail if there is a lack of direction and unclear goals. A consequence of these limitations is that most adopted policies include vague language and ambiguous, contradictory, or unfeasible policy goals. Furthermore, the goals of the newly gazetted regulations of the SRD grant are unrealistic, as hundreds of thousands of people receiving the grant were disqualified. The evidence further suggests how SASSA failed to update its outdated, limited databases and inadequate verification systems leading to an influx of applications from public servants.

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## ACRONYMS

<b>ANC</b>	- African National Congress
<b>APC</b>	- Association for Progressive Communication
<b>BASS</b>	- Banking Association of South Africa
<b>CAOSA</b>	- Community Advice Office of SA
<b>CDS</b>	- Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development
<b>COGTA</b>	- Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs
<b>Covid-19</b>	- Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>CSG</b>	- Child Support Grant
<b>DAFF</b>	- Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries
<b>DPME</b>	- Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>DPSA</b>	- Department of Public Service and Administration
<b>DSD</b>	- Department of Social Development
<b>EIG</b>	- Emergency Income Grant
<b>FIC</b>	- Financial Intelligence Centre
<b>FIES</b>	- Food Insecurity Experience Scale
<b>FSIN</b>	- Food Security Information Network
<b>G2P</b>	- Government-to-People
<b>GBV</b>	- Gender Based Violence
<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	- Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>ICESCR</b>	- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>ID</b>	- Identity Document
<b>ILO</b>	- International Labour Organization
<b>IPSOS</b>	- Institut Public de Sondage d’Opinion Secteur



<b>IPV</b>	- Intermate Partner Violence
<b>ISDR</b>	- International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
<b>KZN</b>	- KwaZulu-Natal
<b>M&amp;E</b>	- Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>NDA</b>	- National Development Agency
<b>NGO</b>	- Non-Governmental Organisations
<b>NIDS</b>	- National Income Dynamics Study
<b>NIDS-CRAM</b>	- National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey
<b>NPA</b>	- National Prosecuting Authority
<b>NPR</b>	- National Population Register
<b>NSFAS</b>	- National Student Financial Aid Scheme
<b>NSNP</b>	- National School Nutrition Programme
<b>OECD</b>	- Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>PASA</b>	- Payments Association of South Africa
<b>PMBEJD</b>	- Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity
<b>PMG</b>	- Parliamentary Monitoring Group
<b>PPP</b>	- Public-Private Partnership
<b>QLFS</b>	- Quarterly Labour Force Survey
<b>RESEP</b>	- Research on Socioeconomic Policy
<b>RSA</b>	- Republic of South Africa
<b>SALDRU</b>	- Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit
<b>SAPO</b>	- South African Post Office
<b>SAPS</b>	- South African Police Service
<b>SARS</b>	- South African Revenue Service

<b>SASSA</b>	- South African Social Security Agency
<b>SCAT</b>	- Social Change Assistance Trust
<b>SRD</b>	- Social Relief of Distress
<b>SSA</b>	- Sub-Saharan Africa
<b>Stats SA</b>	- Statistics South Africa
<b>TERS</b>	- Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme
<b>UIF</b>	- Unemployment Insurance Fund
<b>UN</b>	- United Nations
<b>UNDP</b>	- United Nations Development Programme
<b>USA</b>	- United States of America
<b>USD</b>	- U.S. Dollar
<b>USSD</b>	- Unstructured Supplementary Service Data
<b>WFP</b>	- World Food Programme
<b>WIEGO</b>	- Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising
<b>ZAR</b>	- South African Rand

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 Introduction and Background**

The emergence of the Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) in South Africa in 2019 simultaneously posed a global health and socioeconomic crisis. However, prior to the emergence of Covid-19, South Africa's economy was plagued with low growth rates, a technical recession and the persistent challenges of poverty, unemployment, and inequality (Chitiga et al., 2021:1; Futshane, 2021a:3). According to Worldometer (2022), approximately 573 million people were reported to have contracted Covid-19 as of July 21, 2022, with over 6.3 million deaths globally. In the case of South Africa, over 4 million positive cases were reported on the 21st of July 2022, with over 100 000 deaths (Department of Health, 2022). Following the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002, Cyril Ramaphosa, President of South Africa, declared a state of national disaster on March 23, 2020, and announced a national lockdown for March 26, 2020 (SA News, 2020). Correspondingly, disaster regulations were enacted to address, prevent, and combat the spread of Covid-19 in South Africa (COGTA, 2020:3). In addition, the lockdown regulations were developed as a risk-adjusted series of five alert levels with varying degrees of restrictions on the movement of people, as well as the transportation and sale of goods and services (RSA, 2020). The hard lockdown in South Africa left many of the country's precarious and informal workers without income (Skinner et al., 2021:1-2). Most of these workers are Black women whose families depend on them (ibid).

The Covid-19 crisis and regulations restricted social mobility and interaction, which led most governments worldwide to expand their social protection systems to provide relief to vulnerable individuals and household members (Köhler and Bhorat, 2020:i). The national lockdown had unparalleled impacts, which included loss of jobs, income and poverty amongst vulnerable South Africans who had no income protection (Department of Social Development (2021:1). Statistic SA released its Quarterly Labor Force Survey (QLFS) for the fourth quarter of 2020 on the 23rd of February 2021, which showed an increase of 1,7% in the official unemployment rate which stands at 32.5% in South Africa. Since 2008, unemployment in South Africa has been at its highest level, "the number of unemployed persons increased by 701 000 in Q4: 2020 following an increase of 2,2 million in the previous quarter" (Stats-SA, 2020). Correspondingly, Köhler and Bhorat (2020:1) articulate that those in lower-income households have withstood the most of the adverse labour market effects of the pandemic and lockdown. Similarly, Rogan and Skinner (2020:15) echoed that those in the informal economy



have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic when compared to formal workers. During April 2020, a more sizeable proportion of the informal economy (compared to formal employment) was unemployed. The number of hours worked per week for the typical informal worker decreased by 50% between February and April. Likewise, Jain et al. (2020:1) findings indicate that about one million jobless people have slipped into poverty because of the Covid-19 shock between February and April 2020.

As a devised strategy to protect those with no safety nets to mitigate against the impact of lockdown on vulnerable sectors of the population, the President announced a special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant of R350 a month for the next six months would be paid to individuals who are currently unemployed and do not receive any other form of a social grant or Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) payment (South African Government, 2020). The aim is to provide temporary relief to individuals and families experiencing temporary distress (SASSA, 2021:11). The grant was the first large-scale digitally implemented social security relief programme. The digital application and verification process allowed SASSA to embark on a massive enrolment drive during a national lockdown and in the context of closed offices and staff shortages (Department of Social Development, 2021:1; Gronbach et al., 2022). The Department of Social Development (DSD) and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) managed and administered the distribution of the grant (ibid). Although payment systems were relatively automated, manual cash disbursements via the National Post Office (and later large retailers) were the predominant mode of payment (ibid).

The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the SRD programme implementation issues, including accessibility, the application process, payment processes, and the distributional impact faced by the Department of Social Development in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal. The study also focuses on beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal between May 2020-December 2022.

## **1.2. Research Questions and Objectives**

The key research questions related to the implementation of the Social Relief of Distress grant in KwaZulu-Natal are:

1. What is the policy and legislative framework for the Covid-19 lockdown legislation in South Africa?
2. What is the policy and legislative framework for the SRD grant?
3. What were the implementation/delivery structures, processes and systems put in place to deliver the SRD grant?
4. What were experiences of the targets of the SRD in accessing the grant?
5. What was the importance of the SRD grant?
6. What were the implementing issues experienced by implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering the SRD grant?

The research objectives are:

- To present a policy analysis of the policy and legislative framework for the Covid-19 lockdown regulations in South Africa.
- To present a policy analysis of the policy and legislative framework for the SRD grant.
- To present the implementation/delivery structures, processes and systems that were put in place to deliver the SRD grant.
- To explore the significance of the Social Relief of Distress grant.
- To investigate the experiences of beneficiaries in accessing the SRD grant.
- To explore how the importance of the SRD.
- To investigate the implementing issues experienced by the implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering the SRD grant.

## **1.3. Research Design**

### **1.3.1. Methodology**

This study employs a desktop qualitative research approach. A qualitative researcher “collects data in written or spoken language or observations recorded in language and then analyses the data by identifying and categorizing themes” (Blanche et al., 2006: 47). Besides, Durrheim (2006:47) states that qualitative researchers collect data in the form of oral or written language

or observations that are verbalized, and then identify and categorize themes in the data. This approach will provide an in-depth understanding of beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents, including SASSA, in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal. This presents a valuable opportunity to gain experience more about how they see the world.

### **1.3.2. Sampling technique**

A non-probability sampling technique is used in this research. A non-probability method is used when there is no way to estimate that all population elements are represented in the sample (Leedy and Ormarod, 2005:206). This study adopts purposive sampling. Furthermore, purposive sampling (also known as judgment, selective, or subjective sampling) is a method in which the researcher chooses members of the population to participate in the sample based on his or her judgment (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014). Therefore, the sample for this study is a selection of primary documents, including the Social Relief of Distress, Social Assistance Act (No 13 of 2004) and the South African Social Security Agency Act (No 9 of 2004). Moreover, secondary studies related to the topic and research questions will be selected, such as reports, online news articles, and academic journals.

### **1.3.3. Data Collection methods**

The study uses content analysis as a data collection method. Content analysis is a research technique used to determine the presence of specific words, themes, or concepts in qualitative data (i.e., text) (Bernard and Bernard, 2013). Researchers can use content analysis to quantify and examine the presence, meanings, and relationships of specific words, themes, or concepts (ibid). The sources of data are primary government policy and legislation related to the SRD and secondary data sources. Besides, secondary data sources include government reports, non-governmental organization reports, journal articles, online reports, and online news articles from (E.g., Daily Maverick, IOL, News24, City Press, Conversation Africa, Ground Up, Mail& Guardian) on the experiences of SRD beneficiaries and implementing agents.

### **1.3.4. Data Analysis**

Data analysis translates all the information collected into order, structure, and meaning (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al.,2014:232). Because qualitative data analysis concerns meaning, the researcher uses the thematic content analysis model to analyse the data. Du-Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:234) argue that qualitative content analysis is used in exploring and identifying “overt

and covert themes and patterns in a text”. Correspondingly, Neuman (2011) writes that themes are unique patterns in data sets correlated with a specific research question and are essential to describing a phenomenon. Du-Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:234) noted that qualitative content analysis identifies unique themes that illustrate the phenomenon’s range of meanings rather than analysing the statistical significance of textual or conceptual occurrences. For this study, themes derived from primary and secondary sources are used to analyse data.

## **1.4. Structure of Dissertation**

### **Chapter One: Introduction**

The chapter provides the study background and outlines the study's research questions and objectives. Further, it lays out the research design used to conduct the study.

### **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

The chapter presents an overview of existing literature on implementing the Social Relief of Distress grant from a local, African, and global perspective.

### **Chapter Three: Conceptual and Theoretical Framework**

The chapter explores the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the investigation; it includes a discussion on public policy and policy programs, policy implementation theories, public-private partnership (PPP) concepts, and factors that impact implementation.

### **Chapter Four: Policy and Legislative Framework for the Social Relief of Distress grant**

The chapter analyses the policy and legislative framework that guide the implementation of the Social Relief of Distress grant.

### **Chapter Five: Findings and Analysis**

The chapter analyses and presents the findings according to the research questions. The findings are presented according to the themes drawn from the theoretical framework.

### **Chapter Six: Conclusion**

The chapter draws conclusions as revealed by the findings of the research study.

## **1.5. Conclusion**

The study investigates the SRD programme implementation issues, including accessibility, the application process, payment processes, and the distributional impact faced by the Department

of Social Development in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal. The study also focuses on beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal between May 2020- December 2022. The emergence of Covid-19 in South Africa in 2019 and its corresponding impacts simultaneously posed a health and socio-economic crisis globally. The special Covid-19 R350 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant was introduced as a government intervention as jobs were lost owing to the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on the economy.

The chapter presents an overview of the study. The main aspects covered included the study's background, research questions and objectives, research design (methodology, sampling technique, data collection methods, and data analysis) and the chapter plan. The next chapter, chapter two, presents and discusses existing literature on implementing the Social Relief of Distress grant from a local, African, and global perspective.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Introduction**

It is important to define social welfare and grants to conceptualise and contextualise the key issues emanating from the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. In order to do this, the chapter first presents an in-depth discussion of South Africa's pre-Covid-19 social protection system; this is because South Africa's social protection system prior to the Covid-19 pandemic consisted of a social assistance component (cash and food transfers). In addition, the chapter highlights the impact of social grants and poverty in South Africa. The argument is important because the SRD grant aims to alleviate poverty for persons experiencing temporary distress. The chapter reviews South Africa's socioeconomic context before the advent of Covid-19 to determine the impact of Covid-19.

In the same way, the chapter examines the challenges posed by Covid-19 and the subsequent lockdowns. Besides, the section outlines and analyses the Covid-19 Disaster relief programmes to support SRD beneficiaries globally and in Africa. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, governments worldwide used social assistance payments to support vulnerable populations. Moreover, governments are creating new and adapting existing-social assistance programs to cater to a broader population, increase benefits, advance payments, increase payments' frequency, or waive conditions for eligibility. The argument will establish the implementation challenges of the social assistance programs. Finally, the section reviews the role of digital technology in delivering social assistance cash transfers for Covid-19 relief.

### **2.2. Social Welfare**

In its broadest sense, the concept of 'welfare' refers to what is 'good' for people or what is in their best interests (Spicker,1988:3). In its narrower sense, it is defined as the delivery of social services-principally, social security, health care, education, housing, and social work (ibid). Mothiane (2014:5) notes that healthcare may be curative because it provides care for the sick and vulnerable. In Bond (2014:4), social policies are characterised as measures that aim to improve a person's well-being, whether through welfare services or policies impacting more broadly on livelihoods. Moreover, Patel (2008:1) posits that social welfare policies are an "integrated system of social services, benefits, programmes and social justice and social functioning in a caring and enabling environment". Social welfare policies, therefore, generally meet the needs of society through a variety of methods (Msomi, 2018:7). The importance of social security, particularly for the elderly and disabled, cannot be underestimated (Mokwena,

2016:15). For these groups, social security should serve as a comforter. This study defines social welfare as state-provided social assistance to benefit marginalised groups (Bond, 2014). Providing social welfare is debatable and attracts different responses from the public and private sectors (Grobler and Dunga, 2015).

During the apartheid era in South Africa, the state-run social welfare system was initially racialised, as it exclusively benefited whites only (Bond, 2014:2; Haarman, 2000:10). Despite the growing inclusion of other racial groups, apartheid's social welfare system was premised on discriminatory policies (Klasen, 2010:9). This implies that once apartheid was overthrown in 1994, the succeeding African National Congress (ANC) administration inherited a racially fractured social welfare system that was not designed for the entire population at the time (Bond, 2014:1; Haarman, 2000:10). Notably, the ANC administration has achieved steady and gradual development in eradicating poverty and creating a more equal society for all South Africans (Bernstein, de Kadt, Roodt and Schirmer, 2014:15; Patel, 2008:72). The post-apartheid government's two priorities are to combat poverty and reduce inequality (The World Bank, 2014: v), and poverty alleviation is the primary goal of social welfare policy in South Africa (Triegaardt, 2005:249).

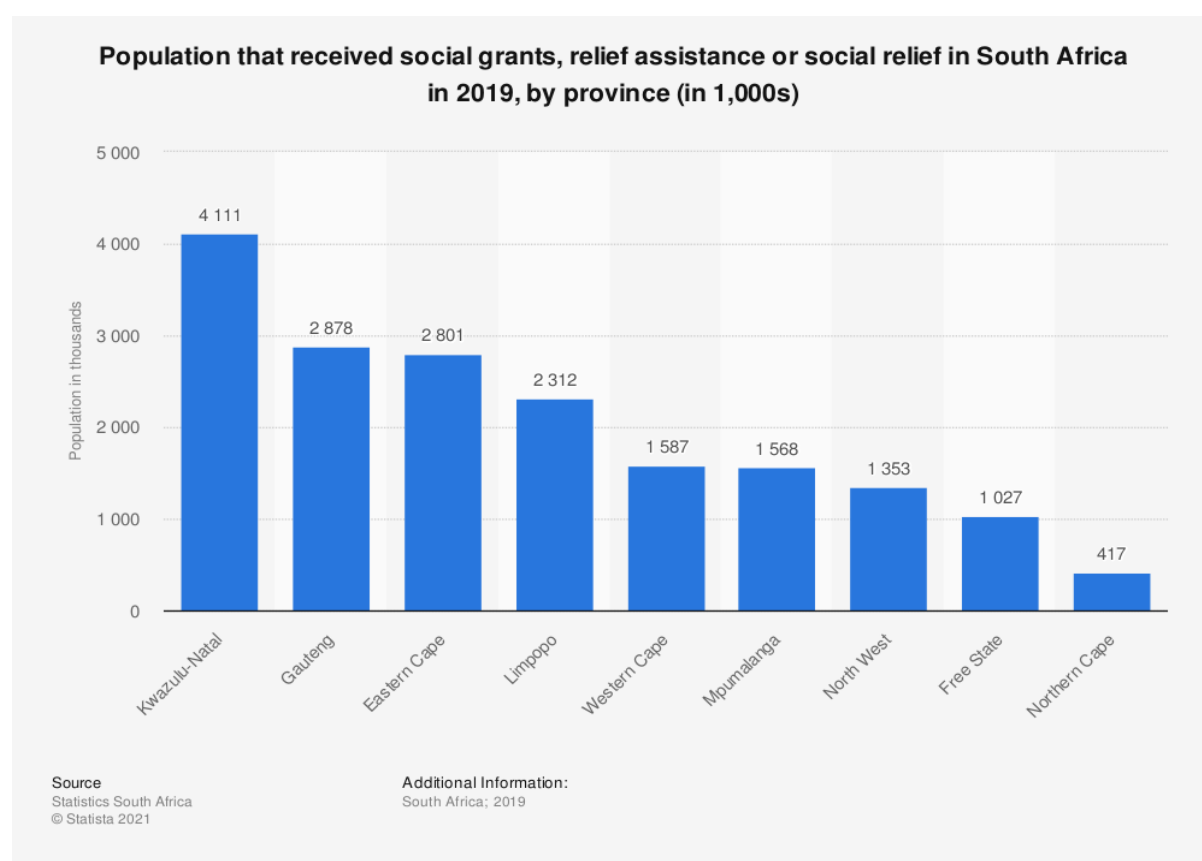
### **2.3. South Africa's pre-Covid-19 Social Protection System**

In South Africa, social grants are based on a right to social security enshrined in the Republic of South Africa's (RSA) (1996) Constitution. However, the Constitution does not detail this policy (RSA, 1996, Section 27, Subsection 1; Rosa, Leatt and Hall, 2005:06). What is more, a means-tested approach is used to determine who is eligible for these grants, which benefits the neediest and most deserving South Africans (SASSA, 2012:07; Seekings and Nattrass, 2008:363). Besides, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) is designated the role of implementing social grants in the country (Green, 2015; Klasen, 2010:04). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2011:364) documents that social grants are means-tested, tax-funded, and non-contributory cash transfers targeted at specific groups of the population. To be precise, young children from low-income families, the elderly, and the disabled are examples of such groups (Van der Berg, Siebrits & Lekezwa, 2010: 9). According to Leibbrandt et al. (2010:46), social grants are defined as money paid to members of vulnerable groups from funds to which they did not contribute. Furthermore, these vulnerable populations cannot meet their basic needs independently. These grants aim to reduce poverty's

impact on South Africa's poor and vulnerable households (Van der Berg, Louw and Du Toit, 2007: 12).

Means testing is used to distinguish between the “deserving poor” and the “non-deserving citizens” (Moore & Seekings, 2019:513; Leubolt, 2014:11). As a result, the post-apartheid social assistance system is shaped by means testing, as grants are exclusively for those who are unable to work, such as pensioners, family caregivers, the disabled, and the chronically ill. According to most measures, welfare spending and coverage have increased significantly since 1994 (Phaahla, 2015). Statistics South Africa estimated that approximately 18 million South Africans needing support or vulnerable to poverty received government grants, relief assistance and social relief in 2019 (Galal, 2021; SASSA, 2020). Kwazulu-Natal had a relatively high number of social grant recipients, amounting to over four million people (ibid).

**Figure 1: Social grant recipients in South Africa 2019, by province.**



Source: Statistics South Africa (2021)

The United Nations (UN) (2001:3) defines social protection as *“the set of public and private policies and programmes undertaken by societies in response to various contingencies to offset the absence or substantial reduction of income from work; to provide assistance for families*



*with children as well as provide people with health care and housing*". In order to provide social protection, several functions are necessary, including (a) protective measures - meant to prevent lives from being lost or to reduce deprivation; b) preventive – through social insurance schemes such as pensions and health insurance, people's exposure to risks is reduced; (c) promotive- strengthen the capability of the vulnerable to safeguard themselves from dangers and loss of income; and (d) social justice - eliminate inequities and improve social integration through legislative reforms, budgetary allocations, and redistributive measures (Taylor, 2008:28; UN, 2001:3-4). The state commits the duty to all people to provide social protection, particularly those most vulnerable to poverty and social exclusion (Mutangadura, 2009:1; Adato and Haddinnott, 2008: 2).

In comparison to other developing countries, South Africa has a far longer history of using social assistance as the cornerstone of its social protection system (Gronbach, Seekings and Megannon, 2022:4). The International Labour Organization (ILO) (2011) writes that "*South Africa has developed a social security system based on the constitutional right, composed of three pillars: non-contributory schemes, including targeted social assistance and public employment programmes, mandatory social insurance, and voluntary insurance*". Similarly, Gronbach et al. (2022:4) echo that before the Covid-19 pandemic in South Africa, social protection consisted of cash and food transfers and social or semi-social insurance covering many workers in formal employment but not all.

#### **(a) Social Grants**

The social assistance component predominantly consisted of tax-funded, unconditional, and (mainly) means-tested cash distributions to 'deserving' groups like children, the elderly, and the disabled (Moore & Seekings, 2019:514). It is argued that the post-apartheid administration's introduction of democracy broadened the scope of social grants in South Africa. SASSA administers seven major social assistance programs. As of April 2021, the monthly benefits were (with USD equivalents- the ZAR/USD exchange rate as of 08 April 2022 was used to estimate the USD values) (Human, 2022):

- Child Support Grant (R460/USD31)
- Older Person's Grant (R1,890/USD128, or R1,910/USD129 for beneficiaries over 75 years)
- Disability Grant (R1,890/USD128)
- Foster Care Grant (R1,050/USD71)

- Care Dependency Grant (R1,890/USD128)
- War Veterans Grant (R1,910/USD129)
- Grant-in-Aid (R460/USD31)

Grants are paid in cash or via electronic payment channels to the beneficiary or nominated recipient after being adjusted for inflation annually (SASSA, 2021). Gronbach et al. (2022:5) write that a total of 18.3 million grants were given out every month to nearly 11 million recipients at the end of the 2019/20 fiscal years (some receiving several grants). Correspondingly, estimates from the National Treasury (2021) reveal that in 2023/24, the number of grant beneficiaries is set to increase to 19.3 million. The Child Support Grant accounted for about 70% (nearly 13 million) of all grants paid out in the 2019/20 fiscal years (Bassier et al., 2021:8).

Some observers argue that social grants primarily satisfy those in poverty rather than pull them out (Meyer, 2021). The system has aided in the survival of poor and vulnerable people and serves as a mechanism for income redistribution. *It also allows for limited improved access to essential services, contributes to higher consumption and savings, and enhances livelihoods. The grants seem to have positive economic and social impacts* (Meyer, 2021).

#### **(b) Food Schemes**

The World Food Programme (WFP) (2020) reported that the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) in South Africa is the largest in Africa. As part of NSNP, up to 10 million pupils in primary and high schools classified as falling into the poorest three quintiles were offered free meals prior to the emergence of Covid-19 (Devereux, 2018:5). Additionally, preschool children in the Early Childhood Development centres were served meals through a smaller program (ibid). The National Department of Basic Education took over the programme in 2004 after being overseen by the national Department of Health. However, the programme's implementation has been commended (South Africa, 2017) and criticised (Devereux et al., 2017). Also, prior to Covid-19, the government supplied food parcels and food vouchers through its Social Relief of Distress scheme administered by the Department of Social Development and SASSA (Gronbach et al., 2022:7). The food parcel program was designed to help the poor and most vulnerable families for a limited time and under specific conditions (ibid).

#### **(c) Social Relief of Distress Fund**

The Social Relief of Distress Fund (SRD) is government-provided short-term assistance, usually in extreme fires, floods, and other natural disasters (ILO, 2010; SASSA, n.d.). In Frye (2008:31), SRD is denoted as a grant that is implemented for a brief period in circumstances where “a person finds themselves in distressed circumstances; these distressed circumstances refer to situations such as “death, institutionalisation or illness of a breadwinner and external disasters”. As a result, it may be deduced that social relief of distress is a measure or intervention implemented when income creation is abruptly disrupted.

This assistance is mainly based on need, but it is also means-tested. The assistance might be in kind or cash, and the amount is determined by need. The SRD, which was formed prior to the 2008 food crisis, is a temporary monthly assistance program for those unable to meet the most basic needs of their family or themselves for a maximum of three months (Department of Social Development, no date). However, the SRD can be extended to six months in certain conditions, which are determined upon assessment (Sehlabane, 2014:26). While some provinces in South Africa distribute the grant in cash, it might alternatively come in the form of a food parcel or a voucher (ILO, 2010). In addition to the SRD, the government distributed agricultural starter packs to particularly disadvantaged populations with the support of the business sector, NGOs, and community-based organisations (ibid).

E (2009:372) observes that “emergency relief measures tend to focus more on transitory food insecurity and neglect chronic food insecurity, which detriment the poor more”. Alternatively, concentrating on the core causes of food insecurity and addressing them would be preferable and more successful than focusing on the consequences. This means we deal with the problem before it arises or at the earliest stage of its growth rather than waiting for it to become uncontrollable before dealing with it.

#### **2.4. The Impact of Social grants on Poverty**

There is a growing body of literature that highlights the function of social assistance in poverty alleviation in South Africa (Woolard, 2003:5; Seekings, 2002:5; Samson et al. 2002:15; Samson, 2002:76; Lund, 1999:56). Much of the previous studies on the influence of social grants on poverty concentrated on the success of the old age pension (Case & Deaton, 1998:1334; Jensen, 2004:92) and the importance of this source of income for household security and food security (Lund, 1999:57-58). Besides, Ravallion (2003:14) emphasises the critical role of targeted transfers in poverty alleviation, citing growing evidence of some successes that refute the commonly held belief that others capture the benefits of targeted

transfers or that their coverage is too low to make a significant difference. Devereux (2002:657), on the other hand, claims that social safety nets can aid in the alleviation of chronic poverty if a portion of welfare transfers is spent on “income-generating activities, education, social networks, and the acquisition of productive assets”.

The primary objective of social grants in South Africa is to alleviate poverty and enhance the country’s socioeconomic growth. Leibbrandt et al. (2010: 66) confirm this assertion and postulate that since the grants are based on means, they are well-targeted. Their use has significantly decreased poverty levels among the poor and vulnerable. Also, the influence of the Child Support Grant (CSG) on poverty reduction was studied using R515 per capita as a poverty line. Between 1997 and 2006, the overall number of households in the poorest quintiles (quintiles 1 and 2) receiving CSG surged from 16% to 69%, according to the findings of this study (ibid). Notably, 53% of households were lifted out of poverty during this period (ibid).

Van der Berg et al. (2010: 31) also examined the impact of grants on poverty reduction. The poverty line in this study was set at R3,000 per year. Their findings revealed that in 2008, social grants reduced poverty rates between individual households from 55.4% to 47.1%. Moreover, the proportion of caregivers of poor children who reported that their children did not have enough food decreased from 31% to 17% between 2002 and 2008 (Van der Berg et al., 2010: 31). social grants have helped reduce poverty levels in South Africa by a significant amount through the reduction in poverty rates

Mackett (2020:46) also examined social grants to reduce poverty in South Africa. The scholar used the National Income Dynamics Study (NIDS) to discover that those in grant-receiving households have poorer labour market prospects than those in non-grant-receiving households (Mackett, 2020:46). In addition, individuals living in a household with an old-age pension recipient experienced better outcomes in terms of the labour market and poverty compared with individuals living with a child support grant recipient (ibid). This demonstrates that, relative to other households, the characteristics of homes with old-age pension beneficiaries may be more favourable to the labour market and poverty outcomes over time.

## **2.5. South Africa’s Socioeconomic context pre-Covid-19**

### **(a) Unemployment**

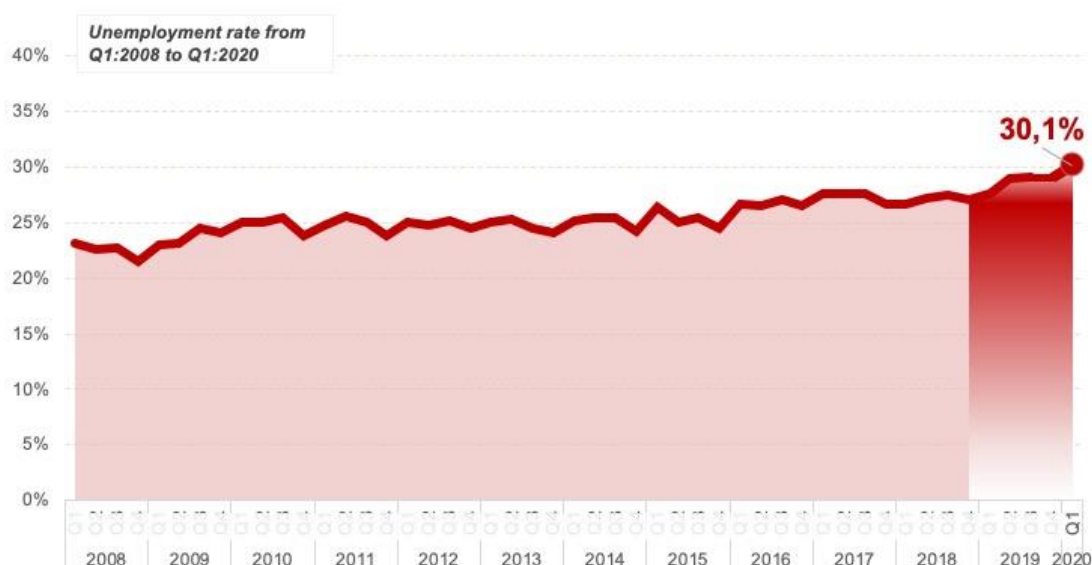
South Africa is plagued by high unemployment and poverty, with people relying on social assistance as their only means of income and survival. Kingdon and Knight (2004:391) argue

that there are several reasons why unemployment could be a crucial concern, including its impact on economic welfare, production, human capital erosion, social exclusion, crime, and social instability. In ILO (2002), “Persons in unemployment are defined as all those of working age who were not in employment, carried out activities to seek employment during a specified recent period and were currently available to take up employment given a job opportunity”.

According to Statistics South Africa (2019), the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the second quarter of 2019 shows that unemployment has increased by 1,4 percentage points to 29,0% compared to the first quarter. By comparison, the number of unemployed increased by 455 000 in Q2: 2019 to 6,7 million, resulting in a 476 000 increase in the labour force (ibid). Furthermore, Statistics South Africa (2020) documents that from Q4:2019 to Q1:2020, South Africa’s unemployment rate increased by one percentage point to 30,1%. Also, unemployment usually rises yearly between the fourth and first quarters. Given the current economic condition in South Africa, an estimated 16,4 million people are unemployed (Statistics South Africa, 2020).

**Figure 2: The increase in the unemployment rate in Q1 and Q4 over time.**

**South Africa’s unemployment rate increase by 1,0 percentage point to 30,1% in Q1:2020 compared to Q4:2019.**



Source: Statistics South Africa (2020)

Chagunda (2014:115) articulates that the causes of unemployment are complex and distinct. Some long-term reasons include technological unemployment, which occurs when people's skills are obsolete. Moreover, some are medium-term, such as cyclical unemployment, which occurs when there is insufficient demand to keep production going Chagunda (2014:115). Regardless of its causes, unemployment is a barrier to people's development. Cooke and Kothari (2001:5) contend that unemployment denies people the chance to participate in the economy, so it disempowers them.

McCord (2002:25) posits that the South African economy is experiencing labour market failure, with labour supply outweighing demand. The high unemployment rate in South Africa exacerbates poverty and inequality and the unequal incidence of unemployment across racial groups. McCord (2002:5) further explained that unemployment impacts poverty and inequality. Therefore, unemployment and poverty go hand in hand since unemployed people do not earn enough income to support themselves and their dependents. In addition, unemployment leads to inequality between the rich and the poor because the poor and the poverty-stricken are unequal to their employed counterparts.

### **(b) Poverty**

Poverty is one of the most significant impediments to development since it robs individuals of their capabilities. This interpretation of poverty goes beyond a lack of income to include persons experiencing several deprivations and vulnerabilities compromising their overall well-being (Francis and Webster, 2019:791). Additionally, it should be highlighted, however, that income poverty remains a significant indicator because income is required to access diverse services. These services include water, health, education, transport, and other socioeconomic opportunities to achieve development. Poverty is perpetuated, and poverty traps arise when poor people's lives cannot be transformed via education, access to primary health care, and decent housing. In this regard, social assistance is one of the interventions that provide individuals with the building blocks they need to alleviate poverty and take advantage of socioeconomic possibilities to attain development (Francis and Webster, 2019:791). A World Bank analysis from 2014 shows that the impoverished half of the population receives 70% of social grant spending and 54% of education and health spending. According to the findings, social grants and the provision of free essential services (such as water and electricity) raise the incomes of approximately 3.6 million South Africans above US\$2.50 per day (purchasing

power parity), resulting in a 50% reduction in extreme poverty from 34.4 per cent to 16.5% between the end of apartheid and 2011 (World Bank, 2014).

Finn and Leibbrandt (2017:2) agree that South Africa's money-metric poverty has decreased. The authors note that “various cross-sectional studies of poverty using household survey data have chronicled a decline in the poverty headcount largely attributable to the role of state support of household incomes” (ibid). The researchers found that access to a state social grant was the primary cause of individuals exiting poverty, accounting for 23% of those who escaped poverty between waves of the National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS).

In his foreword ‘From Poverty to Power’, Amartya Sen quoting George Bernard Shaw, said, *“The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty...This certainly goes well beyond noting the fact that poverty is a huge tragedy which ruins the lives of a great many people across the world. The immense tragedy of poverty is obvious enough: lives are battered, happiness stifled, creativity destroyed, freedoms eradicated by the misfortunes of poverty”* (Green, 2012: xiii). Poverty generates and perpetuates social issues, including crime, domestic violence, suicide, prostitution, child labour, human trafficking, and spreading diseases like HIV/AIDS. Mgijima (1999) stresses that the most severe type of poverty is a lack of nutritious food that is safe to consume and culturally acceptable.

However, progress in alleviating poverty appears to have lagged recently. South Africa is an upper-middle-income country as measured by its per capita income, but most South African households are in outright poverty and vulnerable to being poor (Statistic South Africa, 2018; Marais, 2011:203). The national poverty lines were calculated using the cost-of-basic-needs technique, which relates welfare to the consumption of goods and services (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Moreover, the national poverty lines include food and non-food components of household consumption expenditure. Food poverty is the first national poverty line, at 585 in 2020 prices (Statistics South Africa, 2020). Also, the lower-bound poverty line is at 840 in 2020 values, and the upper-bound poverty line is at 1268 in 2020 prices (ibid). According to Samson et al. (2002), poverty levels are intricately linked to unemployment.

Poverty in South Africa continues to reflect the country's history and current racial disparities. Thus, according to Finn (2015), only 4.1% of white South Africans were poor in 2015, compared to 20.5% of Asians/Indians, 56.8% of coloureds (a South African word for people of mixed ancestry), and 70.75% of black South Africans.

### **(c) Inequality**

Different stakeholders agree that years of active unfairness in policymaking and neglect have resulted in unprecedented levels of inequality. Correspondingly, inequality is distinguished by the concentration of excessive wealth in the hands of a small percentage of the population while the bulk lives in absolute poverty. Terreblanche (2002), in his seminal contribution to inequality in South Africa, provides a detailed analysis of the historical routes leading to today's distribution of wealth and income. According to the Gini coefficient of income, Hundenborn, Leibbrandt, and Woolard (2016) found that the overall inequality in South Africa declined considerably between 1993 and 2014, from 0.681 to 0.655, despite a transitory increase during the global financial crisis, when inequality soared to 0.69 in 2008.

Furthermore, Finn (2015) calculates the Gini coefficient of income to be 0.66. This suggests that in the post-apartheid era in South Africa, there has been no significant reduction in total inequality. Wilson & Ramphela (1994:22), writing at the start of the 1990s, discovered that South Africa had the highest Gini coefficient of income of all 57 countries for which data was available at the time, at 0.66. According to the World Inequality Database (2019), the top 1% of South African earners take home over 20% of all income, whereas the top 10% take home 65%. The remaining 90% receive only 35% of total income inequality among African households, accounting for between 29% and 49% of overall inequality, depending on the measure used.

Inequality in South Africa is preserved by some structural forces that cannot be understood without reference to the economic and social power structures that existed during apartheid, many of which still exist today. Apartheid enabled enormous inequalities in the country's population among the various racial groups. Correspondingly, Hoogeveen and Ozler (2005:2) confirm that at least 58% of all South Africans lived in poverty in 1995. Increased Black South African adult mortality from HIV/AIDS, which resulted in the loss of a generation of primary breadwinners, was one of the reasons for this significant spike in inequality (Hoogeveen and Ozler, 2006). The majority of black South Africans were affected by the outbreak.

When comparing South Africa's income distribution to that of similar middle-income nations such as Argentina, Mexico, or Malaysia, it becomes clear that the country has a severely skewed income distribution. A small percentage of South Africans have high incomes, whereas the rest have low incomes (Marais, 2011; National Planning Commission, 2011). This understanding is necessary for the present study, which examines the implementation of the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant in KwaZulu-Natal.



## **2.6. Challenges posed by Covid-19 and the lockdowns**

### **(a) Unemployment**

Covid-19 worsened the economic situation of many and caused a sharp increase in unemployment, hunger, and suffering. Different data sources suggest contradictory employment trends, and as a result, the data on employment trends are somewhat chaotic. Various sources suggested that employment declined sharply during the hard lockdown, effectively in the second quarter of 2020. In addition, There was a 15% decrease in employment in both the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (of individuals) and the Quarterly Employment Survey (of formal sector employers) (Gronbach et al., 2022:9). It is unclear whether this includes or excludes workers who were compensated under the emergency “unemployment insurance” program (Statistics South Africa, 2021a).

The National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAM), a collaboration between the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), the Research on Socioeconomic Policy (RESEP) group at Stellenbosch University, and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town, conducted several waves of research to look into changes in critical social and economic indicators as a result of the Covid-19 virus. The first wave of NIDS-CRAM (7 May to 27 June 2020) showed that “employment has declined substantially and that the effects of this are largest for the most disadvantaged” (Spaull et al., 2020). The report further stipulates that “47 percent of respondents said that their household ran out of money to buy food in April 2020” (ibid). Wave 2 (30 September 2020) found that the 3 million jobs lost between February and April have not returned by June and half of the shack dwellers (51%) reported running out of money to buy food in June and 22% reported that someone in their household went hungry in the previous seven days (Spaull et al., 2020). Besides, Wave 3 of the NIDS-CRAM (2 November and 13 December 2020) presented improvement in the employment situation in the country (ibid).

A telephonic panel survey (NIDS-CRAM) likewise found that employment fell by 15%, with furloughed workers accounting for most of the loss (Spaull et al., 2021). In late 2020 and early 2021, the economy began to recover. The implications for employment are unclear. By October 2020, employment in NIDS- CRAM’s (unrepresentative) panel had nearly restored to pre-Covid levels, partly due to the return of furloughed workers. The unemployment rate 10 fell considerably (by more than seven percentage points) over this period, according to NIDS-

CRAM (Spaull et al., 2021). In the same way, Quarterly Labour Force Survey results indicate a partial recovery, with approximately one million more workers employed in the first quarter of 2021 than in the second quarter of 2020, while unemployment remains high (Statistics South Africa, 2021b). While the Quarterly Employment Survey shows a modest recovery, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey found that almost one in ten employed workers were not receiving total wages (if they were being paid) due to inactivity (Statistics South Africa, 2021b).

Researchers found that job losses were disproportionately concentrated among those already disadvantaged in the labour market (Jain et al., 2020; Ranchhod and Daniels, 2020; Köhler and Bhorat, 2020; Rogan and Skinner, 2020). According to Jain et al. (2020:8), women, manual workers, and those in the bottom half of the income distribution have all lost jobs at substantially greater rates. For Ranchhod and Danniels (2020:3), *"the over-arching finding from this analysis is that the job losses were not uniformly distributed amongst the different groups. In particular, groups who have always been more vulnerable – such as women, African/Blacks, youth, and less educated – have been disproportionately negatively affected"*.

Similarly, Rogan and Skinner (2020:15) echoed that those in the informal economy have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic when compared to formal workers. During April, a more considerable proportion of the informal economy (compared to formal employment) was unemployed. The number of hours worked per week for the typical informal worker decreased by as much as 50% between February and April. In particular, women, self-employed workers, and informal, casual workers saw their typical working hours decrease significantly (Rogan and Skinner, 2020:15). The national lockdown halted unemployment and thus led to increased poverty.

### **(b) Poverty**

According to the World Bank, while the pandemic would increase poverty worldwide, Sub-Saharan Africa will be severely impacted (Sanchez-Paramo et., 2021). In South Africa, the national lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty rates (Statistics South Africa, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has compounded the dimensions of poverty and inequality. When South Africa plunged into a hard lockdown on March 26, 2020, many informal and precarious workers found themselves without a source of income.

Findings by Jain et al.(2020:1) indicate that about one million jobless people have slipped into poverty due to the Covid-19 shock between February and April 2020. *"Indirectly, accounting*

*for the dependents of these workers, we tentatively estimate that this job loss has increased poverty by about 3 million people. We stress that these estimates are highly approximate and not direct poverty calculations"* (ibid). It may be partly due to the relatively low rate of social insurance coverage that these significant poverty impacts occur. What is more, only 20% of those workers working zero days in April continued to receive unemployment benefits (Jain et al.,2020:1). While social assistance programs (notably the Child Support Grant) are gradually expanding their coverage, 30% of people whose February work connections were ended report having no household-level grant protection (ibid). The authors further estimate that if social grant top-ups had been implemented in April rather than May, the poverty rise associated with job loss would have been minimised by 20 to 40% (ibid).

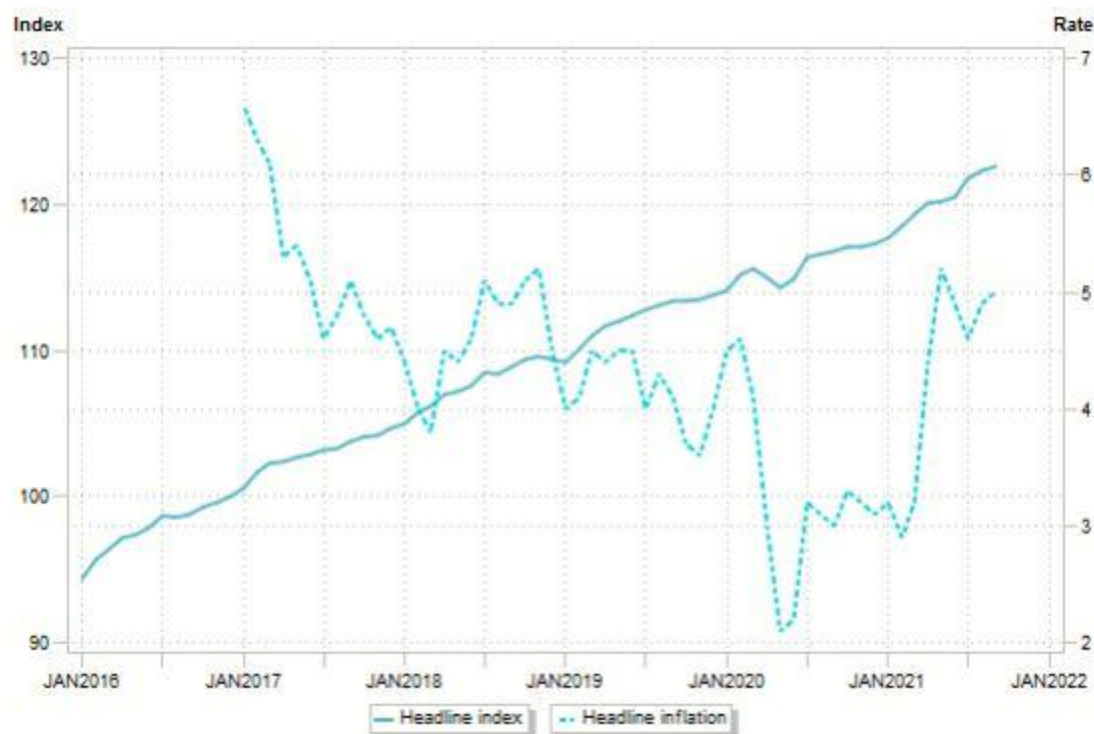
During the pandemic, which has worsened the economic status of the vulnerable, Statistics South Africa (2021c) released new national poverty lines, raising the minimum monthly income required for an adult to survive to R624 and raising the lower- and upper-bound poverty lines, giving further impetus to calls for the government to increase welfare assistance to the poor and growing unemployment rate. The food poverty line has risen to R624 from R585(ibid). The lower-bound poverty line increased to R890 from R840 last year, while the upper-bound poverty line increased to R1,335 from R1,268 (ibid). Toyana (2021) notes that “almost half of South Africa’s adult population of 35 million live below the breadline”. Early in 2020, the severe lockdown resulted in a significant spike in hunger. According to NIDS-CRAM, hunger substantially decreased by the third quarter of 2020, albeit it remained alarmingly high (Van der Berg, Patel, and Bridgman, 2022).

### **(c) Inequality**

The Covid-19 pandemic is emerging as a virus of inequality, exacerbating existing inequities. In a report published by Oxfam, *"it will take over a decade for the world's poor to recover economically from the pandemic, and South Africa's four billionaires have seen their fortunes increase by R83,321,600,000 since March 2020, enough to give every one of the 5.9 million poorest South African people a cheque for R14,049 each"* (Futshane, 2021b). Despite this, most South Africans are jobless, with more than half of the population (55,5%) living below the poverty line (ibid). The covid-19 pandemic has intensified the interwoven challenges of unemployment, as more South Africans have to scramble to buy food for their basic needs, which is when inflation continues to rise.

Statistics South Africa (2021d) has reported that “inflation jumped to 4,4% in April 2021 from 3,2% in March 2021”. Consequently, this has driven up the price of food in South Africa. For example, *“food and non-alcoholic beverages increased by 0,9% between March and April. This took the annual rate to 6,3%, the highest it has been since 6,8% in July 2017 (45 months ago). At that time, parts of South Africa were experiencing severe drought.”* (ibid). Futshane (2021b) concludes that food inflation in South Africa is at its highest level in four years.

**Figure 3: Consumer Price Index numbers and year-on-year rates**



Source: Statistics South Africa (2021d)

The pandemic has amplified existing inequalities and introduced new types of inequality, the most notable of which is vaccination inequality. The vaccination rollout has widened the gap between richer and poorer countries. Vaughn (2021:12) demonstrates that “mass immunisation may not happen until 2024, if at all, in places to explain this, he cites the World Health Organisation, which documented earlier that “the West African state had administered just 25 doses as of 18 January. By comparison, 4.72 million had been given in the UK alone”. Concerning the vaccination rate in South Africa, President Ramaphosa announced in September 2021 that the goal was to vaccinate 70% by the end of the year (Engelbrecht, 2022). At this point, the figure seems farfetched, considering that just over 43.98% of South African adults are fully vaccinated, according to current statistics (ibid). It is due to numerous factors,

including inadequate public education and the inability of people to access vaccines in terms of affordability, transportation, and time off work (ibid). Likewise, Futshane (2021b) postulates that “the rate of vaccination has been slow, maladministration has occurred in the process, and we are beginning to see a trend of vaccine corruption emerging”

Consequently, if we are to design equitable interventions, we must ponder the multidimensionality and intersectionality of old, current, and emerging socioeconomic inequalities in South Africa.

## **2.7. Covid-19 Disaster Relief Programmes to Support SRD beneficiaries Globally**

### **(a) United States of America (USA)**

Globally, the extension of social assistance has been the most common response to the Covid-19 pandemic. There has never been any program of this scope or scale regarding the amount of money the government spends and the proportion of people receiving social assistance. The World Bank asserts that rapidly determining who would be eligible for these transfers was challenging due to a lack of information about workers in the informal sector, their families, and other vulnerable groups (Palacios, 2020a).

Social policy architecture in the USA relies extensively on a mix of social insurance and social assistance programmes (Béland et al., 2021:281). Also, Covid-19 response and relief have covered a wide range of areas, including unemployment insurance, direct payments to self-employed individuals, people in the gig economy, families with dependents, and nutrition programmes (ibid). CNBC reported that a \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief plan was passed by the Senate, paving the path for millions of Americans to receive \$1,400 (R21 739,73 the ZAR/USD exchange rate as of 23 April 2022 was used to estimate the rand values) stimulus checks (Konish,2021). Also, “full \$1,400 payments are slated to go to those with adjusted gross incomes of up to \$75,000 for individuals, \$112,500 for heads of household and \$150,000 for married couples filing jointly” (Konish,2021). However, opponents of this idea maintain that income caps should have been lower. For example, moderate Republican senators recommended a full-payment cut-off of \$40,000 (Iacurci, 2021). This is the case because employment losses have been concentrated among low-wage workers. In other words, statistics suggest that higher earners who receive a check are more likely to have a job and wage income right now (Iacurci, 2021).

### **(b) China**

China has seen significant employment losses, like most other countries, due to the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent lockdown. The Chinese government has used and pragmatically amended existing welfare systems in response to the Covid-19 outbreak to ensure social and economic stability. Furthermore, the Chinese central government implemented countermeasures and provided significant financial support to vulnerable people, including cash and in-kind subsidies (Ten Brink et al., 2021:4). Ensuring minimum subsistence levels for millions of Chinese individuals is challenging because many industries have shut down or reduced their workforces, and many small businesses and restaurants have gone bankrupt (ibid).

The most critical program in China's social assistance system is the Minimum Living Standard Scheme (MLSS, also known as Dibao), which covers inhabitants in both urban and rural areas whose per capita income/annual net income falls below the local minimum living standard criteria (Lu et al., 2020:4). Additionally, the programme is supplemented by the temporary assistance programme for those requiring assistance due to accident, natural disaster, or public health emergencies (Wong and Qian, 2020:i). In the same way, Premier Li Keqiang called on the program in April 2020 to 'expand coverage' to as many people as possible in the face of enormous obstacles (Chinese Government Network. 2020). In response to Covid-19, for example, Hubei provided a one-time living allowance of RMB 2000–3000 per month (USD 286–429, based on the local cost of living) for people stranded because of the lockdown (Wang et al., 2022:4). Approximately 15,000 Hubei residents also received cash transfers amounting to RMB 37,6 million (USD 5.3 million) (ibid). However, Wong and Qian (2020:i) contend that local fiscal incapacity, restrictive eligibility criteria, and long and cumbersome application procedures are among the leading causes of the mediocre performance of social assistance programs.

## **2.8. Covid-19 Disaster Relief Programmes to Support SRD beneficiaries in Africa**

### **(a) Namibia**

Several developing countries have already implemented temporary measures to protect jobs, improve access to health care, and reduce the impact of the crisis on their citizens' incomes. Regrettably, rehabilitation can only be sustained, and future catastrophes will be averted if countries can gradually build upon and reshape temporary relief measures into comprehensive and shock-responsive social protection systems, including social protection floors, following

human rights and ILO social security standards, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations, 2020).

Namibia established the COVID-19 Disaster Relief Fund to boost job preservation and direct household cash transfers through the Emergency Income Grant of the Economic Stimulus and Relief Package. The Namibian government introduced an Emergency Income Grant (EIG) for workers in the informal economy to help them get through the lockdown. What is more, *“this once-off payment of N\$750 (US\$ 41) is open to all Namibians, between the ages of 18 to 59, who have lost jobs or income in part or full-time in the informal sector as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. It also covers those who are unemployed in the same age category”*. Also, the government used simple enrolment techniques, such as mobile technology, and funds were distributed rapidly, with more than 500,000 beneficiaries receiving payments within three weeks (ILO, 2020:8).

There are still some valid concerns about who qualifies for the grant, the application and implementation processes, and the program’s restricted and stopgap character. Women in Informal Employment: Globalising and Organising (WIEGO) (2020) articulate the urgency to address the fact that applicants who are already receiving funds from social security on behalf of their vulnerable relatives do not qualify. Women are disproportionately affected by this exclusionary practice because they are typically the primary caregivers and sole breadwinners in many households (ibid).

## **(b) Somalia**

The onset of COVID-19 halted Somalia’s economy’s fledgling recovery, which had begun in 2016/17 after recovery from earlier droughts, and curtailed the country’s 2.9 per cent GDP growth gains in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Nevertheless, as the effects of COVID-19 fade over time, the economy is predicted to revive to 2.9% in 2021 moderately and 3.2% in 2022, restoring to pre-COVID-19 levels (ibid).

The Covid-19 crisis may require humanitarian intervention in areas where national social protection systems are insufficient. The ILO (2020:7) reports that cash transfers and other interventions provided by humanitarian actors provide urgent relief to help people to reduce the negative impacts of crises. Therefore, the Somali government introduced the ‘Baxnana’ program, providing cash transfers for the first time to over 1.3 million poor and vulnerable households (Horn Observer, 2020). The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs is one of the implementing agents working closely with the World Food Programme and the United Nations

Children's Fund (ibid). Again, the Baxnano initiative aims to give cash transfers to impoverished and vulnerable households while also forming the basis for a national shock-responsive safety net. This program consists of the government's plan to move away from humanitarian assistance and focus on providing social protection.

However, CaLP (2020) emphasised the constraints of linking cash transfer programmes to national social protection systems. Lack of coordination among the different parties involved and humanitarian practitioners lacking experience in social protection are among them (ibid).

## **2.9. Digital Technology in Social Assistance Transfers for Covid-19 Relief**

Technology has become an integral part of many social security systems around the world, including cash transfers, medicine, health care and education (Department of Social Development, 2021:3). To cushion the economic and social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; many countries have implemented assistance packages in the form of conditional and unconditional transfers, child support payments, and social pensions. These programs are broadly termed Government-to-People or G2P payments (Gelb and Mukherjee, 2020:1). Furthermore, according to the Association for Progressive Communication (APC), digitisation has the potential to make it easier for people to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled (Souter, 2020). They can apply for them online or by phone rather than in writing or at government offices. Claims can be processed more quickly using automated processes. Different databases can be used to cross-check entitlements. Response times can be shortened, assisting those in unexpected or urgent need.

The potential role of digital technology in social assistance spans the entire value chain of G2P programs and payments: “(i) *informing potential beneficiaries about programs*, (ii) *onboarding them (in cases where they are not already included in existing programs)*, (iii) *identifying them*, (iv) *screening them for eligibility*, (v) *making payments*, and (vi) *following up to resolve problems and grievances*” (Gelb and Mukherjee, 2020:3). Also, as part of the value chain, digital ID systems, mobile communications, and digital payment systems are three crucial components. Together, they enable governments to identify and communicate with potential beneficiaries and transfer funds electronically. The vast majority of countries, such as South Africa, Namibia, Turkey, Pakistan, Togo, and Brazil, used databases linked by national ID numbers to screen applications against multiple criteria (Palacious, 2020b). Furthermore, these countries invited digital applications for emergency relief to be submitted through mobiles, WhatsApp, or websites.



However, a digital welfare state raises essential subjects related to policy, exclusion, and human rights that should be considered when developing systems for application, evaluation, verification, and payment (Department of Social Development, 2021:4). Access to benefits may become more challenging rather than more accessible as a result of digitalisation (Souter, 2020). Besides, many targeted beneficiaries have limited digital resources and inadequate digital skills (computers, even phones). If access is made digital by default, as is sometimes advocated as being more efficient, they are not enabled but locked out. Gelb and Mukherjee (2020:10) argue that “a sizeable minority of people will lack access to, or control over, mobile communications or the capacity to use them to apply for or to receive grants”. Similarly, The UN Rapporteur’s report expresses concern over the use of digital technology in welfare, citing that a lack of digital literacy prevents people from using fundamental digital tools, let alone successfully and efficiently (Alston, 2019). Moreover, the UN states that *“limited or no access to the internet poses huge problems for many people. Additional barriers arise for individuals who have to pay high prices to obtain Internet access, travel long distances or absent themselves from work to do so, visit public facilities such as libraries in order to get access or obtain assistance from staff or friends to navigate the systems”* (Alston, 2019).

The UN Women (2020) echoed how gender inequities can be a unique source of concern regarding access. Under normal circumstances, G2P programs are sometimes designed to overcome gender gaps to maximise long-term advantages through empowering women (ibid). Despite this, this urgency can result in programs failing to address Covid’s specific effects on women and girls. For example, in Pakistan, women generally lack access to mobiles, and many use mobiles registered in the name of a male household member (Bourgault and O’Donnell 2020). This raised the possibility that women not already enrolled in the Benazir program would have faced difficulties applying independently for an emergency grant (ibid).

Generally, countries with better digital infrastructure, particularly those with payment systems and social registers, can implement and disburse emergency assistance programs more rapidly than those without such assets (Palacios 2020b). Although most instances have emanated from middle-income countries, Togo is an example of a low-income country with an ‘all-digital’ emergency program (Kazeem, 2020).

The role of digital systems should be acknowledged, especially emphasising much debate on their limitations (Khera, 2020). The constraints imposed by Covid-19 have undoubtedly shown

areas for improvement. They will stimulate a more significant push toward digitalisation in general and specifically toward digitised and more integrated social protection programs.

## **2.10. Conclusion**

To conclude, the chapter addressed several significant issues related to implementing the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant. The chapter argued that social welfare is defined in this study as a state-provided form of social assistance to benefit marginalised groups. Moreover, providing social welfare is debatable and attracts different responses from the public and private sectors. Governments provide social grants to vulnerable populations who are unable to meet their basic needs on their own. Furthermore, South Africa's pre-Covid-19 social protection system comprised social grants, food schemes, and the social relief of distress fund.

The high unemployment rate in South Africa exacerbates poverty and inequality and the unequal incidence of unemployment across racial groups. Likewise, Covid-19 worsened the economic situation of many and caused a sharp increase in unemployment, hunger, and suffering. Consequently, if we are to design equitable interventions, we must ponder the multidimensionality and intersectionality of old, current, and emerging socioeconomic inequalities in South Africa.

The Covid-19 crisis and regulations restricting social mobility and interaction have led most governments worldwide to expand their social protection systems to provide relief to vulnerable individuals and household members. Notably, digital technology has become integral to many social security systems worldwide. However, a digital welfare state raises essential subjects related to policy, exclusion, and human rights that should be considered when developing systems for application, evaluation, verification, and payment.

The following chapter explores the conceptual and theoretical framework guiding the investigation.

## **CHAPTER THREE: CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The chapter provides the conceptual and theoretical framework for implementing the special Social Relief of Distress grant in KwaZulu-Natal. The conceptual framework is public policy, and the theoretical framework is the implementation theory. Therefore, incorporating these frameworks in analysing the SRD grant will help evaluate programmes fairly and eventually learn what program components are necessary to produce intended effects. As this occurs, policymakers can make evidence-based programs more efficient, flexible, effective, and sustainable. Therefore, if a program is implemented poorly or moderately well, its goals are unlikely to be achieved, or the results will be less significant.

For the discussion on the conceptual framework, the chapter first defines public policy, followed by a discussion on the various stages of public policy. The chapter then focuses on a depth discussion of the implementation stage of the policy process as the research focuses on the implementation of the Social Relief of Distress grant. A discussion of implementation theory then follows, which incorporates; approaches to implementation in terms of the top-down approach and bottom-up perspectives, public policy modes of delivery-focussing on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), and Brynard's 5-C protocol of policy implementation to assess the complexities of policy implementation and how ignoring these variables could lead to the failure of policy implementation. The chapter highlights factors that constrain policy implementation and factors that promote successful implementation.

### **3.2. Public Policy and Policy Programmes**

Public policy can be defined in many ways. Various scholars define public policy as subjective phenomenon based on their experiences and conditions (Birkland, 2016; Hogwood and Gunn, 1984). Therefore, Birkland (2016:9) defines "a policy as a statement by the government at whatever level, in whatever form- of what it intends to do about a public problem". Public policy aims to transform a perceived problem into a solution that yields future benefits (Cloete and De Conning, 2011). Researchers exploring the concept suggest that it could be understood as a goal-achieving strategy (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003). Similarly, Cochran et al. (2010:1) posit that "public policy refers to a set of actions taken by the government that includes, but is not limited to, making laws and is defined by in terms of a common goal or purpose". Correspondingly, Cochran and Malone (2010) argue that "public policy consists of political decisions for implementing programs to achieve societal goals".

Parsons (1995:3) describes the public policy as “that dimension of human activity which is regarded as requiring governmental or social regulation or intervention, or at least common action”. The author further notes that democratic governments should legitimise their proposals or actions by enacting policies that address societal issues (Parsons, 1995). For Dye (2013), what government does or does not do is what constitutes public policy. Moreover, Dye (2013:3) views that “public policy may regulate behaviour, organise bureaucracies, distribute benefits, or extract taxes-or all of these things at once”. Public policies aim to improve people's lives; policymakers should seek the most efficient means to conduct tasks (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:3).

There are a few key features that distinguish public policy from other concepts. Furthermore, public policy is complex and multifaceted (Parsons, 2005). Additionally, the policy is not made in a vacuum (ibid). Before the decision becomes a public policy, it must undergo a rigorous process. It involves the interplay of many parties. This includes many businesses, interest groups, and individuals competing and collaborating to influence policymakers to act in a particular way and on various policies (Cairney, 2012).

Anderson (2003:5) distinguishes between distinct types of policies; distributive, redistributive, and regulatory policies. According to Peters et al. (1997:3), distributive policies are intended to provide citizens and certain groups with certain benefits. A redistributive policy seeks to promote equality, particularly for previously disadvantaged groups (Ferreira, 1996:1). Peters et al. (1997) explain that regulatory policies are designed to counteract harmful activities which expose society to risk. Also, governments control society through regulatory policies (Lowi, 1973:2). The Covid-19 lockdown is an example of a regulatory policy where a set of measures aimed at reducing transmission of Covid-19 were implemented. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), if governments want to improve the effectiveness of regulatory policies, they must first understand the context in which the policy is implemented (OECD 2000). Understanding the context in which people live and planning for timely mitigation measures are critical components of effective regulation (OECD 2010). It is argued by the OECD (2000) that understanding context involves identifying the characteristics of the marketplace, the types of incentives intended beneficiaries and organisations might be motivated by to comply with regulation and the factors that may hinder compliance. Using capacity tools that provide information, training, education, and resources to enable individuals and groups to make informed decisions could also facilitate effective policy implementation (Schneider and Ingram, 1990).

Moreover, the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant is an example of distributive policy as it seeks to provide citizens and certain groups with certain benefits. The government introduced it to provide temporary relief of R350 to individuals and families experiencing temporary distress. In the current study, the implementation process of the SRD programme is investigated. Specifically, the study focuses on the implementation of the Social Relief of Distress in KwaZulu-Natal from the period between 2020 to 2022.

### 3.3. Policy Process and Policy Cycle

Public policymaking is a process of evolution that undergoes stages and activities to solve a particular problem (Colebatch, 2002; Hill, 1997). This is known as the policy cycle. Some policy scholars, including Howlett and Ramesh (2003), contend that analysing public policy processes can help understand public policy. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the policy cycle does not imply that policymaking is a straightforward and uncomplicated process. According to Parsons (2005), policy landscapes are frequently complex, less organised, interspersed by conflicting interests and contexts, and characterised by political cleavages. Howlett and Giest (2015) identify five phases of the policy process. These are; Agenda-setting Policy Formulation, Decision-making, Policy implementation and Policy Evaluation (ibid).

**Figure 4: The Policy Cycle**



*Source: Howlett and Giest (2015)*

### **(i). Agenda-Setting**

The agenda-setting process is one-way challenges and viable solutions are considered or recognised by public and elite circles (Tendengu, 2021:550). Agenda is “the list of subjects or problems to which government officials and people outside the government closely associated with these officials are paying some serious attention at any given time” (Kingdon 1995:3). In the views of Jann and Wegrich (2007:45), agenda-setting is the process of organising a policy issue from the perspective of potential methods and instruments which will impact the policy’s development in the subsequent stages of the policy cycle.

### **(ii). Policy Formulation**

During this stage, government programs are developed to address expressed problems, proposals, and demands (Jann and Wegrich, 2007:48). The scholars further note that policy formulation consists of the description of objectives (what the policy ought to accomplish) and the consideration of various policy options (Jann and Wegrich, 2007:49). Also, Howlett and Ramesh (2003) describe it as a valuable and competitive phase in the policy cycle because various policy options are assessed and contrasted, leading to a decision.

### **(iii). Decision-making**

Parsons (2005:245) writes that decision-making occurs between policy formulation and implementation. The author describes decision-making as a procedure where “choices are made or a preferred option is selected” by the state (Parsons, 2005:245). In the same way, decision-making is the method of determining which of the policy alternatives will be implemented. Consequently, this is the stage in the policymaking process when the approved policy is negotiated and adopted. Colebatch (2002:51) contends that decision-making is a multifaceted procedure and cautions that “best policy options” are taken and calculated through a rational decision-making process. Therefore, decision-makers have a well-specified problem and an extensive array of alternatives to consider, and there is a complete baseline of information at their disposal.

### **(iv). Policy Implementation**

Implementation refers to the phase of a policy’s execution or application by administrations that are often but not necessarily, part of the public sector (Jann and Wegrich, 2007:51).

Moreover, policy implementation is described as “*what happens between the establishment of an apparent intention on the part of the government to do something, or to stop doing something, and the ultimate impact in the world of action*” (O’Toole, 2000: 266). Therefore, implementation is described as policy in action or how policy is conducted.

#### **(v). Policy Evaluation**

The projected outcomes of policies become the focus of attention throughout the evaluation phase of the policy cycle. According to Rubin (1995:29), the evaluation's goal is to enable better management of projects and measure progress. Correspondingly, Jan and Wegrich (2007:54) posit that “evaluations can lead to diverse patterns of policy-learning, with different implications regarding feedback mechanisms and a potential restart of the political process”. Similarly, evaluations can result in a termination of a policy. Therefore, policy cycles are viewed as a continuous process.

The following section discusses the implementation theory, which is the focus of the study.

### **3.4. Policy Implementation**

Van Meter and Van Horn (1974:447-448) argue that “policy implementation encompasses those actions or private individuals (or groups) that are directed at the achievement of objectives set forth in prior policy decisions”. Indeed, implementation describes the policy in action (Khan, 2016). What is more, implementation emphasises putting the strategy into action, the “how” instead of the “what.” Besides, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:166) opine that implementation is a process where goals are specified, and measures are taken to achieve them. Furthermore, the authors say that connecting actions to goals depends on establishing causal links. Cloete and De Coning (2011:7) describe policy implementation “*as the conversion of mainly physical and financial resources into concrete service-delivery outputs in the form of facilities and services, or into other concrete outputs aimed at achieving policy objectives*”.

Implementing a policy or programme is crucial in public policymaking despite its complexity. This is because implementation involves many stakeholders, operates at various levels, and depends on resources and capacity. Besides, Ripley and Franklin (1982) maintain that during implementation, actors from many levels and units of government participate in government programs with varying and competing goals influenced by decisive factors whose influence is outside their control. According to Hardee et al. (2004:8), “public sector individual stakeholders can include politicians (heads of state and legislators), government bureaucrats

and technocrats from various sectors (e.g., health, education, finance, local government) and public sector staff who implement programs.” Also, non-governmental sector stakeholders participate in the implementation and include representatives from civil society organisations, faith-based organisations, and support groups (e.g., people living with disabilities) (ibid).

The quality of its implementation determines the effectiveness and success of any policy. There is a policy gap when policy expectations and perceived outcomes differ during implementation (Cloete and De Coning, 2011). If policies are implemented consistently and systematically, challenges and barriers are dealt with—they are likely to achieve their goals. Also, Moore (1995) proposes a comprehensive strategy for ensuring public value in implementing public policy. Also, this includes elements of administrative and operational feasibility, substantive value, political sustainability, and legitimacy.

As a result, incorporating implementation theory to analyse the delivery of the SRD provides a way to evaluate programs and learn which program components are required to produce intended effects. In addition, research has demonstrated that implementation quality contributes significantly to outcomes (Durlak, 2011:3). The results of a poorly implemented or even moderately well-implemented program will be less significant, or their goals will be less likely to be achieved.

### **3.4.1. Approaches to Implementation**

#### **(a) Top-Down perspective of Policy Implementation**

The top-down approach empowers top executives (e.g., Government officials) to make policy decisions. Accordingly, individuals at the top are responsible for creating and implementing the organisation’s rules and regulations. Top-down implementation is how objectives are established, and actions are directed to reach these goals. Colebatch (2002:53) argues that the top-down perspective to policy implementation concludes that “authorised decisions at the top coincide exactly with outcomes at the bottom...securing compliance”. Girdwood (2013) avers that the “*top-down system showcases: (1) clear and consistent goals articulated at the top of the hierarchical environment, (2) knowledge of pertinent cause and effects, (3) clear hierarchy of authority, (4) rules established at the top and policy is aligned with the rules, (5) resources / capacity to carry out the commands from the top*”. Moreover, the top-down system is a coherent and comprehensive method of planning. However, DeLeon and DeLeon (2002) postulate that top-down representatives may endorse policies based on conditions that citizens do not comprehend, potentially obscuring citizens’ rational preferences.



### **(b) Bottom-Up perspective of Policy Implementation**

Bottom-up perspectives on policy implementation are a response to the top-down approach. According to DeLeon and DeLeon (2002), top-downers narrowly impose policy on specialised interest groups, while bottom-uppers represent community interests. The scholars settle that bottom-up implementation is “realistic and practical” and much more “democratic” in contrast to top-down implementation (ibid). In this way, the bottom-up approach is underpinned by the notion that everyone in the organisation must actively participate in the decision-making and implementation of programs. Referring to the views of Colebatch (2002:53), the bottom-up perspective is “an exercise in collective negotiation: the focus shifts from the desired outcome to the process and the people.” Subsequently, the objectives, proposals, and actions must be implemented, emphasising the people directly affected by the policy. Therefore, the ideal strategy is to evaluate based on street-level bureaucrats (Matland, 1995, 149). Criticisms of the bottom-up approach reflect how street-level bureaucrats are usually not accountable and transparent to people (Girdwood, 2013). Also, most policies are designed from the top down to enhance top-down power, which bottom-uppers disregard.

#### **3.4.2. Modes of delivery**

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002: 86) recognise Public-Private Partnership (PPPs) as a delivery mode where “*cross-sectoral (public and private sector) interactions whose purpose is to achieve convergent objectives through the combined efforts of both sets of actors, but where the respective roles and responsibilities of the actors involved remain distinct*”. Equally, Van Ham and Koppenjan (2001: 598) mention that partnerships are durable co-operations between private and public actors in which they develop goods and services and share costs, risks, and resources relating to those goods and services. According to Parsons (1995:492), in the real world, there are delivery mixes and modes that a government can use to implement policy. In the delivery system, Parsons (1995:491) recognises four types of policy mixes: (1) the *sectoral mix*, which involves both public and private responsibilities, as well as voluntary, community-based agencies which may be involved in delivering services; (2) the *enforcement mix*, which emphasises compliance and enforcement capability of policies; (3) *governmental mix*, which places a greater emphasis on delivering government services at local and provincial levels in contrast to the national government level, and final, (4) *value mix*, which explains that behind the choice between the delivery mixes lies a set of values that shape understandings and inform decisions and in the end, the values that guide public policy determine these mixes.

The delivery of the SRD grant involved the sectoral mix as a mode of delivery which involves both public and private responsibilities, as well as voluntary, community-based agencies which may be involved in delivering services. Moreover, these sectors included SASSA, a government agency collaborating with large private retailers (Pick n Pay, Boxer) for the disbursement of cash payments of the SRD grant (Department of Social Development, 2021). The other sectors comprised volunteers from the local government networks, the National Development Agency (NDA) and civil society organisations such as the Black Sash and the Social Change Assistance Trust and Community Advice Offices who provided information and application support to SRD beneficiaries (Department of Social Development, 2021).

The following section outlines a discussion of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). The challenges and conditions for successful policy implementation are examined using PPPs.

#### **3.4.2.1. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

The study also examines the role and impact of PPPs on access to the SRD grant in KwaZulu-Natal, which can be assessed by investigating the challenges and success of implementation using PPPs. The fundamental feature of PPPs is the emergence of dependable and formal business relations with the private industry based on mutual interest and commitment, where both parties share benefits and risks, and both parties are responsible for service financing, construction, design, and operation of public facilities and services (Van Ham and Koppenjan, 2001: 598). Using partnerships when implementing policy seeks more ways to adopt private sector practices and innovate to make policy delivery more efficient and effective (La Roche, 2008: 8). Governments may outsource services to private companies to sustain and strengthen the implementation of their programs. (ibid). SASSA collaborated with large private retailers (Pick n Pay, Boxer) for the disbursement of cash payments of the SRD grant (Department of Social Development, 2021). PPPs are used to examine the issues related to this mode of delivery to deliver the SRD.

#### **3.4.2.2. Advantages of Public-Private Partnerships**

Using partnerships to implement policy consists of adopting private sector practices and innovation to improve policy delivery efficiency and effectiveness (La Roche, 2008:8). Implementing policies using collaborative partnerships not only assists public agencies in overcoming social and economic issues that affect government's capacity to deliver services efficiently and effectively (ibid). PPPs allow the public sector to organise private funds to increase funding capacity and bring in new modern technologies (Klijn and Tiesman, 2000:

22). Moreover, PPPs ensure higher quality and timely provision of public services (ibid). Private sector expertise and experience are used in PPP project implementation (ibid). According to Nelson (2003: 250), transparency encompasses four issues that should be maintained throughout the PPP: full disclosure, document accessibility, timeliness of information availability, and the mechanisms available for recourse and influence.

### **3.4.2.3. Disadvantages of Public-Private Partnerships**

#### **(i) Transparency**

Debande (2004: 201) contends that the advantages of PPPs can only be sustained and all stakeholders' collaboration and support ensured if all parties are involved from the start of the PPP agreement through a transparent process. Moreover, creating a Memorandum of Understanding between the parties also helps to ensure accountability by sharing all information about the parties' roles and responsibilities with the relevant stakeholders (Debande, 2004:201). This will gradually assist parties in making the best decisions, ensuring the best use of resources, value for money, transparency, and achieving desired results (ibid).

#### **(ii) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**

During the program's life cycle, the public sector's commitment includes ongoing performance monitoring of each project aspect. Bagal (2008: 25) asserted that monitoring the operations and performance of PPPs through required government oversight is another pillar of PPP success. As stated by the author, regular checks, and mandatory submission of progress reports by management teams running PPPs may ensure that the partnership's objectives are met (Bagal, 2008: 25). A log frame can be used as a program management tool to manage the entire project lifecycle, from design to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Van Baalen and de Coning, 2006: 242).

### **3.4.3. Coverage and Bias**

Coverage measures how well the target population achieves the levels of participation outlined in the program design (Rossi and Freeman, 1989:182). Bias is the degree to which subgroups of the target population participate differentially (ibid). A bias in the coverage of a program means that some subgroups are being covered more thoroughly than others (ibid). However, Rossi and Freeman (1989:183) argue that the most common coverage problem in social interventions is the failure to achieve full target participation; this is because of bias in the way

participants are recruited or because potential clients reject the intervention. As a result, inappropriate coverage can be costly (Rossi and Freeman, 1989:184).

### **3.4.4. Factors impacting implementation**

#### **3.4.4.1. The 5-C Protocol for Policy Implementation**

Research revealed that “policy implementation is a complex process rather than a mechanical, administrative one” Brynard (2005:16). Furthermore, Brynard (2005) writes that top-down system has been disapproved for minimising complexity and favouring simplistic hierarchical models, which do not provide a clear picture of how processes work. Despite the lack of a widely acknowledged theory of implementation, Brynard (2000:179) claims that it may be better understood by looking at clustered explanatory components, which he refers to as Brynard’s theory of the 5C protocol. Five common variables have been identified by Brynard (2012:318) as major causative determinants for policy implementation outcomes. These include content, context, commitment, capacity, and clients/coalition (ibid).

##### **(i). Content**

Various implementation scholars confirm the usefulness of policy content (Edler and Fagerberg, 2017; Mugwagwa et al., 2015). The policy’s content is what it intends to achieve (e.g., goals, how directly it connects to the issues) and how it intends to address the issues (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:45). To validate, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973: 15) observe policy implementation as “a seamless web... a process of interaction between the setting of goals and actions geared to achieving them”. Therefore, the content of the policy mediates this choice of ends and means. Unesco (2006) points out that the greatest of policies cannot be implemented successfully without a viable strategy. The content of the policy captures the objective of the policy and what it stands for.

##### **(ii). Context**

The focus here, as stated by Cloete and De Coning (2011:45), is on “*the nature of the institutional context- the corridor (often structured as standard operating procedure) through which a policy must travel and by whose boundaries it is limited, in the process of implementation*”. One must consider the institutional context and a larger backdrop of socioeconomic, political, and legal realities within policy implementation (Molobela, 2019:214). Furthermore, Cerna (2013:17) argues that “only looking for general solutions and not acknowledging the particular context can lead to incoherent implementation efforts”. A key

recommendation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2000:7) is that policymakers should understand the nature of different policy instruments along with the preferences of the regulated group and the regulatory context so that regulatory objectives can be achieved.

Berman (1980: 206) postulates that “a context-free theory of implementation is unlikely to produce powerful explanations or accurate predictions”. Despite institutionalised relationships, Brynard (2000:178) concedes that bureaucratic conditions conducive to implementation are typically the result of human interactions rather than hierarchical regulations. However, O'Toole (1986: 202) states how *“the field of implementation has yet to address, as part of its research strategy, the challenge of contextuality, beyond fairly empty injunctions for policymakers, implementers, and researchers to pay attention to the social, economic, political, and legal setting”*.

### **(iii). Commitment**

Commitment denotes the involvement of a variety of actors in the implementation of policy. Brynard (2007:145) states it is “the commitment of the entrusted with carrying out the implementation at various levels to the goals, a causal theory, and methods of the policy”. Moreover, it also considers actors’ ability and willingness to make policy work (ibid). The failure of some policies lies not in their inadequacies but in the lack of commitment from their implementers or even in how they are conducted (Warwick, 1982:130). Regarding the top-down and bottom-up perspectives, commitment is significant at all levels of the process, including the state and street levels. In the 5-C protocol, commitment is influenced by and influences all four other variables.

### **(iv). Capacity**

The administrative capacity of the public sector is viewed through the structural, functional, and cultural capabilities it has to achieve its policy objectives. Brynard (2000) posits that capacity includes tangible resources (i.e., financial, human, logistics and technological), and intangible requirements include motivation, courage, leadership, and endurance. It is also essential that the administrative, the political, economic, cultural, technological, and social context in which action is taken supports or favours successful implementation (Grindle, 1980). In summary, the capacity asks key questions for efficient implementation, such as *“is there a budget for the implementation of a policy? Is it enough? Are there people with necessary skills*

*and knowledge to conduct the job of executing the policy? Are there technological resources necessary to implement the task?” (ibid).*

#### **(v). Clients/Coalition**

Smith (1973:204) argues that “clients/coalitions are defined as those who are required to adopt new patterns of interaction by policy”. One looks at the “potentially influential clients and coalitions from the larger cast of characters in the implementation theatre” (Brynard, 2006:185). When considering this variable, it should be emphasised, first, the essential role played by coalitions of individuals and organisations who are in some manner shaped and impacted by the policy. Cloete and De Coning (2011:145) maintain “the support of clients/coalitions whose interests are enhanced or threatened by the policy, and the strategies they employ in strengthening or deflecting its implementation”. Bryant (2000:183) claims that successful implementation requires the government to collaborate with interested organisations, opinion leaders, and other external stakeholders. The influential clients/coalitions must be determined first to allow better implementation. Most often, the implementation process affects the more extensive group than the key actors, and they have the power to influence the implementation process (Brynard, 2005:662). The control of the larger group and minor actors is essential to ensure that the group is manageable, and policy is implemented without major hindrances (ibid)

The study's findings adopt the factors that constrain policy implementation to analyse the challenges emanating from the implementation of the SRD grant.

### **3.4.5. Factors that Constrain Implementation**

#### **(i). Unclear Goals**

One of the most common reasons for the failure of public policy programs is a lack of direction and unclear goals (Hudson et al., 2019:3). While it is impossible to predict every outcome, taking the time early on to define and communicate objectives and goals can dramatically increase the chances of implementing a project successfully (ibid). Many factors contribute to the difficulty of identifying problems and formulating policies (Emimue, 2005:299). These include a lack of understanding of potential policy alternatives, incomplete information, and political bias (ibid). That would partly explain why some well-conceived policies sometimes do not achieve predetermined goals, primarily when vast human and material resources support them (ibid). Emimue (2005:299) further validates that *“it is held that policies fail more in*

*developing countries than in advanced industrialised countries. The critical elements in both the internal and external environments are developing countries' implementation processes, which account for the gap between goals and achievement*". A consequence of these limitations is that most adopted policies include vague language and ambiguous, contradictory, or unfeasible policy goals. As a result, the agency tasked with implementing the policy may need to seal the gaps, which may or may not coincide with the policymakers' intentions (Theodoulou and Kofinis., 2004).

## **(ii). Inadequate Data**

Organisations or agencies often require baseline data to benchmark their performance before a project, not only to guide implementation but also to gain an overview of the subject or issue and as a foundation for mid-term, end-term, or impact evaluations (Ssekamatte and Okello, 2016). Baseline data are collected to monitor project outcomes and possibly evaluate their impact; some data are not collected during the pilot stages of a project or are collected after it has been underway (ibid). This suggests that there could be a lack of organisational support (e.g., computers to conduct work), expertise, and financial resources (ibid). Wu et al. (2013:90) substantiate, for example, that "the baseline data essential for any serious evaluation are often not collected before new policies are introduced, and there are almost no remedial measures that can be taken for this lack once policies are implemented". Therefore, the lack of baseline data hinders decision-making and causes policy implementation efforts to be hampered.

## **(iii). Inadequate Collaborative Policymaking**

The policy has been developed in distinct silos, although most interventions have wide-ranging impacts on other parties (Hudson et al., 2019). Therefore, collaborative policy planning and adaptive policy implementation will assist public policymakers in improving implementation. For example, Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) is a process where stakeholders at various levels and skills monitor and evaluate specific programs, projects, or policies. Gazley (2017) argues that despite increasing academic interest in promoting inter-organisational partnering, improvement is patchy despite growing academic interest.

The inability to establish a common ground for public problem-solving through constructive management of differences is one of the primary reasons for subsequent implementation difficulties. Koontz and Newig (2014:5) note that collaborative efforts are often described as 'bottom-up' in that they engage stakeholders in a local area to address problems of local interest. For instance, community members can play an essential role in mitigating the effects

of disasters because they are often the most vulnerable to disasters and possess valuable knowledge about the available livelihood options (Maskrey 2012). Studies on alternative disaster mitigation methodologies in which NGOs intervene at the local level show that local people understand their own needs and are the only ones who can define mitigation priorities within a given context (ibid). Therefore, a collaboration between upstream and downstream policy actors will help spur mutual learning and policy innovation processes and ensure flexible adaptations of public policies and their implementation plans to align them with local conditions (Ansell et al., 2017; Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:118).

#### **(iv). Lack of Expertise**

It is argued that policymakers in developing countries lack the fundamental knowledge, skills, competence, and technical expertise required to implement public policies and programmes (Wu et al., 2013). Government evaluation departments, for example, lack the technical knowledge concerning the explanation of performance indicators and the retrieval, preparation, collection, and interpretation of data (Maimula, 2017). Consequently, some policymakers who know how to use indicators to measure the performance and efficacy of public policies fail to use them because the process is cumbersome and time-consuming due to laxity and inefficiencies (ibid). Consequently, this affects the local government's ability to initiate, implement, monitor, and evaluate projects and programs since few skilled personnel are available (ibid). A veritable army of implementors would be needed to execute all the programs delivered by state and local governments.

The findings of this study will use the factors that promote policy implementation to analyse the challenges that emanate from the implementation of the SRD grant.

### **3.4.6. Factors that Promote Successful Implementation**

Various researchers have proposed the factors associated with successful policy implementation and the factors associated with ineffective policy implementation. Viennet and Pont (2017; 2834) identified four critical drivers in successful policy implementation, and these four aspects should be acknowledged when addressing policy implementation. These include “(1) policy design, (2) stakeholders and their involvement, (3) institution and context (4) the implementation strategy” (Tezera, 2019:093).

#### **(i). Policy design**



Policy design refers to how a policy is articulated and demonstrated and the logic it implies between a policy issue and the solution it proposes, with the latter's feasibility establishing whether or not a policy is implemented (Tezera, 2019:093). Developing policies entails determining goals and adopting policy instruments to achieve these goals. Policy implementation involves putting these policies into practice, including defining a structure for implementation, making decisions within agencies, and implementing policies to benefit target groups (Tosun and Treib, 2018; Howlett et al., 2015b).

#### **(ii). Stakeholders and their involvement**

Stakeholders are any actors, organisations, groups, or individuals who have an interest or role in public policy decision-making. Policy issues, decisions, and implementation are impacted by many factors, including stakeholder interests (Helbig, 2015). Stakeholders must contribute to policy formulation and have ample time, adequate means, and efficient evaluation methods (Bryson, 2004). When stakeholders are directly involved, the public can better understand the implications of different decisions. As a result, engagement leads to a broader range of policy options and prevents unprecedented consequences.

#### **(iii). Implementation strategy**

Tezera (2019:093) avers that “the implementation strategy refers to the operational plan that guides the process to make the policy happen in effect”. Strategies and plans are turned into actions through implementation in order to meet strategic objectives and goals. Miller (2020) posits that an organisation’s ability to implement decisions and execute key processes efficiently, effectively, and consistently is one factor that determines its success. Fischer and Miller (2007:92) outline six criteria for successful implementation: “(1). *Policy objectives are clear and consistent* (2). *The program is based on a valid causal theory*; (3). *the implementation process is structured adequately*; (4). *Implementing officials are committed to the program’s goals*; (5). *Interest groups and (executive and legislative) sovereigns are supportive*; (6). *There are no detrimental changes in the socioeconomic framework conditions*”.

#### **(iv). Communication**

Communication is among the many principal factors contributing to successful policy implementation (Rahmat, 2015:309). When implementing a specific policy, communication in the form of sharing information about the policy amongst stakeholders as well as target groups

needs to take place (McLean, 2012:63). This means that communication between target groups as well as the implementers of policy programmes is vital in terms of avoiding the implementation of policies that target groups do not find helpful (McLean, 2012:60).

According to Okumus (2003:871-882), before policy implementation, communication is a critical variable in ensuring that the policy's objectives are conducted as intended. "Communication could be top-down, bottom-up, lateral, formal, informal, internal, external, one-time, or continuous. For a policy to be effective, clear messages must reach all implementation officials" (Okumus, 2003: 871-882). Cloete et al. (2018:212) explain the need for effective communication in public policy implementation, particularly in a country like South Africa, which has a rich history of cultural diversity and eleven languages are recognised as official languages by the Constitution (1996). Through communication, transparency and good governance will be ensured with all stakeholders participating in policy implementation.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

The chapter outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for the implementation of policy. Various scholars define public policy as subjective phenomenon based on their experiences and conditions. Researchers exploring the concept suggest that it could be understood as a goal-achieving strategy. Implementation can be regarded as policy in action or how policy is conducted.

Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the top-down and bottom-up perspectives of policy implementation. The top-down perspective emphasises empowering top executives to make policy decisions. The bottom-up approach to policy implementation responds to the top-down approach, which is more realistic, practical, and democratic. Moreover, the chapter outlined the 5-C policy implementation protocol, which includes content, context, commitment, capacity, and clients/coalition. Moreover, the chapter has highlighted factors that constrain policy implementation, including unclear goals, inadequate data, inadequate collaborative policymaking, and lack of expertise. Besides, factors that promote successful implementation include the design of the policy, stakeholder involvement and the implementation strategy. The next chapter analyses the policy and legislative framework that guide the implementation of the Social Relief of Distress grant.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE SOCIAL RELIEF OF DISTRESS GRANT**

### **4.1. Introduction**

The chapter discusses the policy and legislative framework for the special Social Relief of Distress grant (SRD). As a point of departure, the chapter opens with a policy analysis of the Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act No.57 of 2002), amended on the 25th of March 2020. The discussion presents an overview of lockdown regulations and mitigating measures provided in South Africa. This legislation was the context in which the SRD grant was introduced to provide temporary relief to individuals and families experiencing temporary distress. The focus of the study is the SRD, and the chapter, therefore, discusses the related frameworks for the SRD grant and the grant programme specifically. These include The South African Constitution; the Disaster Management Act 2002; the Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004); and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Act (No. 9 of 2004). The discussion of the SRD grant provides an analysis of

its aims, objectives, eligibility criteria, the application process, screening and verification process and payment system. The information on the SRD is used in the findings and analysis chapter to analyse the implementation challenges experienced by beneficiaries in accessing the grant and the experiences of implementing agents in delivering the grant.

### **4.2. Amended Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002)**

The World Health Organization (WHO) (2020) declared the COVID-19 virus a global health disaster on March 11, 2020. The President of South Africa proclaimed a national state of disaster using the Disaster Management Act 57 of 2002 and scheduled a national lockdown on March 26, 2020 (COGTA, 2020:2). Correspondingly, an initial 21-day nationwide lockdown was imposed by the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) following the pandemic that began at midnight on Thursday, March 26th, 2020 (An expanded lockdown of 14 days was implemented afterwards) (ibid).

Disaster regulations were promulgated with the objective “to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID -19 in South Africa” (COGTA 2020:3). The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, as designated under section 27(1) declared a national state of disaster (COGTA 2020:4). Additionally, Section 27(2) of the Act permitted the government to issue directions or make regulations to -(a) assist and protect

the public; (b) provide relief to the public; (c) safeguard property; (d) prevent or combat disruption; or (e) deal with the destructive and other effects of the disaster (ibid).

Several regulations were put into place to prevent the spread of Covid-19. Under Section 8 of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No. 57 of 2002), during the state of disaster, any Minister may issue and amend directions as required, within the scope of their mandates, to address, prevent and combat the spread of COVID-19, including (a) disseminating information required; (b) implementing emergency procurement methods; (c) taking any other steps that may be obligated to prevent the national state of the disaster from escalating, or to mitigate, contain, and minimise the effects of the national state of disaster; or (d) adopting measures to facilitate international assistance (COGTA, 2020:10).


Some of the regulations that were put in place were Section 3 of the Amended Disaster Management Act (COGTA, 2020:5), which made provisions for the prevention and prohibition of gatherings to curb the spread of Covid-19. Therefore, if there is a gathering, an enforcement officer will need to order those present to disperse immediately, and if they refuse, take necessary action, which may include arrest and detention (COGTA, 2020:5). The consumption and sale of liquor at locations with more than 50 people were also declared as illegal (COGTA, 2020:5).

The government adopted various levels of lockdown restrictions which corresponded with the rate of the spread of infections and hospitalisations (RSA, 2020). The lockdown restrictions started at alert level 5, the most severe, and were reduced to alert level 1, which was the least restrictive. The alert levels were: “(a) ‘Alert Level 1’ indicates a low Covid-19 spread with a high health system readiness; (b) ‘Alert Level 2’ indicates a moderate Covid-19 spread with a high health system readiness; (c) ‘Alert Level 3’ indicates a moderate Covid-19 spread with a moderate health system readiness; (d) ‘Alert Level 4’ indicates a moderate to a high Covid-19 spread with a low to moderate health system readiness; and (e) ‘Alert Level 5’ indicates a high Covid-19 spread with a low health system readiness” (Department of Health, 2020:4)

People were confined to their homes during lockdowns, especially alert levels 5 and 4, with limited mobility for food purchases, medical care, and work (RSA, 2020).

### **Figure 5: Summary of Alert Levels Implications**

## Summary of alert levels

ALERT LEVEL 5	ALERT LEVEL 4	ALERT LEVEL 3	ALERT LEVEL 2	ALERT LEVEL 1
 <b>OBJECTIVE</b>				
Drastic measures to contain the spread of the virus and save lives.	Extreme precautions to limit community transmission and outbreaks, while allowing some activity to resume.	Restrictions on many activities, including at workplaces and socially, to address a high risk of transmission.	Physical distancing and restrictions on leisure and social activities to prevent a resurgence of the virus.	Most normal activity can resume, with precautions and health guidelines followed at all times.  Population prepared for an increase in alert levels if necessary.

*Source: COGTA, 2020b*

South Africa responded to the economic and social stresses of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown measures by using a combination of existing social protection programmes, including Top-up of Child Support Grants, unemployment insurance, Covid-19 Temporary Employer/Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) and special Social Relief of Distress grant to support those most affected by the pandemic (Department of Social Development, 2020).

The study focuses on the SRD grant, introduced for unemployed adults (18–59 years old) not supported by any other social security scheme and not cared for in a state institution (SASSA, 2021). The grant aimed at assisting persons in dire material needs unable to meet their family's most basic needs (SASSA, 2021).

### 4.3. Related Frameworks for the Social Relief of Distress grant

Several existing policy and legislative frameworks were in place that informed the delivery of the SRD. Some of these were: The South African Constitution; the Disaster Management Act 2002; the Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004); and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Act (No. 9 of 2004).

The South African Constitution is the most crucial document of the Republic of South Africa, and all legislation must comply with the provisions of the constitution. The constitution contains several articles that address social security issues for the country's citizens. The

Disaster Management Act is discussed as it mandates the provision of social assistance to mitigate the severity of disasters, which correlates to the SRD grant's emergence. Furthermore, the Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004) provides for the administration and payment of the SRD grant. The South African Social Security Agency Act also mandates SASSA's functions as a state-owned enterprise that manages the administration and payment of social grants. Each of these legislations is discussed in detail.

#### **4.3.1. International frameworks for Social Assistance**

The South African government must assist those in need and provide the resources necessary to meet their basic needs. These obligations are outlined in the Constitution and several international agreements that require it to address social security issues, including poverty, social assistance, and disaster mitigation. The following international frameworks are discussed: Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (CDSO), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

##### **(a) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR)**

The ISDR focuses on protecting communities from natural and man-made disasters, as well as reducing community vulnerability by improving the ability to cope with them (UNISDR, 2002:19). Also, the ISDR takes an international approach concerning disaster mitigation, which also includes developing a risk-avoidance culture and establishing behaviour that supports public-level engagements (ibid). Besides, ISDR aims to raise public awareness about disaster vulnerability, risk, and mitigation worldwide. Likewise, a significant focus is ensuring that the government is committed to disaster mitigation and implementation. ISDR emphasises inter-sectoral and interdisciplinary integration and expanding existing channels (UNISDR, 2002:19).

##### **(b) Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (CDSO)**

The goal of the United Nations (UN) is to eradicate poverty throughout the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as a social, ethical, economic, and political imperative (World Summit for Social Development, 1995:8). Furthermore, they pledge to collaborate with actors of civil society in the context of a multidimensional and comprehensive approach to: *“(b) Focus our efforts and policies to address the root causes of poverty and to provide for the basic needs of all. These efforts should include the elimination*

*of hunger and malnutrition; providing food security, education, employment, and livelihood; primary health-care services, including reproductive health care, safe drinking water and sanitation, and adequate shelter; and participation in social and cultural life. Special priority will be given to the needs and rights of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons”* (World Summit for Social Development, 1995:8).

### **(c) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**

The ICESCR, established in 1966, is an essential document on socioeconomic rights (United Nations, 1966). According to Article 9, everyone is entitled to social security, including social insurance (ibid).

The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the Social Relief of Distress programme implementation issues, including accessibility, the application process, payment processes, and the distributional impact faced by the Department of Social Development in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal from a period between 2020-2022. The study will also focus on beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal.

### **4.3.2. South Africa**

#### **(a) Disaster Management Act (No. 57 of 2002)**

The aim of the Disaster Management Act is: *“to provide for an integrated and coordinated 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”* (RSA, 2002:3).

#### **(b) The Constitution of South Africa**

One of the consequences of Covid-19 lockdown regulations was food insecurity. Section 27 (1) (b) of the South African Constitution (1996:12) provides that everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food and water. In addition, Section (1)(c) mandates that individuals have the right to social security, including adequate social assistance, in case they are incapable of

supporting themselves and their dependents (ibid). To realise these rights, the state must take reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources. The Food and Nutrition Security Policy establishes a comprehensive framework for achieving this constitutional mandate, and it is the mandate for national, provincial, and local governments to guarantee food security at all levels (Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF), 2013).

#### **(c) Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004)**

The Social Assistance Act No.13 of 2004 was promulgated to make provision for social assistance, to provide for the mechanism for the rendering of such assistance, to provide for the establishment of an inspectorate for social assistance and to provide for matters connected therewith (Republic of South Africa, 2004a). The objectives of the Act are to (a) Make provision for the administration of social assistance and the payment of social grants; (b) Establish a system for social assistance and determine the eligibility requirements for it; (c) Ensure that minimum norms and standards for the delivery of social assistance are prescribed; and (d) Provide for the establishment of a social assistance inspectorate (ibid).

#### **(d) South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) Act (No. 9 of 2004)**

The Act establishes the South African Social Security Agency as an agent for the administration and payment of social assistance. Moreover, it provides for the Agency's prospective administration and payment of social security, along with the provision of related services, and makes provision for matters connected therewith (Republic of South Africa, 2004b). Additionally, the agency's objectives include managing, administering, and paying social assistance efficiently and effectively (ibid). Moreover, serve as an agent for the future administration and payment of social security; and provide services related to such payments (Republic of South Africa, 2004b).

Moreover, Section 4 of the SASSA Act outlines the functions of the agency, which are to administer social assistance in terms of Chapter 3 of the Social Assistance Act, 2004, and perform any function delegated to it under that Act (Republic of South Africa, 2004b). Furthermore, SASSA is mandated to collect, collate, maintain, and administer information necessary for the payment of social security, and for the central reconciliation and management of transfer funds, in a national database of all applicants for and recipients of social assistance (ibid). In addition, as contemplated in the subsection, the agency should establish a compliance



and fraud mechanism to ensure the integrity of the social security system and render any service following an agreement or a provision of any applicable law (Republic of South Africa, 2004b).

Furthermore, using SASSA's resources effectively and efficiently is guided by the SASSA Act, which states in subsection 2(a) that the agency has the right to enter into agreements with the minister and any person for the effective delivery of social grants to beneficiaries (Republic of South Africa, 2004b). Nevertheless, such agreements must include provisions in subsection (3). Therefore, the agreement must include provisions to ensure that social security funds are used effectively, efficiently, and economically (Republic of South Africa, 2004b). They must also promote and protect the human dignity of applicants and beneficiaries (ibid). According to Section 16,

the Agency must protect confidential information, provide honest, impartial, fair, and equitable services, and implement mechanisms to ensure community participation and consultation (Republic of South Africa, 2004b). In addition, there are financial penalties for non-compliance with the agreement's provisions (ibid).

#### **4.4. Social Relief of Distress Grant**

The Social Relief of Distress grant was launched in May 2020 (SASSA, 2020). The grant aimed at helping persons in dire material needs unable to meet their family's most basic needs (ibid). Moreover, providing temporary relief of R350 to individuals and families experiencing temporary distress was the grant's main objective (SASSA, 2020:11).

The program was initially scheduled to run for six months, from May to October 2020. However, in mid-October, the government announced a three-month program extension in response to the pandemic's prolonged economic impact (SASSA, 2021). By December 2020, a total of R15.6 billion had been disbursed monthly to approximately six million previously uncovered beneficiaries (ibid). A second three-month extension was announced in mid-February 2021, and the scheme officially ended on April 30, 2021 (SASSA, 2021). Following a two-month break, the President announced a program re-launch on June 25, 2021, in response to an increase in Covid-19 infections and a new set of lockdown measures (ibid). The second round of the grant was scheduled to begin in August 2021 and run until the end of March 2022, making the program one of the most extensive and long-lasting social protection responses to Covid-19 on the African continent (ibid).

The eligibility criteria to qualify for that grant are: *“South African Citizens, Permanent Residents or Refugees registered with Home Affairs; Resident within the borders of the Republic of South Africa; Above the age of 18; Unemployed; Not receiving any income; Not receiving any social grant; Not receiving any unemployment insurance benefit and does not qualify to receive unemployment insurance benefits; Not receiving a stipend from the National Student Financial Aid Scheme; Not receiving any other government COVID-19 response support; and Not resident in a government funded or subsidised institution.”* (Department of Social Development, 2021).

The applicants for the SRD grant are required to submit specific documentation in their applications: *“Identity Number; Name and Surname as captured in the ID (and initials); Gender and Disability; Banking details – Bank Name and Account Number; Contact details – Cell phone number; Proof of Residential Address;”* (Department of Social Development, 2021). Furthermore, to complete the SRD grant application, no additional documentation, such as bank statements, identification, or proof of address, must be scanned for submission (Government of South Africa, no date). Furthermore, the SASSA application authorises the validation of financial and other information against data held by government and financial institutions, including the South African Revenue Service and banks (ibid).

#### **(a) Application Process**

Applicants for the new SRD grant could submit their applications via one of the three electronic channels:

- *“A USSD-based system offered by Vodacom, South Africa’s largest mobile network provider;*
- *A WhatsApp channel managed by GovChat, an organisation that provides digital communication platforms to various government agencies;*
- *A special email and website address delivered by Prosense Technology, an existing provider of biometric verification services to SASSA”* (South African Social Security Agency, 2020).

Only the Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD) (a communications service controlled by mobile network operators for sending short text messages) option was free; meanwhile, the WhatsApp channel and the website/email option required that the applicant have airtime and/or data on their phone (South African Social Security Agency, 2020). In

addition, once their application had been approved, applicants had to sign a consent form, choose their desired payment method, and provide their banking details (South African Social Security Agency, 2020).

SASSA used various communication platforms to disseminate information to the public about the grant, including radio stations, print media, and social media (South African Social Security Agency, 2021). Also, local government networks, volunteers from the National Development Agency (NDA), civil society organisations such as Black Sash, Social Change Assistance Trust, and Community Advice Offices circulated information and helped with application processes (ibid).

### **(b) Screening and Verification Process**

The first round of SRD applications for approval and verification opened on 11 May 2020. To ensure that only one application per person was approved for further processing, SASSA reviewed each application for completeness and potential duplicates. (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). Also, SARS then evaluated applications against a “qualifier database” created using data from the National Population Register (NPR) (ibid). In the same way, additional checks were conducted on records from the UIF database, NSFAS, SASSA’s SOCPEN system, and the government’s Persal and Persol databases of public employee payroll data (Parliamentary Monitoring Group, 2020). Additionally, applicants who were already receiving (or were eligible for) other government assistance, as demonstrated by records from these multiple databases, were rejected (ibid). SARS conducted a second round of verification on the remaining applications to verify whether applicants had PAYE tax records (ibid).

### **(c) Payment System**

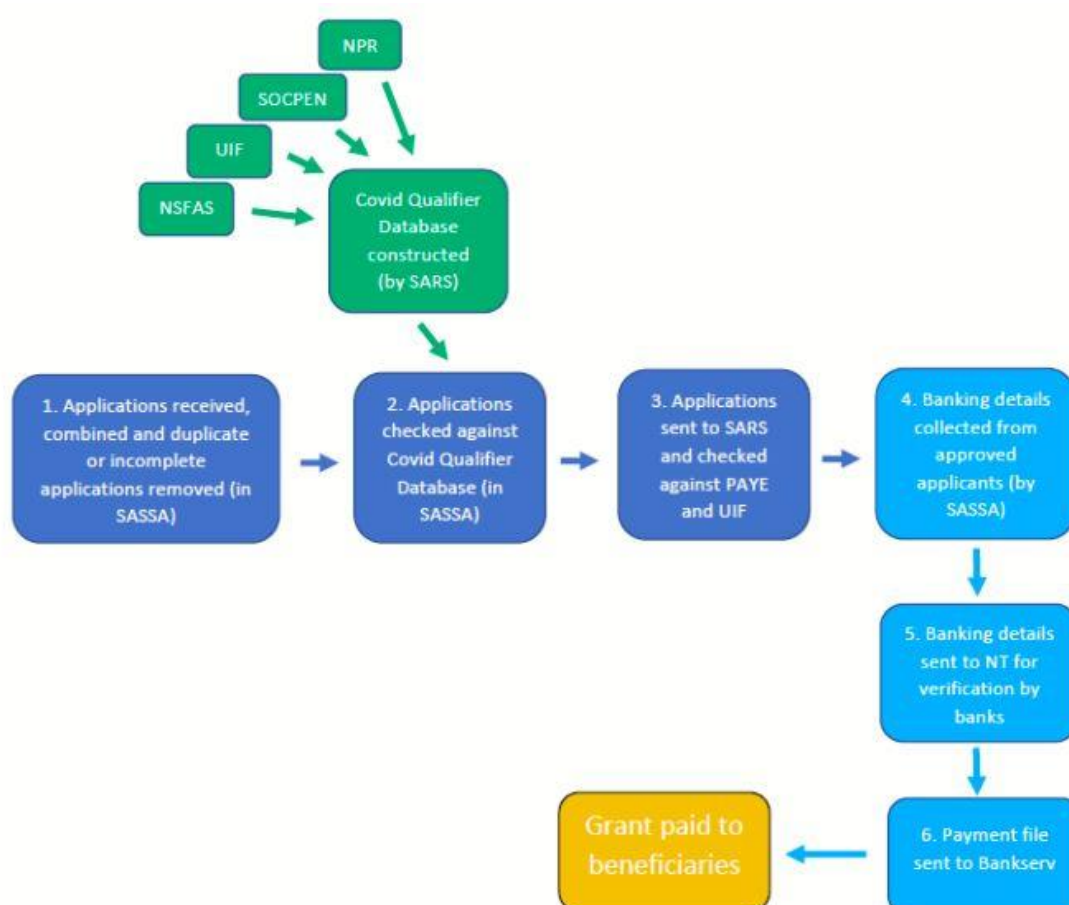
The South African Reserve Bank’s Head of the National Payments System created a special task team jointly organised by the Payments Association of South Africa (PASA) and assisted by a specialist working group on onboarding and payment options (Department of Social Development, 2021). The task team highlighted the necessity of building on current systems and utilising digital-preferably mobile technologies to deliver a payment system in as little as 30 days (ibid).

The payment options available for the new SRD grant were: “(a) *electronic transfer into a personal bank account (unchanged)*; (b) *mobile funds transfer to a cellphone number registered in the applicant’s name, to be withdrawn from any ATM (amended mobile payment*

option); and (c) cash withdrawal from Postbank facilities located at Post Office branches (new)” (Department of Social Development, 2021).

Despite the expert working group’s apparent preference for digital payments, the South African Post Office (SAPO)/Postbank (South Africa’s regular grant payment provider) was incorporated as a cash payment option (Department of Social Development, 2021). Once applications were approved, applicants who chose to have their payments deposited into a personal bank account were asked to provide their banking information (ibid). Before making the first payment, the National Treasury verified the banking information (ibid).

**Figure 6: Summary of the screening, verification, and payment process for the SRD grant**



Source: Department of Social Development (2021)

## 4.5. Conclusion

The chapter discussed the policy and legislative framework for the SRD grant. As a point of departure, the chapter discussed the Disaster Management Act 2002 (Act No.57 of 2002), which was amended on the 25th of March 2020. The Act made provisions to address and

combat the spread of Covid-19. Some of the provisions entailed the prevention and prohibition of gatherings in order to contain the spread of Covid-19 in the Amended Disaster Management. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the South African government to assist people in need and provide resources to meet their basic needs.

Additionally, numerous international agreements and the South African Constitution imposed obligations to deal with social security issues. For instance, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (CDSD) seeks to alleviate poverty, hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition worldwide. Similarly, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) enshrines the right to social security, including social insurance. Likewise, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) aims to raise worldwide public awareness about disaster vulnerability, risk, and mitigation.

Furthermore, the Social Assistance Act (No. 13 of 2004) provides for the administration and payment of the SRD grant. The South African Social Security Agency Act also mandates SASSA's functions as a state-owned enterprise that manages the administration and payment of social grants. Finally, the SRD grant was designed to assist people in dire material need who cannot meet their families' most basic needs. Furthermore, the grant's main goal was to provide R350 temporary relief to individuals and families experiencing temporary hardship. It was the first digitally implemented social protection system in South Africa.

The following chapter analyses and presents the findings according to research questions.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **5.1. Introduction**

The chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study for the following research questions:

- What were experiences of the targets of the SRD in accessing the grant?
- What was the importance of the SRD grant?
- What were the implementing issues experienced by implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering the SRD grant?

The data collection methods that were employed included desktop qualitative analysis. The data sources are primary government policy and legislation related to the Social Relief of Distress grant and secondary data sources including research reports, online news articles and academic journal articles. The findings focus on the period from May 2020, when the SRD grant was implemented, until December 2022. Furthermore, following the hard lockdown (Level 5) implementation, the SRD grant was introduced to offset the socioeconomic challenges of vulnerable populations. Qualitative data analysis concerns meaning, and the researcher uses the thematic content analysis model to analyse the data. The study uses implementation theory to analyse data on beneficiaries accessing the grant and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and South African Social Security Agency) in delivering SRD grant in KwaZulu-Natal. Furthermore, the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) model is also used to analyse applicants' experiences accessing the SRD grant.

The chapter first discusses the experiences of the SRD beneficiaries in accessing the grant programme. The focus is on their experiences concerning the application process, application outcomes and collection of the SRD grant. The issues discussed included communication, a top-down approach, clients/coalitions, and monitoring and evaluation. Further, the findings look at the impact of the SRD grant on the lives of the beneficiaries. Finally, the chapter discusses the implementing issues experienced by implementing agents (Department of Social Development and South African Social Security Agency) in delivering the SRD grant. The issues include unclear goals, inadequate data, and commitment.

### **5.2. Experiences of the Social Relief of Distress grant beneficiaries in accessing the grant**

#### **5.2.1. Communication**

Research showed that the beneficiaries of the SRD R350 grant face many challenges before they can access their money, despite it being viewed as a vital support mechanism for vulnerable members of our society (Gronbach et al., 2022). The Black Sash initiated monitoring the Covid-19 social relief grant application process with its partner organisations, including the Community Advice Office of SA (CAOSA) and Social Change Assistance Trust (SCAT) (Sonjica, 2021). They found that although the SRD grant was beneficial in addressing hunger and poverty in South Africa during the coronavirus pandemic, it was reported that the application process was fraught with challenges (ibid). Although South Africa has eleven official languages, these challenges included that online application systems were only available in English (ibid).

*“For many of the people whom the system was meant to help, English is a second, third or fourth language” (Sonjica, 2021)*

*“Across the country, people came to advice offices and community-based organisations for help simply because the messaging was incomprehensible. The SMSs were lengthy and complicated and people worried if they did not understand the nuances of the instruction, they would not get their grant” (Sonjica, 2021)*

The application systems were set up exclusively in English, and the SMS notifications sent to applicants were often lengthy and complicated, making the process difficult for some applicants who were not proficient in that language. The government must communicate policy direction or implementation to avoid contradictions by ensuring coherence in the actions taken by various public and private entities in policy implementation processes. Cloete et al. (2018:212) explain the need for effective communication in public policy implementation, particularly in a country like South Africa, which has a rich history of cultural diversity and eleven languages are recognised as official languages by the Constitution (1996). Through communication, transparency and good governance will be ensured with all stakeholders participating in policy implementation.

In addition, the research found that beneficiaries who applied for the grant on digital online platforms proved challenging for many applicants due to the lack of connectivity, access to cell phones, computers, cellular networks, data, and airtime (Sonjica, 2021). As a result, many people in the country’s poorest areas had difficulty accessing the grant (ibid).

*“Capturing information on digital systems was challenging for people unfamiliar with keypads and devices. All digital systems were set up exclusively in English, making applying very challenging for people not proficient in that language.” (ibid).*

The Department of Social Development (DSD) and its agency, the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), commissioned a nationally representative rapid assessment study on the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 (Department of Social Development, 2021). Based on the online survey results, metropolitan municipalities (urban areas) have a higher percentage of applicants than district municipalities (Department of Social Development, 2021:11). The report illustrated an urban bias. To elaborate, in KwaZulu-Natal, the eThekweni municipality had by far the most significant proportion of applicants for the Special Covid-19 SRD (Department of Social Development, 2021:12). A comparison of urban and rural populations tends to reveal higher education levels, better access to infrastructures, and more technology devices in urban areas (Department of Social Development, 2021:13).

Applicants who were able to apply through the use of mobile channels found the process to be quite efficient and empowering. Andiswa from Pietermaritzburg describes her experience of applying *“fast if you do it on the phone. Everything was settled and they said I should wait for messages to see if it is approved”* (Gronbach et al., 2022:35). However, during the application process, some participants were dependent on others due to a lack of digital literacy, connectivity, or smart devices (ibid). Often, these participants had to entrust others with their personal information and did not have the option of participating in the application process or selecting their payment method (ibid). This is evidenced by Tumi, also from Pietermaritzburg (aged 22), whose friend completed her application process: *‘No I did not get any options during my application and I remember at that time some people were saying they got paid via bank and my approval only said I must go to the Post Office’* (Gronbach et al., 2022:35).

The application process posed significant limitations in a country where the people most in need of grants often do not have access to mobile phones or computers, cannot afford airtime or data, and live too far away from a service centre and in an area with no cell phone reception. In addition, the evidence demonstrated urban bias as most of the applicants were located in and around cities. Rossi and Freeman (1989:183) contend that the most common coverage problem in social interventions is the failure to achieve full target participation; this is because of bias in how participants are recruited or because potential clients reject the intervention. The scholars further maintain that inappropriate coverage can be costly (ibid).



### 5.2.2 Top-Down Approach

The Pay the Grants movement argued that millions of potential claimants could still not get their applications approved six months into the new iteration (April 2022) of the Social Relief of Distress grant (Ntseku, 2020). The movement also stated that the crisis would not be resolved until SASSA and the Department of Social Development accepted responsibility and corrected the grant's exclusionary criteria and administrative errors (ibid). Among the movement's concerns were pending applications, rejections of applications due to "alternative sources of income" and UIF, and the use of bank verifications and databases such as UIF, Sars, and NSFAS, which remain impediments six months after the new dispensation (ibid). Despite constant reports to SASSA and the department, these were still occurring.

Rose Gumede, from Hluhluwe in northern KwaZulu-Natal, is unemployed and reported that she was denied the R350 SRD grant that she had been receiving each month since the Covid-19 lockdown began (Sikhakhane, 2022). Gumede is one of over 5 million South Africans who used to receive the SRD grant from 2020-2021 but no longer receive it in 2022 (ibid). She applied alongside 11.5 million other citizens in 2022.

*"Every month from April, I check the status hoping the money is coming through. At first, it said approved but didn't give a date for collection, I appealed and got declined. I don't know why because the only money I receive is from my sister who is helping us live right now, but she is struggling with food and petrol going up, it's hard for her to have to help feed us too"* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

Mathuli Mkhize, 39, from Hammarsdale in Durban's western suburbs, echoed Gumede's sentiments. She claimed she had no income, including grants, but her status was still "pending" because she applied for the SRD grant.

*"I don't know why I'm not getting the R350 because I don't even use a bank account at all and I have never been employed in my life, so it can't be UIF. I tried to appeal months back but even having data for that whole process is a struggle,"* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

Mathuli Mkhize said that Hammarsdale is a 45-minute drive from Durban, where she usually goes to drop off her resume and that it costs her up to R200 per day to look for work (ibid). She pays R70 for transportation and the rest for photocopies at her local internet cafe. *"I don't even care where I work as long as I have money, money is all the same,"* she explained (ibid).

Likewise, nearly one-third of grant applications were rejected owing to conflicting information in outdated government databases that falsely showed applicants receiving another grant (Senona, Torkelson & Zembe-Mkabile, 2021). Applicants were not given the opportunity to demonstrate their innocence (ibid). Other reasons for rejection included having previously filed a tax return or applied for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (ibid).

The report commissioned by the Black Sash in collaboration with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that beneficiaries of the R350 grant faced several barriers in processing applications. One of the participants whose SRD application got rejected described their experience.

*“I worked and I left then they said I was declined because I have another source of income. Of which I didn’t have source of income for the whole of 6 months. ... I was using the MOYO app and I had to check. I punched my I.D and I got the response that it was declined because I had source of income. I was sad because at that time I actually needed that money and it was going to help me with a lot of things. ...I tried again, I tried the next month and the next month then I tried again.. I tried four times. I ended up going to ask how come I was declined. ... I was disappointed, I gave up on the government. I didn’t vote. NSFAS rejected me. Nothing for the government is for me, which means that help that everyone gets is not for me.” (Matthews et al, 2022:26)*

Overall, grant applications were rejected primarily due to conflicting information in outdated government databases, which falsely showed applicants already receiving another grant. Applicants were not given the opportunity to prove otherwise. Further reasons for rejection included having submitted a tax return or applied for the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. The argument resonates with DeLeon and DeLeon (2002), who contends that top-down policymakers may enact policies based on criteria that citizens do not comprehend, potentially obscuring citizens’ rational preferences. Solving these problems requires the inclusion of multiple stakeholders and sources of information. Also, Koontz and Newig (2014:5) note that collaborative efforts are often described as “bottom-up” in that they engage stakeholders in a local area to address problems of local interest. Besides, Colebatch (2002:53) supports that goals, plans, and actions must be implemented, emphasising the individuals directly affected by the policy.

### **5.2.3 Collecting the Social Relief of Distress grant**

The payment options available for the new SRD grant were: “(a) *electronic transfer into a personal bank account (unchanged); (b) mobile funds transfer to a cellphone number registered in the applicant’s name, to be withdrawn from any ATM (amended mobile payment option); and (c) cash withdrawal from Postbank facilities located at Post Office branches (new)*” (Department of Social Development, 2021). During the second cycle of the SRD grant, a change to the payment system was the introduction of an additional cash pay-out option via Pick n Pay and Boxer retail stores (two of the country’s largest supermarket chains) on 21 September 2021 (ibid). This was supposed to ease pressure on Post Office branches on pay-out days and increase cash pay points. The following subheadings discuss some challenges emanating from the collection points, including Post Office branches and Banks.

#### ***(a) Clients/Coalitions***

According to GroundUp, SRD beneficiaries formed long lines at the Redhill Post Office in Durban to access the grant (Majola, 2020). They complained about a lack of physical distancing and people cutting in line (ibid). Bonakele Mkhize, from Inanda, claimed she was overjoyed when she received an SMS confirming the approval of the R350 grant she applied for a few weeks ago (ibid). Mkhize chose Redhill because she believed it would be faster than her local post office and stated that:

*“I couldn’t wait to get to the post office and collect my money but I wasn’t expecting a long queue. I arrived around 9am and went home empty-handed,”* (Majola, 2020)

She asserted that the line was so long that people were reserving places for others (Majola, 2020). Shockingly, chaos ensued when it was time to go into the post office (ibid). The police were called, and the post office was compelled to close early (ibid). Mkhize went on further to explain that:

*“People just don’t listen. There is no social distancing and they all want to get in at the same time without waiting their turn,”* (Majola, 2020).

Similarly, Nhlanhla Ximba stated that despite arriving early in the morning, he was forced to fight individuals who arrived after noon and were already attempting to get into the post office.

*“I’m unemployed and do not know where I am going to get bus fare if I don’t make it inside the post office in time...I was turned away yesterday,”* (Majola, 2020).

Mfanafuthi Gumede of the KwaMakhutha Community Resource Centre observed beneficiaries waiting hours to get paid at a Post Office branch in Amanzimtoti (Human, 2022). In order to secure a place in the queue, many arrive at 5 am (ibid). Gumede stated that the branch lacked toilets and running water, which he described as “disrespectful” and “shameful” given that many of the beneficiaries are elderly or disabled (ibid). Gumede also stated that more security is required at the branch on pay dates (ibid). He claimed that earlier in the month, there was a hijacking outside the branch, and someone was shot while about 60 beneficiaries were waiting to be paid (ibid).

Lavena Dulandas from Phoenix in Durban claimed that people receiving Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grants at post offices pay people to reserve places in queues (Dawood, 2020). When the grants were offered, Dulandas said, the Phoenix Post Office issued recipients a card with a number (ibid). Moreover, beneficiaries could return the following day and be first in line if they could not collect the grant that day (ibid). According to her, the queues have been growing since they stopped this process, and a syndicate was collecting R50 for reservations (ibid). She also feared how post office systems malfunction and sometimes run out of cash. Also, Dulandas and her husband are both unemployed (ibid). They slept outside the post office one Friday to receive their grant on Saturday (ibid). She elaborated on how many people slept outside the Post Office entrance; some people got up in the morning and sold their places (ibid).

*“It has become a business. There were 12 people in front of me, but during the day the number increased. A system should be put in place. We are exposed to criminals at night.”* (Dawood, 2020).

Fana Mkhize of Bhambayi in Inanda (Durban) mentioned long queues at every post office (Dawood, 2020). He claimed that even though he arrived early, it took him two days to collect his grant the previous month (ibid).

Nobuhle Njapha, a South African Post Office spokesperson, stated that they were fully cognizant of self-appointed queue marshals who charge customers who visit their branches a fee to be placed at the front of the line (Sithole, 2021).

*“No SAPO employee or other individuals have the right to ask beneficiaries to pay any fee to be serviced and/or to receive preferential treatment by jumping a queue. Such practices are illegal. The public is advised not to pay the fee demanded by any SAPO employee, queue*

*marshals or any other person requesting such a payment, and should consider laying a charge of bribery and corruption at their nearest police station” (Sithole, 2021).*

The findings show that SRD beneficiaries experienced challenges accessing the grant at the South African Post Office. This resulted in long queues on payday, system glitches, and certain outlets running out of cash. Accessing cash payments of grants at SAPO branches continues to be inefficient, costly, time-consuming, and stressful for SRD applicants. Moreover, grant recipients were exposed to poor service delivery, bribery, and corruption in collecting their grants at the Post office branches. The influential clients/coalitions must be determined first to allow better implementation. Brynard (2005:662) postulates that the implementation process affects the larger group more than the key actors, and they have the power to influence the implementation process. Nevertheless, key actors must always be part of the implementation process to enlarge the scope of enquiry. The control of the larger group and minor actors is essential to ensure that the group is manageable, and policy is implemented without major hindrances (Brynard, 2005:662).

### ***(b) Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)***

SRD beneficiaries who preferred the bank as a payment option did so because they considered the process more convenient than going to a SAPO branch to collect their money. The Banking Association of South Africa (BASS) (2020) posited that banks will significantly reduce their charges for South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) (2020) grant beneficiaries to increase the number of pay points from which they can collect their grants, thereby maintaining social distancing in queues at bank branches and retailers for the duration of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. When Thembisile Zondo from rural Newcastle receives her SRD grant, she receives bank charges ranging from R7 to R10 (Matthews et al., 2022). Zondo was willing to accept these charges due to the inflated transportation costs to collect her SRD grant in cash and the lack of safety when attempting to collect cash grants (ibid).

*“Charges are there, but they (the bank) charge about R7 or so, but it is nothing compared to R24 that one pays in total to go collect the grant.” (Matthews et al., 2022).*

However, Busi (age 33) experienced inconsistent commercial bank payments, which amounted to more than the prescribed grant amounts (Gronbach et al., 2022:38). *“It (her first payment) was R750, then on my second month it was R1050, and the rest of the months it was R350, the last payment it was R700” (ibid).* When asked if there were any months in which she did not collect her grant, she replied, *“No, I think it was my luck because I was collecting every month*

*and I never skipped any month” (ibid).* The inconsistency of payment amounts disadvantages some beneficiaries because they cannot plan financially ahead and are compelled to make multiple trips (ibid). Meanwhile, others received double or more significant payments, reflecting an unreliable and inaccurate payment process (ibid).

Due to system glitches caused by their respective banks, some KwaZulu-Natal beneficiaries could not access funds using their bank cards (Singh, 2022). Sassa KZN spokesperson Sandy Godlwana said the issue was brought to the attention of the department (ibid)

*“SASSA assures social grants beneficiaries that SASSA transferred funds to respective bank accounts of beneficiaries,”* said Godlwana (ibid)

The agency requested patience while the system issues were resolved.

*“Sassa has been assured by affected institutions that their technicians are working around the clock to have this matter resolved expeditiously,”* said Godlwana (ibid).

Accessing the grant proved challenging. Those who elected to receive their payments via a bank account deposit were subjected to withdrawal fees and other bank charges. Payments were also inconsistent, and there was no set schedule – some people had to wait weeks before their payments were processed, and others had their payments skipped, doubled, or suddenly terminated. These challenges often meant recipients had to make multiple trips, which compounded costs. Therefore, an ongoing performance monitoring of each project aspect is essential to public sector commitments during programme life. Bagal (2008: 25) asserted that monitoring the operations and performance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) through required government oversight is another pillar of PPP success. The scholar further states that regular checks and mandatory submission of progress reports by management teams running PPPs may ensure that the partnership’s objectives are met (Bagal, 2008: 25).

### **5.3. Importance of the Social Relief of Distress grant**

Developing policies entails determining goals and adopting policy instruments to achieve these goals. Policy implementation involves putting these policies into practice, including defining a structure for implementation, making decisions within agencies, and implementing policies to benefit target groups (Tosun and Treib, 2018; Howlett et al., 2015b).

To support this, Lindokuhle Msomi, 29, from Kwamashu, who lost his job as a scriptwriter and videographer during the Covid lockdown, used his Social Relief of Distress grant to buy poles and wood, to build a stall, and start a small fast-food business near his hostel (Majola, 2022).

*“Most people don’t believe me when I tell them I started this business with the Covid grant but it is the truth. You don’t need to have hundreds of thousands of rands to start a business, you can start small like I did and grow from there. But you cannot do it alone, you need the support of the community,”* said Msomi (ibid).

While applying for and collecting SRD grants presented many challenges for the beneficiaries, it was reported that it contributed to alleviating extreme poverty within their households and families.

Rose Gumede, 48, from Mduku, Hluhluwe, a rural area in northern KwaZulu-Natal, stated that:

*“The grant is not a lot of money, but it helped so much as I bought vegetables with it to sell it here,”* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

Similarly, Sdudla Zungu, 40, a hairstylist who lives in Phumlani, Hluhluwe, stated she sometimes “sits all day” without clients but still has to find R120 in transportation money each week (Sikhakhane, 2022). Zungu said she used the SRD grant to “buy a 2kg chicken braai pack, 10kg packet of rice, small potatoes and onions” (ibid).

And further explained:

*“It gets so tough. There is no food in the house. That money helped. I had to send a family member R500 I owed them and as soon I did, I remembered that the limit for the money you can have in your account is R350 and I knew I wouldn’t get the money,”* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

*“It’s crazy that the government has decided that if you have R400 in your account, that means you are rich,”* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

Despite wishing the grant could purchase more essentials, Ndumi Mhlungu, 25, from Mondlo, a small town south of Vryheid, is grateful for the little she receives (Sikhakhane, 2021).

*“We were eating only pap and soup when the grant came in, so I bought mealie meal, a chicken braai pack, and potatoes and that was it because food is expensive nowadays. You can’t buy much with R350, but it helped us,”* Mhlungu elaborates (Sikhakhane, 2021). Mhlungu graduated with a diploma in horticulture in 2018 but has yet to find work (ibid). She lives with

14 family members, primarily women and children (ibid). During recess, some sell food to students. Only two people are employed (ibid).

Some recipients expressed how the grant was too little to meet their needs (Majola, 2021). *“It’s little to depend on. It just helps as extra to help here and there,”* one person said (ibid). Another said: *“How do you contribute to the household with just R350? I don’t understand. It doesn’t make any sense at all how they can give people R350. I don’t get it”* (ibid). *“It’s really hard, really hard, which I think employment would be better than us receiving these grants,”* one other person said (ibid).

On 9 September, Statistics South Africa (2021) adjusted the national food poverty line to R624 monthly. They reported that approximately 10 million South Africans go to bed hungry each night, many of them in rural areas (ibid). According to the National Food Consumption Survey, most rural inhabitants consume diets with limited variety and are typically inadequate in fruits and vegetables (Sikhakhane, 2021). Similarly, the Household Affordability Index data released in May 2021 indicated that an average food basket costs nearly R300 more than it did in September 2020 (Pietermaritzburg Economic Justice and Dignity, 2021).

Furthermore, Grant recipients reported that they had to pay money to access and collect their grant, so they could barely buy anything. Tshepiso Masiteng, 23, from rural KwaZulu-natal, said that most of her grant went towards transport charges and bank fees (Sikhakhane, 2021). *“The bank charged me and I was left with R310. Our nearest Capitec branch is 35km away so I took three taxis to get there. I spent R76 to get there and R76 to come back as well. I only managed to buy data really”* (ibid).

Evidence shows that the Covid-19 SRD grant has assisted impoverished families in purchasing much-needed food, but the amount of R350 per month is insufficient to meet a person’s basic needs, much less enable them to thrive. Cloete and De Coning (2011) argue that there is a policy gap when policy expectations and perceived outcomes differ during the implementation process. The findings showed that the R350 grant is insufficient to sustain its recipients. Besides, Pressman and Wildavsky (1973:166) postulate that implementation can be best provided if the policy content is critically understood as a process of interaction between setting goals and actions geared toward achieving them. In the case of the SRD, the findings show that program design and goals are counterintuitive as it disconnects from addressing the needs of the intended beneficiaries.



The section discussed the impact of the SRD grant on the lives of beneficiaries. The following section discusses the experiences of implementing agents in delivering the SRD grant.

#### **5.4. Implementers experiences of administering the SRD**

##### **(i) Unclear Goals**

One of the most common reasons for the failure of public policy programs is a lack of direction and unclear goals (Hudson et al., 2019:3). While it is impossible to predict every outcome, taking the time early on to define and communicate objectives and goals can significantly increase the chances of implementing a project successfully (ibid). Many factors contribute to the difficulty of identifying problems and formulating policies (Emimue, 2005:299). These include a lack of understanding of potential policy alternatives, incomplete information, and political bias (ibid). A consequence of these limitations is that most adopted policies include vague language and ambiguous, contradictory, or unfeasible policy goals.

To support the assertion. Previously, the Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD) was paid under Disaster Management Act regulations (Heywood, 2022). However, once the National State of Disaster was lifted on 5 April 2022, the regulations had to be migrated and re-issued under Section 32 of the Social Assistance Act (ibid). Despite being mandated by transitional measures gazetted on April 4, 2022, the Department of Social Development (DSD) and SASSA halted application processing for April without explanation, resulting in many eligible people missing their April SRD grant payments (Black Sash, 2022). The new regulations may disqualify hundreds of thousands of people from receiving the assistance they have relied on for a long time (ibid). Many of the most vulnerable are robbed of their basic rights without warning or consultation by the National Treasury and the DSD.

The DSD has denied this: on 19 April, SASSA spokesperson Paseka Letsatsi told GroundUp, that *“current beneficiaries are not affected by the change in regulations”*. Despite this, Social Development Minister Lindiwe Zulu issued new regulations contradicting this. The department announced changes in its accompanying media statement (issued after working hours during a weekend) that will immediately impact millions of people. It stated that: *“Given that the Covid-19 SRD will now be provided for under a new legislative framework, and that additional qualifying and assessment criteria will be added, those in need of assistance will have to apply for the Covid-19 SRD, or reapply if they were previously in receipt of this grant”* (Department of Social Development, 2022). The department published that, *“Fortunately, the entire*

*application system remains a purely digital process, thereby enabling quick access and turnaround times”, saying that it would open “at 12am on Saturday 23 April 2022” (ibid).*

Furthermore, the published regulations reduced the income eligibility threshold for the SRD from the food poverty line (R624) to R350, implying that people are now only eligible for the SRD grant if their monthly income is less than R350 (Heywood, 2022). Consequently, hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries who previously qualified for the SRD grant under the reduced threshold will no longer qualify (Heywood, 2022). Shaeera Kalla of the #PayTheGrants campaign called this a “disaster”, saying that *“Dropping the income threshold which was already far too low at R640 to R350 will exclude millions”* (ibid). Kalla also alleges that *“many people have not been paid for April and given the dates and deadlines set for applications now, it seems there won’t even be a back payment”* (ibid).

In the same way, the #PayTheGrants movement highlighted how it was *“bitterly disappointing”* that the income threshold had been increased to R624 (Sikhakhane, 2022). The bank verification was also removed as the final determination for means testing (ibid). In a statement, the movement articulated how this needed to be clarified.

*“On this point, the regulation needs more clarity when it comes to the use of or relationship between bank verification and the use of databases such as UIF, SARS [the South African Revenue Service], NSFAS [the National Student Financial Aid Scheme], et cetera,”* the #PayTheGrants statement reads (Sikhakhane, 2022).

It was further found that:

*“These databases have serious flaws and approximately 40% of applicants have been unfairly declined due to this. Bank verification with means testing will remain a huge problem going forward as any funds received into a bank account or via Cashsend or money markets are considered as income. This is the reason why approximately 70% of declined applicants have been declined [because they have been identified as having an alternative source of income]”* (Sikhakhane, 2022).

Findings show that the goals of the newly gazetted regulations of the SRD grant are unrealistic, as hundreds of thousands of people receiving the grant could now be disqualified. Eminue (2005:299) validates that *“it is held that policies fail more in developing countries than in advanced industrialised countries. The critical elements in both the internal and external*

*environments are developing countries' implementation processes, which account for the gap between goals and achievement”.*

## **(ii) Inadequate Data**

Ssekamatte and Okello (2016) argue that organisations or agencies often require baseline data to benchmark their performance before a project, not only to guide implementation but also to gain an overview of the subject or issue and as a foundation for mid-term, end-term, or impact evaluations. The inadequateness of data suggests that there could be a lack of organisational support (e.g., computers to conduct work), expertise, and financial resources (ibid). Wu et al. (2013:90) substantiate, for example, that *“the baseline data essential for any serious evaluation are often not collected before new policies are introduced, and there are almost no remedial measures that can be taken for this lack once policies are implemented”.*

A report by the Auditor-General released in December 2021 found that 5,812 public servants fraudulently applied for and received the R350 SRD grant, which cost R5.8 million (Businesstech, 2022). Moreover, it is reported that:

- *“In KwaZulu-Natal, 221 officials in the provincial health department received the R350 grant and in the Western Cape, 172 officials benefitted illegally.*
- *In the Eastern Cape alone, 986 staffers at the provincial health department fraudulently claimed the R350 grant.*
- *The North West has 129 officials who received the grant.*
- *The Gauteng health department had 113 officials who got a R350 grant, and in Mpumalanga, 103 staffers got away with receiving it.*
- *At national government level, 40 officials in the Department of Correctional Services fraudulently received the grant”*(Felix, 2020).

According to News24, SASSA has not reported a senior government official for fraudulently receiving the R350 social relief of distress grant despite earning more than R1 million per year (Felix, 2022). It was revealed that the government continued to pay social grants to some employees despite SASSA not having *“the precise information on the employment nature”* of some beneficiaries (ibid). SASSA reinstated payments to over 177 000 state employees who had been stopped from receiving social grants in September 2021 (ibid).

Lindiwe Zulu, the Minister of Social Services, suggested that her department is collaborating with the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the Financial Intelligence Centre (FIC), the South African Police Service (SAPS), and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) to bring thousands of public servants to justice for exploiting South Africa's R350 Social Distress Relief grant (Businesstech, 2022). Although thousands of public servants were caught in the act, the department only sent 242 cases for further investigation (ibid). The investigation of 242 sample cases found the following:

- Investigators concluded that 44 civil servants were eligible for the SRD grant because they were employed on a sessional basis, resulting in the disciplinary and criminal action of 198 civil servants.
- DPSA advised that 44 of the 198 civil servants were no longer employed by the government, resulting in 154 disciplinary files being handed over to DPSA for coordination and monitoring of disciplinary hearings with Departments at the Provincial and National levels.
- Internal investigations involving 198 civil servants have been finalised, and individual cases were opened. The opening of 198 cases is expected to be concluded by the end of May 2022.
- Employees who refuse to sign the acknowledgement of debt forms will be prosecuted under Section 300 of the Criminal Procedure Act for loss recovery from the government (Businesstech, 2022).

Regarding the 5,812 civil servants- SASSA is planning to conclude the following two processes on or before 31 September 2022:

- Hand over the files to DPSA for disciplinary hearing coordination with affected National and Provincial Departments, and
- Opening criminal cases within various provinces (Businesstech, 2022).

Tsakani Maluleke, the Auditor-General, reported that SASSA's outdated, limited databases and inadequate verification controls led to people receiving Social Relief of Distress Grants, also known as R350 grants, but people in distress were sometimes unfairly rejected (Ellis, 2020).

The evidence shows why SASSA failed to update its outdated, limited databases and inadequate verification systems leading to an influx of fraudulent applications from civil servants.

### **(iii) Commitment**

Warwick (1982:130) argues that the government may have all the necessary resources, the policy may be established according to cost-benefit analysis, and the ideal structure format may exist. However, if those in charge of putting it into action are unwilling to do so, little will be accomplished, and government transformation may be undervalued. Policy processes require commitment. It is essential for people participating in the process to feel connected to and own the institution for which they are working (Brynard, 2007:145).

To support the argument, in a Committee meeting, Linton Mchunu, Acting Director-General of the Department of Social Development, articulated how the department received 7 840 934 valid applications in May 2020, 5 063 543 of which were approved (Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), 2020). Furthermore, payments had been made to 4 369 627 applicants in June and July and to a further 2 499 989 in June and July (ibid). The total amount disbursed was R3.279 billion (ibid). On 22 July 2020, May's most significant residual payment was finalised and paid (ibid). The R700 payment was made to those applicants who applied in May and who, after revalidation, were still eligible for June and July (ibid). From 20 July, payments were made in batches of 500 000 daily (ibid). Applicants who had previously been disqualified because of database errors have been reconsidered, and those who meet the criteria have been notified and paid (ibid).

Recently, the Department of Social Development (2022) reported the implementation of the new iteration of the SRD, and as of 30 June, the numbers are as follows:

- *“A total of 11,4 million people applied, of whom 43% are male and 57% female.*
- *Caregivers of the child support grant beneficiaries account for 4 million of the applicants.*
- *Youth under the age of 35 years account for 60% of the applications, while 40% of the applicants have a grade 12 qualification and 5% a tertiary education.*
- *So far, SASSA has started paying the June applicants while also back paying the successful reconsiderations from August 2021 onwards.*

- *For June 2022 applications, 5.273 million beneficiaries were approved, of whom 3.729 have been paid”.*

Most of the initial implementation challenges were being resolved. For example, a few issues had arisen with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) databases, but these were being addressed (PMG, 2020). Other challenges included:

- *“Bank account details causing a high rejection rate. This was due to delays in providing details, using other peoples’ accounts, and not knowing the difference between savings and current accounts;*
- *Personal details not matching their identity documents (IDs);*
- *Applicants visiting the post office prior to receiving an SMS;*
- *Clients not responding to SMSs sent to the number on the Department’s records, and difficulty in tracing them;*
- *Expectations not matching reality – it was not a universal grant, but a short-term grant based on valid applications received” (ibid).*

During the discussion at the Committee meeting, Ms D Ngwenya (Economic Freedom Fighters) asked how members of the Committee could locate NDA volunteers in their constituencies who were supposed to help people without smart devices apply for SRD grants (PMG, 2020). Moreover, *“how many cooperatives and SMMEs were ready to produce PPE? What was the update regarding people who had been instructed to apply for the SRD rather than the disability grant? What was the timeline for SRD grant reviews? What monitoring structures were there for CSOs that received funds from the R32 million budget allocation from the NDA for CSOs?”* (ibid). Likewise, Ms Breedt (Freedom Front Plus) mentioned how people were not getting through to the SASSA call centres (ibid). According to Mr D Stock (African National Congress), local post offices in townships and rural areas were not assisting people with the SRD grant; people were directed to go to town (ibid). Ms N Mvana (African National Congress) expressed concern about how the SRD grant was a sore issue for the Department (ibid). It was disheartening to see long queues of people waiting for applications in townships and rural areas (ibid). A mismanagement of the SRD grant was apparent at the post office (ibid).

In response to the questions and comments, Ms Dianne Dunkerley, SASSA's Executive Manager of Grants Administration, stated that several people had been redirected to the post office to receive their SRD grants, even though this was not their first choice of payment method. This was because of contracts with banks for e-cash options.

## **5.5. Conclusion**

The former chapter has presented the findings and analysis of the study. The devastating effects of the Covid-19 pandemic have adversely affected all facets of human life. Although some beneficiaries could access the Covid-19 social relief grant, others were excluded due to various challenges. A lack of digital devices, internet access, and digital literacy made the online system inaccessible and exclusionary. There was a lack of efficiency in the South African Post Office's handling of cash payments. It was common for branches to run out of cash, for their technology malfunctioning, and for long queues to be poorly managed. Rural and peri-urban residents faced more significant challenges accessing the grant than their urban counterparts. Recipients expressed concern about how their grant applications were rejected, mainly due to conflicting information in outdated government databases that falsely showed applicants receiving another grant. Applicants were not given the opportunity to prove otherwise during the appeal process. Rossi and Freeman (1989:183) argue that the most common coverage problem in social interventions is the failure to achieve full target participation; this is because of bias in how participants are recruited or because potential clients reject the intervention. As a result, inappropriate coverage can be costly (Rossi and Freeman, 1989:184).

Moreover, grant recipients were exposed to poor service delivery, bribery, and corruption in collecting their grants at the Post office branches. The influential clients/coalitions must be determined first to allow better implementation. Brynard (2005:662) postulates that the implementation process affects the larger group more than the key actors, and they have the power to influence the implementation process. Those who elected to receive their payments via a bank account deposit were subjected to withdrawal fees and other bank charges. An ongoing performance monitoring of each project aspect is essential to public sector commitments during programme life. Bagal (2008: 25) asserted that monitoring the operations and performance of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) through required government oversight is another pillar of PPP success. The author asserted that regular checks and mandatory submission of progress reports by management teams running PPPs might ensure that the partnership's objectives are met (Bagal, 2008: 25).

One of the most common reasons for the failure of public policy programs is a lack of direction and unclear goals (Hudson et al., 2019:3). A consequence of these significant limitations is that most adopted policies include vague language and ambiguous, contradictory, or unfeasible policy goals. It is established that the goals of the newly gazetted regulations of the SRD grant are unrealistic, as hundreds of thousands of people receiving the grant could now be disqualified. The evidence further suggests how SASSA failed to update its outdated, limited databases and inadequate verification systems leading to an influx of applications from public servants. The inadequateness of data suggests that there could be a lack of organisational support (e.g., computers to conduct work), lack of expertise and financial resources (Ssekamatte and Okello, 2016).

The following chapter concludes, as revealed by the research study findings.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

In Chapter One, the study aimed to investigate the SRD programme implementation issues, including accessibility, the application process, payment processes, and the distributional impact faced by the Department of Social Development in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal. The study also focuses on beneficiaries' experiences in accessing the relief fund and the experiences of implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering SRD grants in KwaZulu-Natal between May 2020- December 2022. The objectives of the study were:

- To present a policy analysis of the policy and legislative framework for the Covid-19 lockdown regulations in South Africa.
- To present a policy analysis of the policy and legislative framework for the SRD grant.
- To present the implementation/delivery structures, processes and systems that were put in place to deliver the SRD grant.
- To investigate the experiences of beneficiaries in accessing the SRD grant.
- To explore the significance of the Social Relief of Distress grant.
- To investigate the implementing issues experienced by the implementing agents (Department of Social Development and SASSA) in delivering the SRD grant.

A desktop qualitative approach to research was used to collect data in the study. In 2019, the emergence of Covid-19 in South Africa and its corresponding impacts simultaneously posed a socioeconomic and health crisis. To curb the spread of Covid-19, South Africa implemented a five-tier lockdown strategy, with level 5 being the most drastic in terms of restrictions. Moreover, the country went into hard lockdown in April 2020, imposing curfews, travel restrictions, and closing businesses and other public entertainment outlets. This worsened an already dire situation in a country with high unemployment, poverty, and inequality. During the pandemic, the government implemented the Special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress Grant (SRD), a monthly stipend of R350,00 for unemployed persons over 18 who were not receiving any other form of income, including social assistance or insurance.

The Covid-19 crisis and regulations restricting social mobility and interaction have led most governments worldwide to expand their social protection systems to provide relief to vulnerable individuals and household members. Notably, digital technology has become integral to many social security systems worldwide. However, a digital welfare state raises

essential subjects related to policy, exclusion, and human rights that should be considered when developing systems for application, evaluation, verification, and payment.

The implementation of the SRD grant was fraught with challenges. Although some beneficiaries could access the Covid-19 social relief grant, others were excluded due to various challenges. A lack of digital devices, internet access, and digital literacy made the online system inaccessible and exclusionary. There was a lack of efficiency in the South African Post Office's handling of cash payments. It was common for branches to run out of cash, for their technology malfunctioning, and for long queues to be poorly managed. Rural and peri-urban residents faced more significant challenges accessing the grant than their urban counterparts. Recipients expressed concern about how their grant applications were rejected, primarily due to conflicting information in outdated government databases that falsely showed applicants receiving another grant. Applicants were not given the opportunity to prove otherwise during the appeal process. Beneficiaries who elected to receive their payments via a bank account deposit were subjected to withdrawal fees and other bank charges. In addition, payments were inconsistent and had no set schedule -some people had to wait weeks before their payments were processed, and others had their payments skipped or abruptly terminated. Moreover, grant recipients were exposed to poor service delivery, bribery, and corruption in collecting their grants at the Post office branches.

It was established that public policy programs fail if there is a lack of direction and unclear goals. A consequence of these limitations is that most adopted policies include vague language and ambiguous, contradictory, or unfeasible policy goals. Furthermore, the goals of the newly gazetted regulations of the SRD grant are unrealistic, as hundreds of thousands of people receiving the grant were disqualified. The evidence further suggests how SASSA failed to update its outdated, limited databases and inadequate verification systems leading to an influx of applications from public servants.

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