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**Civil Society and Social Grants: A Case Study of Civil Society Organisations and the Child
Support Grant During the COVID-19 Lockdown in South Africa**

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2023

DECLARATION

I, Nicollette Sindiswa Mchunu declare that:

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23 June 2023

Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all those families who lost their loved ones during the Covid-19 Pandemic. A special dedication to my late Mother (Thokozile Priscilla Dlamini), who passed on in the commencement of my Master's degree journey. Graduation ceremonies will no longer be the same without your cheerful ululation but I know you will smile in heaven when I step on the podium to be rewarded for all my efforts. I will always treasure the memories we shared together.

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 lockdown regulations promulgated by the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (No.57 of 2002) Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27 (2) has led to a dramatic loss of income and presents an extraordinary challenge to the livelihoods of the vulnerable. The level 5 lockdown was implemented to prevent the virus from spreading through the regulations, which included the closure of businesses and schools, restrictions on travel and transportation, and orders to remain at home, causing overwhelming economic and social disruptions mostly affecting children and caregivers as beneficiaries of the Child Support Grant (CSG). The study seeks to explore the impact of the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role played by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) on the CSG during the lockdown. The study adopted an interpretative approach whilst using a qualitative methodology to explore the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries, and the role played by CSOs in the CSG programme. The study is a desktop research; therefore, non-probability purposive sampling and theoretical sampling for documents was used to select relevant primary and secondary studies with sufficient data to address the research questions. The study uses a qualitative content analysis data collection method to collect data from books, journals, government legislation, newspaper articles, reports from government departments and Non-Governmental Organisation (NGOs), and relevant websites to provide in-depth descriptions of the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on CSG beneficiaries and CSOs' advocacy role in the CSG programme. Therefore, qualitative content analysis is used to analyze and organise data extracted from primary and secondary sources into themes related to the conceptual framework and the research questions of this study. The implementation of the CSG programme, as the focus of the study, was analyzed within the conceptual framework of public policy implementation which comprises numerous actors' involvement. Additionally, the study uses the conceptual framework of civil society, which involves policy advocacy to understand the involvement of CSOs, the advocacy role and strategies of CSOs in the CSG. The findings of this study portray that CSOs influence the implementation of the CSG programme, and play both advocacy and watchdog roles. Furthermore, invented spaces of participation through virtual platforms such as media campaigns, evidence-based research, online petitions, lobbying through litigation, and submissions were utilised by CSOs to pressure the government to top up the CSG and for the public to contribute to the design of the social assistance policy response during level 5 lockdown. The CSOs proposed the CSG top-up of R500 per recipient. However, government implemented the CSG top-up of R500 per caregiver from June to October. Whilst CSOs contributed to the social assistance policy response during lockdown, they experienced challenges such as lack of advocacy capacity, lack of public awareness of online petitions, the digital divide, and lack of data and lack of communication between respective stakeholders and the public in executing advocacy activities.

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ACRONYMS

- CSG - Child Support Grant
- CSO - Civil Society Organisation
- NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation
- NPO - Non-Profit Organisation
- CBO - Community Based Organisation
- RSA - Republic of South Africa
- DSD - Department of Social Development
- SASSA - South Africa Social Security Agency
- SAPO - South African Post Office
- Stats SA - Statistics South Africa

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted people's health and livelihoods in South Africa. On 23 March 2020, the President of the Republic of South Africa (RSA) announced a national lockdown in the country from 26 March to 30 April 2020 that was aimed at combatting the spread of the pandemic (RSA, 2020). To mitigate the spread of the virus, the South African government introduced COVID-19 Regulations under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (No.57 of 2002) Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) which regulated the movement of citizens and access to goods and services (RSA, 2020). Additionally, a COVID-19 risk-adjusted strategy comprised of five distinct levels of regulations, ranging from Alert Level 5 to Level 1 (which is the least restrictive), was implemented (RSA, 2021). These strategies impacted economic activities, levels of social inequality, and levels of poverty, especially among social grant beneficiaries (South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), 2019/20:22).

Under level 5 of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations, movement and gatherings were prohibited except when they related to "performing an essential service, obtaining an essential good or service, collecting the social grant or seeking emergency life-saving or chronic medical attention" (RSA, 2020). Where movement was permitted, public transport was restricted to curfew hours, the capacity of public transport restricted by 50% and the adherence to COVID-19 safety measures and hygiene regulations had to be complied with (RSA, 2020). Furthermore, the regulations stated that only retail stores providing essential services were permitted to operate with the necessary safety hygiene measures in place (RSA, 2020). High unemployment, high poverty, lack of or interrupted access to products and services, and unstable income-generating activities were all risk factors for food insecurity and household hunger (Van der Berg et al., 2020:5). During lockdown in South Africa, these risks factors intensified for many families and more so for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, women, children, and the unemployed (Van der Berg et al., 2020:5).

The Quarterly Labour Force Survey by Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) states that before the lockdown many households relied on informal sector earnings as the only means to stay above the poverty line (Statistics SA, 2020). The informal sector accommodates about 18% of the total employment, which is approximately three million people (Stats SA, 2020:13). Such losses in adult earnings negatively affect children's well-being and survival (Children's Institute, 2020:2). Despite a consistent source of income, a working adult can provide additional benefits of social security to the family, thus contributing to improved health, development, and education of children (Children's Institute, 2018:223).

The child support grant (CSG) is one of South Africa's most effective poverty reduction programmes for children under the age of 18, at the amount of R440 monthly, per child (SASSA, 2020:4-8). The RSA Constitution states that "everyone has the right to social security" and the state must design an accurate social assistance plan within its available resources in recognition of this right (RSA, 1996:11). This right is encoded in the Social

Assistance Act (No.13 of 2004), which provides for the effective implementation of social assistance in the realisation of the right to social security for rightful beneficiaries to combat child poverty (RSA, 2004:4).

Multiple studies have found that the receipt of a child support grant is linked to improved food security, school attendance, and nutritional and health outcomes for children, as well as many other positive effects in addition to reducing income poverty (Mtshali, 2018:92; Department of Social Development (DSD), SASSA and UNICEF, 2012:120; Ngcongco, 2016:66). However, Mthethwa (2017:195) and Isaacs (2018), argue that the CSG cannot accommodate all basic needs of the child and is inadequate, since it provides for the whole family. A report by the Children's Institute and Stats SA (2020:18), found that "about 62,1% of children aged 0–17 years are multidimensionally poor in South Africa". In addition, higher rates of child poverty are found among children from bigger households with unemployed adults with no education or lower levels of education (Children's Institute; Stats SA, 2020:18).

South African citizens, permanent residents, and refugees are eligible for the CSG. However, essential documents such as a child's birth certificate and caregivers' identity document are required (SASSA, 2020:4). Statistics South Africa estimated the population of South Africa to be at 59,62 million in the second quarter of 2020 (Stats SA, 2020: viii). Based on the estimated population, SASSA pays "18.1 million social grantees representing about 31% of the country's population" (SASSA Strategic Plan, 2020/25:34). The CSG accommodates about 12.4 million children of the estimated grants paid by SASSA (SASSA, 2020/25:10). Unemployment levels and food insecurity have a direct impact on the demand for social assistance, particularly the CSG and Social Relief of Distress (SRD), (SASSA, 2019/20:22).

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are an "intermediary entity standing between the private sphere and state officials" that are characterised by citizens collectively interacting to attain common goals, make demands on the government, and hold it accountable (Diamond, 1994:5). The term "civil society refers to a wide range of organisations such as development-oriented NGOs, trade unions, religious entities, community-based organisations, and social movements" (Davids, 2014:63). Chapter 2 of South Africa's Constitution (1996) enables the formation and participation of CSOs in policymaking as it guarantees citizens' rights to freedom of expression, assembly, demonstration, picketing, and petition, as well as labour relations and political rights. Civil society organisations participate in policymaking through dialogue, negotiating, and lobbying in different decision-making arenas, articulating specific interests of the targeted group or issue and taking part in consensus-building activities of decision-making, and other stages of the policy process (Theron and Mchunu, 2014:67). The South African White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) identified the role of CSOs in providing social welfare services such as providing information systems, operational research, direct service delivery and advocacy (RSA, 1997:28).

Contributions of CSOs in social security programmes are recognised globally. A study by International Labour Organisation, United Nations & Department of Economic and Social Affairs claim that since the 20th century, the involvement of trade unions and civil society in

the fight for social rights and the growth of social security have also been crucial in the case of Argentina (ILO et al., 2021:7). Child-focused organizations pushed for a structured social protection policy and a reduction of particular regulatory restrictions so that children may receive adequate basic services and a fair standard of living (ILO et al., 2021:15). For Kapundu (2017:18), CSOs are essential for promoting human rights, accountability, and transparency while pushing for economic reforms. Additionally, CSOs work to combat poverty and inequality in society by providing essential services. The study by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA, 2015:19-20) asserts that the government, Southern African Development Community (SADC), United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local non-governmental organizations, and community-based groups all work to reduce poverty and disaster risk in Africa). In Zambia, local community organizations are praised for their participation in the creation, execution, and oversight of social transfer programmes (Kabelanga & Mphande 2019:49).

The Civicus report indicated that globally the coronavirus pandemic has triggered an intense wave of civil society activity civil society worked to monitor the violation of human rights, campaigned and advocated for policies that recognise the marginalised people, and for the introduction of emergency basic income interventions during the pandemic (CIVICUS, 2020:4 & 36). In Latin America, CSOs have used online and offline activism to pressure the government to respond to the pandemic. They have formed coalitions to advocate for better crisis legislation, advocated for an emergency relief fund, and protested for the economy to reopen and better government support to mitigate the crisis (CIVICUS, 2020:34). As a result, the government of Argentina announced a one-time increase of ARG \$3,100 for The Universal Child Benefit (AUH), a conditional cash transfer program for poor and or vulnerable children and adolescents (younger than 18 years old) as means to mitigate challenges accompanying COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown (Blofeld et al., 2021:5). Many CSOs' responses in Africa concentrated on advocating for social protection and minimising the effects of governmental measures that enforced lockdowns and disrupted many activities of everyday life, disproportionately affecting disadvantaged and excluded groups (SPII, 2021:23). In response to mitigate COVID-19 related challenges to children, Zambia initiated an Emergency Cash Transfers (ECT), topping up the Child Grant Programme primarily to assist the poorest households in coping with the pandemic's effects (Pruce, 2021:7). This grant included food and cash assistance in the amount of "ZMW 400" monthly to beneficiaries of the existing social cash transfer scheme as well as additional households identified as either vulnerable or food insecure (Pruce, 2021:7).

In South Africa, CSOs have been at the forefront of advocating for democracy, good governance, and the promotion of human rights (Democratic Works Foundation, 2018). The South African Child Gauge (2016) published by the Children's Institute argued that since the evolution of the CSG in South Africa, civil society, particularly non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have played a major role in ensuring that social grants reach the vulnerable, (Patel and Plagerson, 2016:3). Civil society organisations such as Black Sash, the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA), the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), and the Children's Institute have been involved in the CSG through research, advocacy, participating in the implementation of the programme, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as holding the government accountable and transparent to citizens about social grant conspiracies and delivery (Patel and Plagerson, 2016:3, 40). During the COVID-

19 lockdown, prominent NGOs directly operating in the field of child care, social security and children's rights namely Black Sash, Children's Institute, CINDI, Section 27, PLAAS and many more were advocating for the CSG increase and for it to match the cost of living at an initial proposal of an R500 monthly increase paid to all beneficiaries, almost 13 million individuals, to mitigate the COVID-19 lockdown-related impact on CSG beneficiaries (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020; Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII), 2020).

Several reports have shown that children bore much of the impact of the COVID-19 hard lockdown, as they are dependent on adults' income for survival (Bhorat et al., 2020; Van der Berg et al., 2020; The Presidency, 2020). Changes were made in the implementation of the CSG programme by the government to assist the CSG beneficiaries to counterattack COVID-19 lockdown challenges. These changes are discussed in Chapter 4 of the study. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the impact of COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role played by CSOs during this period in advocating for the interests of CSG beneficiaries.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The CSG is one of the major tools employed by the South African government to alleviate child poverty in the country. The RSA White Paper for Social Welfare (1997:45) asserts that "given the enormous backlogs in meeting the social and economic needs of the most disadvantaged sectors of the population, government will not be able to address these discrepancies by itself". CSOs played a major role in ensuring that social grants reach the vulnerable. In relation to the CSG, civil society organisations have been the major influence in the implementation of the grant, from challenging the means tests criterion, increase the amount and age coverage (DSD, 2012: ii).

The provided information in the background of the study depicts that notwithstanding the efforts by the government and CSOs contributions to soften the shock of poverty in South Africa since 1994, it is clear that the existing social grants support system is not sustainable and is inadequate to uphold beneficiaries in times of unforeseen disasters. Despite the countless developments and the expanded reach of the Child Support Grant, child poverty is still a major problem and is most likely to exacerbate during disasters. Children are the most affected by the challenges accompanying the COVID-19 pandemic due to the stipulated lockdown measures as they are dependent on adults' earnings. Based on the outlined research questions and objective in the next section, the main objective of the study is to explore the impact of COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role played by CSOs during this period in advocating for the interests of CSG beneficiaries.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What were the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
2. What were the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries in relation to regulations instituted by The Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
3. What is the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG in South Africa?

4. What strategies do CSOs employ to advocate for the interests of CSG beneficiaries?
5. What changes did the CSOs propose for the CSG during COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
6. What changes did the South African government implement to the CSG during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
7. What were the experiences of the CSOs in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To explore the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown
2. To explore the impact of the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown on CSG beneficiaries
3. To explore the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG in South Africa
4. To explore strategies employed by CSOs to advocate for the interests of CSG beneficiaries
5. To explore the changes that were proposed by CSOs around CSG during COVID-19 lockdown level 5
6. To explore the changes that were implemented by the South African government to the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown
7. To explore CSOs' experiences in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

1.5.1 Research Paradigm and Approach

Leedy and Ormrod (2010:12) define research methodology as the overall method that the researcher employs to conduct the research study. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:20), a research paradigm is more frequently described as research traditions or worldviews that researchers adopt as a particular manner of examining the phenomena pertinent to their field. The authors identify three prominent paradigms including positivism, interpretivism, and critical realism. This study adopted an interpretive paradigm. This paradigm is an approach to understanding and interpreting everyday happenings (events), experiences, and social structures as well as the values people attach to these phenomena (Rubin and Babbie, 2010:37). Additionally, Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:28) agree with Rubin and Babbie when they claim that people are fundamentally distinct from objects and are constantly influenced by the events taking place in their surroundings. This study explores the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries, and the role played by CSOs in advocating for their interests. The interpretive paradigm is suitable for this study because it emphasises the uniqueness and allows the researcher to fully comprehend and describe significant social activities and experiences with the subjects of the study. Thus, the study used a qualitative research methodology.

Creswell (2014:32) defines qualitative research methods as a means of exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.

Babbie and Mouton (2001) concur with Creswell (2014) and maintain that qualitative research seeks to comprehend a small group or context in depth by using data findings to offer meaning rather than generalized explanations about the subject being studied. The use of qualitative research methods in this study is beneficial because it gives an understanding of people's lived realities, makes it easier to explore how people internally construct their distinct worldviews and provides in-depth data (Babbie, 2010). This made it possible for the researcher to learn about and comprehend the experiences of CSG beneficiaries and the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations on them, as well as the views of CSOs that influenced their advocacy responses concerning the study's subject matter.

1.5.2 Research Design

The study used a case study approach, which, according to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:178), is a thick and detailed description of a social phenomenon that exists within a real-world context. The case study for this research is the CSG programme during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown and the advocacy role of CSOs. An in-depth analysis was carried out in this research regarding the implementation of CSOs' advocacy roles and strategies in the CSG programme.

1.5.3 Data Collection Methods

This study used qualitative content analysis as a data collection method. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:191), qualitative content analysis is both a data collecting and data analysis technique. The authors state that qualitative content analysis as a data collection method allows the researcher to collect and analyze a large amount of data and there is no particularly structured way of collecting data. Additionally, qualitative content analysis is most effective when looking at narratives on textual content (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. 2014:191). This study is a desktop study using primary and secondary data. Therefore, data were collected from books, journals, written documents, government legislation, newspaper articles, reports from departments, and NGO websites. This qualitative content analysis is appropriate for this study because it explores in-depth descriptions of the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on CSG beneficiaries and CSOs' advocacy role in the CSG programme using existing information.

1.5.5 Sampling Technique

This study's sample consisted of a selection of relevant primary and secondary documents with sufficient data to address the research objectives. Therefore, the study adopted the non-probability sampling method using purposive sampling and theoretical sampling for documents. According to Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:137), non-probability sampling is used when it is nearly impossible to determine who the entire population is. Purposive sampling is one of the non-probability sampling methods where the components to be observed are selected based on the researcher's judgment by choosing which ones will be most appropriate or representative (Babbie, 2010:193). Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to collect appropriate data to answer the research questions. According to Strauss & Corbin (1990: 176), 'sampling on the basis of concepts that have proven theoretical

relevance to the evolving theory' is called theoretical sampling. Further, Theoretical sampling was used for reading and extracting data from relevant primary and secondary documents to ensure conceptual representativeness for the themes developed to attain the main objective of the study. In addition, Chenitz and Swanson (1986) assert that theoretical sampling depends on the requirement to gather more information to study categories and their connections as well as to guarantee that the category is representative. Therefore, purposive sampling and theoretical sampling for documents are relevant for this study as it is a desktop study thus enabling the researcher to simultaneously collect and categorise relevant data to answer the research questions.

1.5.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is aimed at reducing and making sense of the vast amounts of information collected from different sources so that impressions can emerge that will correspond to the research question (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010:152). According to Neuman (2014:49), content analysis is a method that examines the content or information contained in written documents or other communication media to construct suitable literature. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:234) assert that in conducting content analysis, the aim is to group data into masses and categorise them into broader themes of related meanings. This study used qualitative content analysis to examine and organise data extracted from primary and secondary sources by categorising the information into themes related to the conceptual framework and the research questions of this study. Du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2014:234) further assert that qualitative content analysis comprises the eight steps process which includes:

1. *Preparing data,*
2. *defining the coding unit to be analysed*
3. *developing categories and coding scheme or conceptual framework*
4. *testing your coding scheme on a sample text*
5. *coding all text*
6. *assessing your coding consistency*
7. *drawing conclusions from the coded data (interpreting your data) and*
8. *reporting your methods and findings*

The following steps were used to enable the researcher to identify pertinent information and categorising themes. The researcher searched and read through the relevant documents several times, and prepared data by saving documents into categorised folders (COVID-19 impact, Public participation, CSOs role, CSOs challenge, etc). Subsequently, the researcher listed research questions and concepts adapted from the conceptual and legislation frameworks of the study. The next step comprised developing categories by highlighting relevant information and making brief notes based on the appropriate research questions and concepts using different colours assigned to each research question to safeguard the construction of themes. Thereafter, the researcher captured all relevant data on the appropriate theme and presented findings. The themes focused on COVID-19 lockdown regulations and their impact on CSG beneficiaries, the CSOs' advocacy role and strategies, and the challenges faced when advocating for the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Several studies have pursued to analyse the impact of CSG on its beneficiaries as a tool to alleviate poverty and enhance the living conditions of the most vulnerable groups of the population before the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. However, this study seeks to explore the impact of COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role played by CSOs during this period in advocating for the interests of CSG beneficiaries. The study will enable CSG beneficiaries and ordinary citizens to understand the roles that CSOs play in the development of the CSG top-up during the COVID-19 lockdown and identify the platforms available to engage with CSOs to voice their concerns in an attempt to cope with the undue hardship brought by the lockdown and in future occurrences of a disaster. And thus, to decision-makers, policymakers, pertinent departments, and implementing agents such as (DSD, SASSA, and SAPO) the study will give a clear and more profound understanding of the impact of COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries. Furthermore, the study will enable them to identify possible planning and implementation gaps to address in an attempt to improve the delivery of social grants as well as realising the role, strategies, and contributions of the CSOs in the implementation of the CSG.

1.7 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study:** includes background information, and a description of the study's research questions and objectives. It also explains the research methodology that was utilised to carry out this research.
- **Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework:** describes the investigation's conceptual framework, which consists of an analysis of public policy, civil society, and policy advocacy concepts.
- **Chapter 3: Legislative Framework:** analyses the policy and legislative framework safeguarding the operation of CSOs and the implementation of the CSG programme.
- **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis:** presents and analyzes the findings as they relate to the research questions.
- **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations:** makes conclusions based on the research study's results.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided the overall background of the study and the outline of the research methodology. The background of the study highlighted that South African citizens' health and livelihoods were severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact was further perpetuated by the COVID-19 Regulations under the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (No.57 of 2002) Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) to mitigate the spread of the virus. These regulations informed the development of a COVID-19 risk-adjusted strategy comprised of five distinct levels which regulated the movement of citizens and access to goods and services. Risk factors such as unemployment, and food insecurity intensified for many families and more so for vulnerable groups due to the stipulated lockdown regulations and restrictions. Amongst the highly impacted vulnerable groups are children who mostly are dependent on adults' earnings and the CSG is the most effective tool for poverty reduction. Contributions of the CSOs in the implementation of the CSG programme are lauded for ensuring effective access to the rightful beneficiaries of the programme to alleviate child poverty and improve living conditions. However, the problem statement of the study indicated that children are the most affected by the challenges accompanying the COVID-19 lockdown despite the countless developments and the expanded reach of the Child Support Grant. The main objective of this study is to explore the impact of COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role played by CSOs during this period in advocating for the interests of CSG beneficiaries. A set of seven questions and their correlated research objectives contributing towards the realisation of the main objective are outlined. The study adopted the interpretivism paradigm and qualitative research approach and methods which are appropriate for this study to enable the researcher to access in-depth information and understand the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries as well as the views and actions of CSOs. Focusing on the CSOs' roles in the CSG programme as a case study, qualitative content analysis is adopted in the study as both a data collection and analysis method. As desktop research, the study samples primary and secondary documents and data relevant to answer the research questions and objective, therefore, purposive sampling and theoretical sampling for documents are utilised as a sampling technique. Qualitative content analysis is used to examine and organise data extracted from primary and secondary sources by categorising the information into themes related to the conceptual framework and the research questions of this study. Therefore, the study is significant to decision-makers, policymakers, and implementing agents to understand the challenges experienced by CSG beneficiaries during the lockdown and to make amendments and informed decisions when designing disaster responses in the future. The chapter ends with the Dissertation structure outlining the chapters of this study. The next chapter discusses the conceptual framework underpinning the study.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. More specifically, it focuses on the role of CSOs in public policymaking and the delivery of government implementation programmes. Thus, the chapter discusses public policy through the public policy process; policy programmes implementation with the focus on the implementation approaches, delivery modes, actors involved, the 5C Protocols of implementation, factors promoting successful implementation and implementation challenges. The chapter goes on to discuss CSOs focusing on the civil society concepts, civil society in public policymaking, civil society enabling environment and mechanisms of civil society participation in public policymaking. The chapter ends with a discussion of the policy advocacy concepts, advocacy guidelines and activities used by CSOs to participate in public policymaking.

2.2. PUBLIC POLICY

Several authors have defined public policy in various settings, yet there are certain similarities in how they describe it. For instance, Hanekom (1987:7) defined public policy as a formally articulated goal that the legislator intends pursuing with society or with a social group and as a system for achieving social goals and allocating resources (Hanekom, 1987:7). The author further stated that public policy is dependent upon information about societal goals or problems (Hanekom, 1987:21). Similarly, according to De Coning (2006:3), public policy is "a statement of intent" to achieve the defined goal. This means that public policy is planned, and the determined objectives safeguard activities involved in the process. Kingdon (1995:7) considered public policy to be made of various decisions and actions from different individuals, groups, institutions, and agencies. Kingdon's (1995) definition is reinforced by Anderson (1997:9) who states that public policy is "a relatively stable, purposive course of action followed by an actor or set of actors in dealing with the problem or matter of concern". Unpacking this viewpoint of public policy, Anderson identified six characteristics of public policy that are evident:

- *The policy is purposively or goal-oriented action rather than random behaviour or chance occurrences.*
- *Policies consist of courses or patterns of action taken over time by governmental officials rather than their separate, discrete decisions.*
- *Public policies emerge in response to policy demands or those claims for action or inaction on some public issue made by other actors, private citizens, group representatives or legislators, and other public officials upon government officials and agencies.*
- *The policy involves what governments do, not just what they intend to do or what they are going to do.*
- *A public policy may be either positive or negative.*

- *Public policy, at least in its positive form is based on law and is authoritative* (Anderson, 1997:10-12)

According to these definitions, public policy is concerned with determining and dealing with a problem through the accumulation of knowledge and planning. The public policy that is the focus of this study is the social assistance policy focusing on the social grant programmes with specific reference to the CSG. This study sees public policy through the lenses of Kingdon (1995) and Anderson (1997), simply because the study aims to explore the "set of actors involved" and the level of influence they have on the "various decisions and actions" taking place in public policy making. The process through which public policies are executed is known to be the public policy process, which comprises certain stages as a means to attain the main objectives of the policy.

2.2.1. The Public Policy Process



Figure 1. The Public Policy Process. Adapted from Serban (2015:9)

The term 'policy process' indicates that there is a mechanism in place that converts policy ideas into actual policies that are implemented that may have positive outcomes (Birkland, 2011:25). The illustration in Figure 1 demonstrates that public policies are planned, created, and implemented in stages, depending on the specific problem that has been discovered. However, sometimes, policymaking ignores all these steps. This is because the policy does not always follow the desired course of action and may, as a result, have unintended consequences (Parsons, 1953:13). A policy-making process also enables the government to evaluate the chosen actions, their consequences on social conditions, and how those actions might be changed if they have negative results (Fox, Schwella andWissink, 1991:30). Given that the policymaking process includes steps to address the recognised problem and the chosen course of action as a solution, Anderson (1997) identified several stages of the policy process as problem identification, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy monitoring and evaluation (Anderson, 1997:39-41).

A policy begins with the identification of a problem. However, what constitutes a problem and how it is characterised is determined by how policymakers intend to approach the issue or an event (Parsons, 1995:87). Public problems arise in a community for a variety of reasons, such as unexpected occurrences, which could be disasters or the lobbying efforts of concerned individuals and interest groups (Birkland, 2011:25). Furthermore, actors inside and outside government continuously attempt to influence and collectively shape the agenda by pressing the government to act on a particular topic, dramatising and advocating a certain problem definition which may occur at any stage of the policy process (Dye, 2012:33). Such influence is known as policy advocacy, which will be the sub-focal point of this study as part of the role that CSOs play as actors involved in the CSG programme implementation. After a problem has been identified, the attention shifts to the formulation stage such as identifying and developing particular policy options or borrowing suggested courses of action for fixing the specified problem and formulating an informed policy or improving on existing policies (Anderson, 1997:39). Following that is the policy adoption stage, which entails decision-making processes and determining which offered alternative will be adopted to address the defined problem (Anderson, 1997:39).

The implementation stage involves all of the activities designed to carry out the policies, enacted by the legislative branch (Dye, 2012:55). The stage involves the capacity of implementers to turn mostly financial and material resources into tangible service delivery outputs, such as public services and amenities (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:137). The implementation process engages a range of internal and external stakeholders who are both directly and indirectly involved in implementing policy or programme procedures to achieve the goals and objectives (Hill and Hupe, 2002:46). As the focus of this study, emphasis is placed on the implementation stage focusing on the actors involved with specific reference to CSOs as those involved in the execution of the policy or programme.

Finally, the monitoring and evaluation stage entails activities intended to determine what a policy is accomplishing, whether it is achieving its goals and whether it has other consequences (Anderson, 1997:41). Parsons (1953:13) asserts that policy does not always follow the desired course of action, and so might have unintended consequences. However, to ensure that services are delivered to the targeted population, public policies are implemented in a decentralised manner through programmes or projects.

2.3 POLICY PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

A policy programme is a collection of well-organised varied actions implemented toward achieving specified policy objectives (Department of Policy Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), 2014:4). Ile et al. (2012:70) assert that programmes are often very broad and require several projects to aid the realisation of their goals. Therefore, programmes are purposefully designed and implemented to address the identified problem through specified activities employed as suitable alternatives geared to achieve the desired outcomes. Implementation programmes normally contain a strategy, activities, defined delivery goals, and, preferably, a budget estimate (DPME, 2014:4). The CSG is a policy programme that is informed by the White Paper on Social Welfare Policy aimed at preventing and alleviating

poverty and the development of people's capacity to take real control of their conditions (RSA, 1997). The programme that this study focuses on is the Child Support Grant, its implementation processes, approaches, modes of delivery and actors involved in safeguarding the delivery of the programme.

2.3.1 Programme Implementation Approaches

The methods used to execute programmes are part of a larger framework that involves putting ideas, visions, and choices into action so that they may be transformed into various programmes, initiatives, and activities. The implementation process necessitates the involvement of numerous stakeholders from both inside and outside of government to fulfill the needs of the policy or programme and achieve the goals and objectives (Hill and Hupe, 2002:46). The process includes the capacity of implementers to transform mostly material and financial resources into tangible service delivery outputs, such as public amenities and services (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:137). By evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of the services that are provided to them, individuals may in turn evaluate the quality of government. Top-down and bottom-up techniques are two well-known traditional strategies for implementing policies, and they are the ones used most frequently in the public sphere.

(i) Top-Down Approach

The top-down approach involves a type of authoritative policy decision-making that enforces the transmission of instructions to the lower levels without giving them the power to amend or make implementation decisions (Anderson, 1994:215-216). In essence, the top-down method is an implementation technique that is characterized by government officials formulating and carrying out legislation that has an impact on residents. The engagement or participation of the public in the formulation or execution of policy is not taken into account. This strategy, therefore, assumes that sufficient bureaucratic procedures should be established to guarantee that public policies are implemented as accurately as possible and that implementers lack the discretion to use alternative coping mechanisms when foreseeing implementation problems.

(ii) Bottom-Up Approach

Instead of only concentrating on the instructions that policy implementers must follow, the bottom-up approach focuses on how they implement the policy. Lipsky (1980:14-20) argued that this approach is grounded on lower levels and focuses on the operations of bureaucrats on the ground. This affirms Parsons' (1995:467) sentiment that the process of implementing policy should be centred on the target populations and those who provide services. As a result, this approach encourages public participation in policy-making. It acknowledges the complexity of the policy process and the problem being addressed, which may not be resolved by a single actor, and acknowledges other actors' crucial contributions to policy implementation and the different stages of the policy cycle (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65). Parsons (1995:489) asserts that public services are now provided through complex and varied combinations of institutions and procedures because it is widely acknowledged

that governments acting alone are unable to address the socio-economic issues that policies and services are intended to address. This approach aligns with this study, as it explores the role of public participation in the implementation of social grant programmes focusing on the CSG.

2.3.2. Delivery Modes

The delivery modes interact to influence the implementation process, alleviate barriers and raise the capabilities of the intervention. Parsons (1995:491) outlines four types of delivery mixes:

(i) The enforcement mix is made of agencies that prioritise compliance and enforcement principles of policies. Parsons (1995:509) points out that the mix of enforcement may range from brute force to fixed bayonets, to information broadcasts that seek to change behaviour.

(ii) The sectoral mix contains a complex pattern comprised of a mix between public and private role players, as well as between voluntary sector and 'community' and implementing agencies that may have a role in delivering services (Parsons, 1995:497).

(iii) The governmental mix entails the coexistence of the three levels of government (national, provincial, and local), and the use of decentralisation within government organisations to provide services. The functionality of the organisation is based on delegation, rules and discretion. Through delegations, officials are directed to specific roles and responsibilities that they must adhere to and contribute towards achieving organisational objectives.

(iv) The value mix is the selected mixes of delivery shaped by the multiple values held by the stakeholders of the mix. Therefore, the mixes are the outcome of those values upheld by the actors involved in decision and public policy-making. Parsons (1995:496) cautions that the increase in stakeholders with different values provides a platform for potential conflict that may delay the implementation process. Thus, it is advisable that partnerships should be within stakeholders of similar values to avoid delays in the implementation of the programme.

This study explores both the sectoral and governmental mixes in the implementation of the CSG programme.

2.3.3 Actors Involved in Policymaking and Programme Implementation

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:85) cautioned that for effective programme implementation, partnerships are essential to attain shared objectives through the joint efforts of multiple actors, but where the respective roles and responsibilities of the actors involved remain separate. Policymaking comprises multiple actors with varying degrees of power to control the implementation of the programme. However, priorities and actions must be clearly defined during the policy formulation process and programme design so that varied stakeholders can interpret and implement them consistently (Brinkerhoff and Crosby,

2002:85). Lacking operational uniformity may result in a difficult and confusing implementation programme.

Policies are those developed by government bodies and officials where non-governmental actors and factors may influence public policy development (Anderson, 1997:9). This assertion implies that multiple actors are involved in policymaking with varying degrees of influence. Kingdon (1995:75) stressed that it is essential to determine the importance of the actors in the process, before discussing the process itself, to understand the influence they have in the policy process. Policymaking is a comprehensive process. Therefore, actors involved can be distinguished as official and unofficial policymakers (Anderson, 1997:59-77).

(i) Official Participants

According to Anderson, "*Official-policy makers are those who have legal authority to engage in the formation of public policy*" (Anderson, 1997:59). Official policymakers are legislators, executives, administrators, and judges and all are assigned tasks that are a little different from the others (Anderson, 1997:59). Official policy-makers are given obligations to establish and implement policies by laws or the Constitution. Additionally, it is important to keep in mind that officials must put policies into action and that individuals are fundamentally involved in the procedure (Hanekom, 1987:68). This emphasises the uniqueness of every community – what works in one area will not necessarily work in another.

(ii) Executives, Legislators and Policy Officials

In policy matters, the president of a country is not acting alone. Numerous staff agencies serve as advisors and aid the president in carrying out duties such as policy development and implementation (Anderson, 1997:61). According to Anderson (1997:60), legislators engage in the central political tasks of law-making and policy formulations. As the issues that members are called upon to resolve become more complex, their need for technical and expert assistance becomes greater. Therefore, the capacity of legislators to engage effectively in policymaking has been much enhanced by its expanded staff assistance (Anderson, 1997:60). Hanekom (1987:24) identifies the functions of public officials, especially leading officials, as policy innovators, advisers, formulators, implementers, monitors, analysts and evaluators. Dye (2012: 60) recognises policy officials as bureaucrats and asserts that they make policy as they engage in the tasks of implementation-making regulations, adjudicating cases, and exercising their discretion. The implementations of policy programmes, as well as the actual provision of a collective good and service, are frequently carried out by street-level bureaucrats other than those who develop and decide on policies (Hill and Hupe, 2002:87). Street-level bureaucrats are characterised by direct interaction with the implementation programme and the beneficiaries. However, when the demand for effort among bureaucrats is high or the availability of resources becomes scarce, bureaucrats tend to 'limit' their services (Lipsky, 1980:45). Street-level bureaucrats have discretionary authority to determine coping mechanisms to continue delivering services in a stringent environment (Lipsky, 1980:2).

(iii) Administrative Agencies

According to Anderson (1997:59), state departments and administrative agencies are supplemental policymakers since they rely on parliament to implement their acts, are accountable to parliament, and are thus dependent on it to initiate their actions. Anderson (1997:66) further characterised administrative agencies as experienced and holding specialised knowledge, thus being a valuable source of legislative proposals and ideas. This alludes to the role of administrative agencies to ensure effective policy implementation and attain the defined objectives, which further alludes to administrative agencies' capabilities and resources to reach the identified beneficiaries of the programme. As a result, agencies have the discretion to make decisions and issue regulations that have far-reaching political and policy implications (Anderson, 1997:66). Additionally, agency officials can spot needed changes in existing policies, possibly close gaps, and identify new problems that, in their opinion, are appropriate targets for legislation (Anderson, 1997:66).

(iv) The Courts

Courts are not only getting more involved in policymaking, but they are also playing a positive role, defining not just what the government cannot do, but also what it must do to comply with legal or constitutional obligations (Anderson, 1997:69). Courts are frequently asked to interpret and evaluate the meaning of acts and laws, as well as to examine the constitutionality of legislative and executive branch acts, and declare them null and invalid if they are found to violate the constitution (Anderson, 1997:68). Anderson, further identified factors that guarantee the ongoing involvement of judicial authorities in policymaking as due to the government's expanding role in people's lives, the legislative branches' reluctance or refusal to act on particular issues and the dissatisfaction that frequently arises when they do act (Anderson, 1997:69).

(v) Unofficial Participants

According to Anderson (1997:70), unofficial participants rarely have the legal ability to make enforceable policy adoptions, no matter how powerful or influential they are in particular contexts. However, they give information, apply pressure and try to convince, but do not make decisions. Only official policymakers have the authority to do so.

(vi) Communication Media

The media play a role in policymaking as information providers and transmitters, agenda setters, and attitude shapers (Anderson, 1997:76). It may be a powerful tool for keeping government officials responsible for their actions. Much of the policy information accessible to the public is determined by the media, whether independent or controlled by the government, which underpins its relevance (Scribner and Crosby, 1997:8). The implication is that the media could be helpful in reaching multiple audiences, communicating advocacy messages and possibly gaining support for the cause.

(vii) Individuals and Interest Groups

A variety of enabling variables impact the degree of influence that interest groups have on decisions. Groups can serve as interest articulators, expressing demands and proposing policy options (Anderson, 1997:70). Additionally, they may also provide public authorities with a wealth of knowledge on the nature and potential effects of policy ideas, which is frequently technical and not available from other sources (Anderson, 1997:70). According to Hanekom (1987:37), interest groups are generally committed to the advancement of a certain group's interests. They can act as spokespeople for certain community groups and be very effective in enacting new public policies or adjusting current ones, so they must be able to persuade authorities that the views they represent are more significant than the opinions of other interests' groups (Hanekom, 1987:37). A variety of enabling variables affect the degree of influence that interest groups have on decisions (Anderson, 1997:70). Cloete and De Coning (2011) highlighted the content, context, capacity, commitment, coalition and clients as the 5c Protocol as variables that influence the level of policy or programme implementation.

2.3.4. The 5c Protocols of Implementation

(i) Content

Cloete and De Coning (2011:141) highlighted that the content variable of the implemented policy is determined by the policy objectives, how it problematises the issue, and how it aims to solve the perceived problem. The authors identify that the policy content is linked to the type of policy being implemented, either regulatory or redistributive. Brynard (2006:196) argue that the content of implementation is either characterised by distributive, regulatory and redistributive approaches determining the policy response. Redistributive policies aim to shift the distribution of power or resources from one group to another, regulatory approaches set forth particular norms that must be adhered to without fail and distributive approaches refers to sharing for the general benefit (Najam, 1995:38; Cloete and De Coning, 2011:147). According to Brynard (2005:659), the emphasis of the content is on the institutional framework, which is influenced by the larger context of the system's social, economic, political, and legal realities.

(ii) Context

Najam (1995:42) emphasises the institutional context to enhance the ability to understand implementation, which consists of numerous sectoral agencies, and claims that the context establishes the boundaries for what must be done or not done during the implementation stages. He states that understanding the institutional context requires identifying the important institutional actors who are influencing or being impacted by the process, the interests and power dynamics between and among the relevant institutions, and the institutional characteristics as influenced by the overall structure of the social, economic, political, and legal framework in which they operate. According to Brynard et al. (2011:147), there is a great need for strategic planning regarding the context for policy implementation to succeed. This includes determining the scope of the policy to be implemented, examining the strategies in place to ensure its success, and determining whether the policy informs its intended goals. Brynard et al. (2011: 147) emphasise the importance of understanding the

social, economic, political, and legal settings of a policy, which gives a policy its context, and, thus its direction to implement the plan. Najam (1995:43) further recognised the process of mutual adaptation between implementing agencies and the policy being implemented as factors influencing the context variable, since the actors involved may be either directly or indirectly participating in the implementation of other programmes. This may affect the agencies' level of commitment to the established programme and their ability to implement it (Najam, 1995: 43).

(iii) Commitment

According to Cloete and De Coning (2011:145), the success of policy implementation is strongly dependent on the major commitment of the actors accountable for it and their understanding of the value of participatory decision-making. Decentralisation may be necessary to provide successful service delivery in order to ensure commitment. Implementation occurs at many administrative levels and in a range of action contexts to ensure the supply of services (Hill and Hupe, 2007:287). Peters (2001:24) defines this specific decentralisation as administrative decentralisation, which is defined as, "the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and the raising and allocating resources from the central government's agencies to subordinate units or level of governments." De Vries (2016) asserts that within the central government, each organisation or department can be viewed as a division of government, depending on the delegated authority and power allocated to them. Najam (2016:46) cautions that inefficient implementation may be due to a lack of commitment at the top rather than the bottom policy officials. Brynard (2005:660) asserts that commitment affects all other implementation variables. As a result, implementation actors should be aware of these relationships and choose the ones that will improve a particular programme's implementation process the most. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:26) argued that those responsible for implementing the policy must demonstrate commitment and the necessity of the policy even though it may require significant expenditures.

(iv) Capacity

According to Cloete and De Coning (2011:148), the availability of capacity either makes it easier for the policy's implementation to be successful or can make it more difficult. Capacity is both the accessibility of intangible resources, and the willingness and dedication of individuals involved in the creation and management of policy. Tangible resources include money, people, and other materials (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:148). De Vries (2016:191) claims that when examining how problems are defined and resolved, internal operations of the public sector cannot be ignored. According to Cloete and De Coning, these could be the result of a capacity problem, because the availability of capacity either makes the policy's implementation easier or more difficult (2011:148). According to them, (2011:148), administrative capacity and other job-related skills are the most important factors in successful implementation. The lack of access to administrative capacity, such as technological resources, knowledge, and relatively low levels of technological literacy, is one of the challenges mentioned by Cloete and De Coning (2011) as the cause of the hesitation to adopt electronic technology infrastructure and the ensuing developmental difficulties,

especially in developing countries (Cloete and De Coning, 2011). Clients and coalitions may capacitate the implementing department or agency through sharing of resources as they form part of the implementation programme.

(v) Clients and Coalitions

In order to ensure effective policy implementation, both internal and external clients and coalition partners play a critical role. The change in power that may cause shifts in the process of implementing policies can be influenced by external players, such as interest groups (Brynard, 2000:661). To make sure that the group is manageable and that policy is implemented without significant obstacles, it is crucial to maintain control over internal and external actors involved (Brynard, 2005:662). Clients and coalitions are concerned about the government's capacity to put together alliances of influential external entities that actively support a particular implementation process (Brynard, 2005:662). Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:24), provide additional factors or activities for a successful policy implementation.

2.3.5 Factors for Successful Implementation

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:24) emphasise the importance of determining the contributing factors towards successful programme implementation and being wary of what may hinder the progress and effectiveness of the programme. These factors are appropriate to this study in its exploration of the implementation of the CSG during lockdown. There are six factors identified by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002):

(i) Policy legitimisation

Before a policy can be put into action, it must be agreed by all relevant parties that the recognised issue requires attention. As a result, in order to facilitate and offer the essential support for the policy being implemented, policy stakeholders are required to ensure adherence to the policy and this may make it possible to apply it to people who disagree with it (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:25).

(ii) Constituency building

Constituency building occurs in the absence of support. Therefore, it involves a number of actors who stand to gain from the implementation programme (Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:26). Furthermore, constituents are seen as the advocates of the policy process and their assistance and dedication helps in decision making and implementing the programme (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:26).

(iii) Resource accumulation

Strengthening resources is necessary for the implementation of new policies (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:27). Although gathering these resources can be a difficult process due to the organisation's resistance to resource redistribution, policy needs the allocation of human,

technical, and financial resources and their proper channelling in the appropriate direction (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:27). With deficient resources, there is likely to be a high level of conflict between the relevant departments, which will negatively impact the programme implementation (Brinkerhoff, 2002:121).

(iv) Organisational design and modification

De Vries (2016) cautioned that organisations often implement policies by following the same strategies and procedures and this has a detrimental effect, especially when the reform assigns new task. Organisation implementers might not be equipped to handle them. New partnerships with the private sector will increase the need for coordination, sharing resources, and information sharing (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:28).

(v) Mobilising resources

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:29), resources and actions need to be allocated in the appropriate manner in order to produce desirable results. Therefore, greater focus should be given on planning phase and deciding on suitable activities to ensure that resources are mobilised efficiently.

(vi) Monitoring progress and the impact of policy change

The lifespan of an adopted policy is determined by monitoring, which examines the achievements and shortfalls of the policy (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:30). Monitoring is done to maintain accountability, make choices regarding the implemented policy in connection to the desired results, and improve or modify the implementation plan (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:30). Policymaking is not linear and may encounter challenges during the process, as it does not always follow the desired course of action and might, as a result, have unintended consequences (Parsons, 1953:13).

The next section discusses the implementation challenges which may hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of the programme implementation.

2.3.6 Implementation Challenges

It is worth noting here the challenges of implementation to explore the impact of level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries as the end receivers of the CSG programme implementation. De Vries (2016:180) asserted that most of the problems addressed will have multiple dimensions and are interconnected, making it challenging to select where to begin describing and addressing the problem. Moreover, De Vries (2016:181) observed that uncertainty over who owns the problem and who is responsible adds to the programme's execution being hampered when the responsible agency refuses to acknowledge the problem. Lack of coordination has been noted by Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:121) as a contributing factor in implementation failure, particularly when it is linked to insufficient capacity to carry

out the policy. According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:85), there is growing consensus that the government cannot solve socio-economic issues on its own and that the involvement of other relevant parties is crucial and necessary, thus making coordination the answer. However, according to De Vries (2016:181), an organisation's growth may result in a crisis related to the organisation's complexity, leadership, and control. These new crises may affect decision-making processes, since there are a lot of stakeholders and organisations involved (De Vries, 2016:181).

Hill (1997:218) claims that expectations may be too high to be met effectively, especially when changing people's attitudes or behaviours, such that even technically or politically feasible measures may nonetheless fail to fulfill their stated goals. During the implementation phase, there could be several changes, many of which are frequently outside the control of decision-makers and significant organisations (Burger, 1986:173). As a result of internal rules and laws frequently determining how policies are implemented, as well as the fact that different organisations have varying assumptions about how their own operations work, changes may negatively impact on how the programme is implemented (Burger, 1986:173). Additionally, De Vries (2016:200) asserts that different perspectives on policy initiatives make policymaking difficult, and policymakers frequently represent only one of the stakeholder's groups.

The next section discusses the specific involvement of CSOs as an interest group in policymaking processes. It examines the involvement of these organisations in the implementation of the CSG.

2.4 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

2.4.1 Conceptualising Civil Society

According to Diamond (1994:5), civil society involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere to express their interests, passions, ideas, exchange information, achieve mutual goals, make demands on the state and hold state officials accountable. Therefore, civil society is liberating, and stands up for democratic principles such as participation, transparency and accountability. Diamond identified CSOs as registered charities, developmental NGOs, community groups, women's organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups (Diamond, 1994:6). Characterised by diverse interests, the mutual goal is for expressed concerns to reach government for action, thus building and strengthening democracy. In the context of interaction, civil society refers to the systems, other than political parties, that are used to articulate, collect, and represent ideas and disputes (Diamond, 1994:8; Lewis, 2001:4). By using their innovative capabilities and dynamic characteristics, they seek to protect and improve societal justice while defending citizen rights. In particular, Diamond emphasised the advantages of this position for those who have historically been marginalised by the state, such as women, children, and people with disabilities (Diamond, 1994:8). These notions of civil society are significant to the study because it examines how CSOs supported and protected the rights of the CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

According to Heller (2009:125), the civil society is an essential part of deepening democracy because it allows for the efficient exercise of citizens' civil and political rights. In this instance, civil society is seen as a necessary component of democracy and a manifestation of popular political diversity. However, when civil society is weak, it is unable to carry out three essential democratic tasks: (1) creating a setting where people can meaningfully engage in democratic activity on a daily basis; (2) establishing the value of political institutions and processes in vigorous public discourse; and (3) acting as a counterweight to the logic of power in political society (Heller, 2009:124-125). Therefore, for the public to participate and for CSOs to effectively influence policy decisions and implementation, the political environment must be conducive so that the interests of the marginalised may gain recognition in government agendas and action.

2.4.2 Civil Society and Public Policymaking

Davids (2014:65) asserts that NGOs, CSOs, are well known for their contributions to the policy process through their participation in advocacy, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as promoting public participation. Diamond (1994:10) identified that civil society plays an essential role in information dissemination by aiding citizens in the collective pursuit and defense of their interests and values. Both the public and the government rely on them as a major source of information through their ability of raising awareness of the identified problem, so that citizens become aware of what is happening and how they are affected. As a result, by exchanging information among communities and through media channels, CSOs may increase transparency and increase the quantity of information available about the creation and implementation of governmental policies. The CSOs' involvement in this capacity helps to shape the policy.

In problem identification and agenda setting, CSOs function as a resource bank, conducting and submitting evidence-based research, reporting concerns and interests of the public to validate that the problem needs the attention and response of policymakers (Court et al., 2006:9, 32). The submission of evidence-based research allows CSOs to manipulate and shape the policy agenda, thus giving them value as prominent actors in policymaking, especially if the evidence produced is realistic and proposes attainable solutions to the identified problem. From the findings on the evidenced research, informed decisions are made regarding the policy or the programme, thus determining policy alternatives which contribute to well informed decisions, organised policy processes and activities.

The CSOs' ability to influence policymaking is not limited to participating or contributing to the design phase of the policy, but they exercise their discretion in the execution of the plan. Therefore, CSOs also participate in policy implementation. According to Diamond (1994:7), "the most basic function of civil society is to provide the basis for the limitation of state power". Realising that the government cannot sustain good governance principles and democratic aims on its own, CSOs play a fundamental role in formulating public policy and ensuring that it is implemented effectively. In this case, the ability of CSOs to increase the sustainability and scope of the policy, operate as dynamic platforms for action, innovate in service delivery, and reach out to marginalised populations, allows them to act as an

alternative service provider that complements the government's capability (Davids, 2014:64; Court et al., 2006: 32).

In monitoring, Diamond (1994:7-8) argued, civil society is a "vital element for containing the power of democratic governments, checking their potential abuses and violations of the law and subjecting them to scrutiny". Furthermore, Diamond stressed that this role helps mainly those who are usually marginalised by the state, which includes women, children and the disabled (Diamond, 1994:8). This perspective corresponds with that of Swilling and Russell (2001:5), who define the function of civil society as a "social watch". Many CSOs are able to monitor and assess the social impact of a policy on the intended population because of their close interaction with communities.

2.4.3. Enabling Environments, Structures, Mechanisms, Processes and Opportunities for CSOs in Public Participation

Participation is a requirement for democratisation, and powerful CSOs are seen as key participants in the process, since they contribute to the growth of the state. The ways that CSOs can interact with the government depend largely on the political context of the country. The civil society sector has a tremendous impact on lobbying and persuading governments to democratize politics and support policy reforms in non-democratic and transitional nations (Bratton, 1994; Cohen and Rogers, 1995; Kasfir, 1998). In a democratic government, civil society serves as a forum for citizen involvement in public decision-making and implementation, problem-solving and resource allocation, as well as identification and prioritisation of public issues. Through diverse voluntary organisations, people become increasingly active in agenda setting and policy execution, which helps to deepen democracy (Scribner and Crosby, 1997:8).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:7-8) identified four characteristics of democratic governments which fully engage citizens in the policy-making process and strengthen the participation of civil society:

- Exhibiting maximum levels of accountability and transparency
- Increasing participation platforms accessible to citizens
- Having structures and procedures that invite CSOs to participate in policymaking and promote empowerment
- Developing institutional and legal frameworks to safeguard the operation and realisation of rule of law and human rights (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:7-8).

Based on these characteristics, CSOs are preserved as partners of government in maintaining democratic principles. However, there are legal frameworks designed to enable and facilitate the developmental partnerships between government, the private sector and NGOs (Davids, 2014:67). Public participation legislative frameworks set the tone for the robust operation of CSOs. Theron and Mchunu (2014:113) defined public participation as a collective effort and a structured framework where the people affected combine resources and efforts to achieve

well-defined goals and objectives developed by themselves. It is evident that the process of participation is goal-oriented and involves numerous sets of actors with varying degrees of authority to influence the policy. For attainable goals, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:63) identify three sets of public participation objectives:

- Benefitting the newly participating groups but that ultimately may increase the likelihood of implementation or sustainability of a new policy
- Assuring or enhancing the successful implementation of a policy and better delivery services through ensuring effectiveness, cost sharing and efficiency
- Increasing support, legitimacy, transparency and responsiveness of a particular policy through expanded information sharing.

These goals stem from the government's new role in bringing the public sector and people together for policy discourse and to issue solutions. Non-governmental organisations were praised by Davids (2014) as an important component of civil society for their abilities to mobilise and communicate with marginalised communities and allowing the target population take part in issues that impact them, giving them control over the quality of their lives. Through public participation, ordinary people are involved in the design, planning and evaluation of development programmes (Friedman, 2008:5). Furthermore, formalised procedures and regulations are developed and used to manage public participation as means of guiding and monitoring the operation of the involved sectors, stakeholders and activities (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:67). Thus, public participation is emphasised in all spheres of government through structures and mechanisms set to promptly process public inputs to achieve the set objectives of the policy and programmes.

According to Swilling and Russell (2002:4), government manages and facilitates CSOs' operations and involvement in the policy process through legal frameworks. Everyone, including the powerful and the marginalised, organised and unorganised, is welcome to participate in the legislative process. The public must have access to information in order to have informed opinions about legislation or policies that affect them and to be informed in a timely manner when changes are being considered so they can offer their opinions.

Central government sets the structures within which certain participation can be functional, managing the possibility and nature of the interaction between government, private and non-profit sectors involved (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:89). Developing participatory institutions and the decentralisation of power is significant to enable citizens to participate in the decision-making process and the implementation of policies (Theron and Mchunu, 2014:114). It is therefore the responsibility of each provincial legislature to ensure that all the necessary steps are taken to ensure that public opinion is taken into account in decision-making and especially at the local level.

In local government, municipal institutions need to accommodate CSOs in the governance process (Feinstein, 2015:5). The marginalised and disadvantaged people of a community benefit when civil society is engaged in shaping policy, particularly when engagement is legitimate and well-informed, since they operate as the link between the community and

government (Feinstein, 2015:5). Civil society can shape policies and practices to support the disadvantaged. Municipalities must comprehend that the civil society may contribute in a distinctive and important way to the processes of developing and implementing policies. Many CSOs have the goal of influencing policy because they have realized that this engagement can have more positive effects than contestation (Court et al., 2006:14). As a result, a relationship with civil society should not put municipalities at risk; instead, it should be designed to help with meeting the community's needs and service demands. The strain on municipalities can be lessened if duties and responsibilities are clearly defined. Participation is managed through determining appropriate roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in different participation mechanisms (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:89).

2.4.4. Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in Public Policy Making

Public participation mechanisms may differ based on one's interest in a field. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65-69) argue that mechanisms of public participation comprise of information sharing, consultative, collaborative and shared decision making and empowerment mechanisms (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65-69).

(i) Information Sharing

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65), information-sharing mechanisms support engagement and participation of various stakeholders. However, managers of organisational policies, laws, and regulations, have control over the information that can be disclosed (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65). Government policy managers oversee information sharing methods, which limits the ability of CSOs involved in shared decision-making to collaborate effectively without information and explain the factors influencing policy decisions (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65).

(ii) Consultative Mechanisms

Through invited spaces, pertinent stakeholders are identified and invited to offer their perspectives on the defined policy (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:66). A key component of consultative processes should be the identification of pertinent stakeholders and encouragement of their involvement, as this will lead to meaningful engagement and the development of attainable goals (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:66). Civil society organisations can engage in consultative processes as "citizen juries" or consultants. They conduct research, communicate and supply information about the specified policy topic, and offer recommendations (Theron and Mchunu, 2014:114, 124).

(iii) Collaborative Mechanisms

Through collaborative mechanisms, the policy-making process is shared among the relevant stakeholders, who collaborate to achieve well-defined goals through roles and duties and steering committees (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:67). The main goal of collaboration is to accomplish objectives that more than one implementing agent alone cannot achieve (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002: 66).

(iv) Shared Decision-Making Mechanisms

This participatory mechanism invites participants to explore a range of possibilities and collaborate to implement the policy (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:68). In this participatory system, decision-making authority is shared among all participating actors rather than being held by government officials (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:68). This type of participation mechanism is characterised by the notion that it begins by addressing power disparities among the stakeholders involved, which is a crucial component for this particular participatory mechanism to operate efficiently. Shared decision-making takes place when short-term structures like task groups, discussion forums, and seminars are regularly employed and dialogues are centred on the most important goals (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:68).

(v) Empowerment Mechanisms

Empowerment comprises of public officials allowing external stakeholders to demonstrate their strengths, pursue actions and attain their goals (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65). In a setting where there is a higher level of political engagement and ability for disadvantaged groups in society, this participatory mechanism entails a somewhat reasonable decentralisation and sharing of authority (Brinkerhoff and Crosby: 2002:69).

Piper and Von Lieres (2016) identified that participation occurs through invited and invented spaces. Invited spaces are formal spaces created by the government and are facilitated through legal or participatory structures (Piper and Von Lieres, 2016:316). Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:66) assert that policy participation is managed through consulting with stakeholders, particularly in the invited spaces where relevant stakeholders are able to propose their perceptions on a particular policy. Brinkerhoff and Crosby consider invited spaces to be associated with positive participation, including attending and participating in dialogues on proposed policies which are held by the government and require submissions on proposed policies, among others (Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:80). However, this can only be effective when there are enough opportunities granted to stakeholders to have an advanced understanding of the identified issues to be able to participate in an informed and meaningful manner. Therefore, information sharing is essential to form the base and level of participation. According to Theron and Mchunu (2014:112, 115 and 124), in decision making forums, CSOs articulate the interests of the public through interactive dialogue and debates with other stakeholders involved, making informed decisions when choosing a problem to work on, identifying solutions to the problem and setting achievable realistic goals.

In contrast, invented spaces function as informal spaces created by citizens' collective action and right to protest due to the failure of formal participatory governance (Piper and Von Lieres, 2016:319). Such informal practices have no set structure; instead, they are rooted in the situations in which they are used. Sometimes they do use legal channels (such as courts, laws, and local councils), while at other times they rely on informal and publicly confrontational forms (such as picketing, rallies, and demonstrations) (Piper and Von Lieres, 2016:321). The RSA Constitution of 1996 also recognises these strategies as a human right.

However, Brinkerhoff and Crosby describe this type of participation as negative participation, as it blocks and rejects policy decisions rather than contributing to informed policy decisions and implementation (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:80). Ultimately, access to accurate and timely information promotes more effective participation of people with whom they work in decisions that affect their lives (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:80)

In ensuring that policy objectives are upheld even in challenging conditions, civil society campaigns for the rights of the marginalised and recommends potential policy changes. This role is known to be policy advocacy, notable in this study as part of civil society's role in the implementation of the CSG programme and their efforts toward the reforms or initiatives pertaining to this grant before and during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

2.5 POLICY ADVOCACY

2.5.1 Defining Policy Advocacy and Identifying Advocacy Purposes

Policy advocacy is defined as intentional activities initiated by the public to affect the policymaking process (Gen and Wright, 2013:165). For Sharma (1997:10), policy advocacy is a dynamic process that involves a constantly changing range of actors that have common viewpoints on policy problems, ideas, goals, and politics. However, for policy advocacy to be genuinely effective, it must also include citizen participation, allowing local communities to actively participate in policy reform. The aim is to identify and promote problems to get them onto policy agendas, educating authorities and the public about the issue, mobilising support and forming coalitions as part of the influencing process and thus guiding decision-makers toward a solution (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:193). In general, policy advocacy prepares decision-makers and policymakers for the next policy window, or even pressures them to open one, so that action may be taken. In order to examine and comprehend the advocacy activities of CSOs in the CSG programme, it is important to keep in mind the purposes of policy advocacy, here elucidated by Sharma (1997):

"Advocacy can serve the important purpose of opening the decision-making process to input from stakeholders, such as researchers, service providers, beneficiaries, and the public itself. The process of advocacy opens new dialogues which can move decision-makers toward better and more informed decisions. In addition, involving a wide array of stakeholders can greatly strengthen an advocacy effort" (Sharma, 1997:30).

Policy advocacy make use of multiple targeted actions directed at changing policies, positions or programmes. Specifically, policy advocacy seeks to, "Establish new policies; Improve on existing policies and/or; Challenge pieces of legislation that impact negatively particular individuals or groups" (MenEngage, 2013:8).

It is clear that policy advocacy is a planned process that involves preparation and strategy, but it is ineffective if carried out aimlessly. This study mostly resonates with the MenEngage (2013) purpose of policy advocacy. In this research, the importance of policy advocacy is to foster an understanding of the level of influence that civil society advocacy groups have in

social assistance policy decisions, particularly on the CSG provisions during the pressing circumstances of the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown in the realisation of children's basic human rights. The success of advocacy depends on the action plan and the techniques used to present concerns and solutions. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:193) outline the fundamental advocacy guidelines, or action plan, that underpin the nature of advocacy as, (a) articulating priorities; (b) identifying and understanding who needs to be influenced; (c) crafting the message to be communicated; and (d) devising a set of activities. The next section discusses these guidelines in detail.

2.5.2. Guidelines for Advocacy

Advocacy guidelines serve as a map directing the construction of advocacy on particular topics of the problem identified. They aim to entail effective advocacy through a set of important considerations and activities that advocacy groups can utilise to address the identified problem.

(i) Articulating Priorities

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:196), advocacy groups must first determine which themes and topics are significant and then choose which are essential, as not all can be included in an action plan. Prioritising starts with a determination of the problem, identifying policy changes that will be beneficial to the targeted population and the organisation itself (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:196). By providing government officials with knowledge, CSOs can reclaim some of their indirect power over agenda-setting (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:197). Therefore, information must highlight a group's interests, focusing on the most significant and relevant problems from the group's perspective (Sharma, 1997:16).

(ii) Understanding Who Needs to be Influenced and Crafting the Message to be Communicated

It is crucial to understand the decision-making process and the stakeholders involved. Sharma (1997:30) cautions that designing an advocacy strategy requires an awareness of the political mood, decision-making processes, and decision-makers themselves. And thus, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to decision-making, since the complexity of situations varies so widely (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:198). As a result, it is crucial for organisations to comprehend both formal and informal processes of decision-making in order to identify strategies to use when crafting the advocacy message. Constructing the message is one of the critical parts of advocacy, as it must align and appeal to the targeted decision-makers. As representatives of the marginalised groups, CSOs must make a compelling case to the government to launch an effective intervention to solve the stated issue. In order to convince policymakers to listen to their arguments, advocacy organisations must compare their resources, strengths, and weaknesses, meet with decision-makers or other important stakeholders, and develop successful strategies (Sharma, 1997:97; Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:198). They will be able to develop a persuasive message as a result, identify relevant advocacy techniques and activities and engage in discussions with relevant knowledge.

(iii) Devising a Set of Activities to Carry out the Strategy

In strengthening advocacy, creating coalitions may be beneficial to groups in achieving their goals. Whether through permanent or temporary alliances with different organisations, this strategy might be advantageous to get support and persuade government officials (Sharma, 1997:88). For long-term effectiveness, advocacy organisations need to collaborate with other organisations with similar policy core beliefs (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:201). Collaboration can be effective in persuading stakeholders and government officials that the presented interests are not limited to a special interest group. When promoting the subject, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:202) stress the need of having access to a range of communication channels and activities, since they emphasise that no single technique will be beneficial for all concerns and audiences.

2.5.3 Policy Advocacy Activities

Policy advocacy initiatives must offer sufficient opportunities for target audiences to be engaged, hold discussions, and ultimately take ownership of the presented ideas (Young and Quinn, 2012:112). Having strategies that are realistic and comprehensive in a variety of settings is frequently the key to influencing policy implementation (Court et al., 2006:10).

(i) Evidence-Based Research

According to Young and Quinn (2012:31), evidence-based research produces pertinent data and arguments that may be utilised to promote a particular problem or perspective. As a result, research-backed information is essential for creating a compelling narrative that engages the public. Additionally, by incorporating the strongest available research findings into the development and execution of policies, evidence-based decision-making assists individuals in making well-informed judgments about policies, programmes, and projects (Young and Quinn, 2012:31). Young and Quinn (2012:31) assert that an expert analysis of an emerging policy issue is typically provided through policy research that contributes to evidence-based decision making and is based on empirical data gathered in the target setting (Young and Quinn, 2012:31). In addition, empirical examination of policy issues for decision-making from this basis means this evidence will frequently include data on impact, implementation, statistics, descriptive analysis, and economic evidence (Young and Quinn, 2012:31).

(ii) Lobbying

Many groups that are protecting the interests of a certain group of people utilise face-to-face meetings with decision-makers or important individuals as a common strategy (Young and Quinn, 2012:29). Interest groups can also debate policy problems in informal settings like public-private discussion forums, town hall meetings, and public hearings (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:202). These groups are more likely to have easy access to influential individuals and to concentrate their efforts on being present and visible during government and public debates about their interests. Direct lobbying, includes testifying at committee

hearings, contacting government offices directly, presenting research results, and assisting in the writing of legislation (Dye, 2012:47).

(iii) Activism

Organisations that advocate a specific value set, have a defined constituency, and represent or offer a service to a group of people that are not sufficiently included under government social service delivery, frequently employ petitions, public protests, posters, and leaflets distribution (Young and Quinn, 2012:29). These groups' principal job is to provide a service to their constituency, but they also have a policy advocacy role (Young and Quinn, 2012:29). Wright (2012) argued that the success of an online petition appears to depend on media attention, highlighting the significance of actively securing media attention when starting a petition. However, most online petitions fail to reach their goals and gather enough signatures to have an impact (Berg, 2017).

(iv) Media Campaigning

Media is a tool that can facilitate more effective involvement in a civil society framework and assist in putting civil society concepts into practice. Many advocacy groups choose to include a member of the public in their campaign because they think that external or public pressure on decision-makers is required to achieve results (Young and Quinn, 2012:29). This is a common tactic employed by civil society as watchdog groups that monitor government actions. According to Sprechmann and Pelton (2001:91), the media is an important tool in delivering advocacy messages and influencing public opinion and that of policy makers and groups involved in political process. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:202) cautioned that it is important to consider which media outlets are influential with policy makers. Newspaper articles, leaflets, posters, radio and television interviews, and sponsored advertisements are examples of possible communication outlets (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:202). Furthermore, the technology has advanced the media platform and is dominating as a public participation platform. Emails, online newspaper articles, the internet, mobile phones, social media, and teleconferencing are all examples of information technology as a rising advocacy tool (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:202-203).

2.5.4 Caveats of Policy Advocacy

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65) assert that part of the challenges faced by CSOs is the possibilities associated with the fact that policymakers may restrict the information that the general public has access to. Hindered access to information may restrict CSOs as representatives of the marginalised to effectively develop the advocacy plan and message. Additionally, questions regarding the standards used to decide who gets what may surface when policymaking is done in secrecy. When policy choices are made transparently, acceptance is more likely to occur quickly, resistance is reduced and implementation is more achievable (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:56). Being transparent and providing information fosters a perception that there are no hidden agendas and increases credibility.

The trap in relying on the legal and constitutional processes is also a challenge CSOs face, as their level of participation is dependent on the state-designed participation mechanisms. Interest groups should avoid falling into the trap of believing that the legal and constitutional processes are the ones that are followed (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65). In this case of the COVID-19 lockdown, effectiveness and efficiency of legal and constitutional processes are questionable. Part of this study's objective is to examine the influence of CSOs on the CSG programme during the COVID-19 lockdown and the strategies they used.

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a conceptual framework of the key concepts of the study, namely public policy, actors involved in policymaking, civil society and policy advocacy. It is evident from the above discussions that public policy making is complex and involve numerous actors who have different discretion in influencing the policy. However, it is also evident that government holds extensive authority, in decision making and implementation of policies. CSOs influence on public policymaking is recognised worldwide and occurs throughout the policy process, but they are guided by the legal frameworks that determine their operation, structures and mechanisms they function under. Throughout the policy process civil society organisations mostly influence public policy making through policy advocacy, implementation and holding government accountable. As actors involved in programme implementation they serve as a bridge between government and citizens in ensuring that programmes are implemented effectively, they serve as a platform of public participation and as conveyors of the citizen's experiences to reach government ears for action. CSOs uses numerous advocacy strategies to craft and convey the message, however the success of strategies used is determined by how informed they are on the problem, how they comprehend the decision-making process, stakeholders involved or to be influenced and the national mood. The next chapter provides the policy and legislative framework safeguarding the operation of CSOs and the implementation of the CSG programme.

CHAPTER 3: POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY MAKING

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The South African government has dedicated itself to reducing child poverty and protecting children's rights by several legal frameworks. South Africa uses social assistance mechanisms such as social grants to ensure social security and alleviate poverty among vulnerable populations who are disadvantaged and without the means to maintain themselves (Haarmann, 1998:38). Therefore, it is necessary to note here the particular legal frameworks underpinning social security and the provision of the CSG as the case study of this research. These social security frameworks are the RSA Constitution, 1996; White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997; Social Assistance Act, 2004; SASSA Act, 2004; and the Children's Act, 2005; the National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) in South Africa, 2012–2017 policy; and; the Child Support Grant Programme. Additionally, it discusses the CSG top-up as the government's relief response to the COVID-19 lockdown for the CSG beneficiaries to cope with the due hardship of the pandemic and the lockdown.

The chapter goes on to discuss legal frameworks and policies underpinning civil society participation in South Africa the following legislation and policies are discussed from a national perspective. These civil society participation frameworks are the RSA Constitution, 1996; White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997; Non Profit Organisations Act, 1997, and National Development Act, 1998. It is important to note these civil society participation frameworks to explore and understand the enabling environment for civil society participation and its role in social assistance policy with relevance to the CSG programme. Partially, the inclusion of the civil society participation frameworks is to answer the research question: What is the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG in South Africa?

The chapter ends with a discussion of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act No.57 of 2002) and the Disaster Management Act 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) promulgated on 25 March 2020, which was the context of this research. The inclusion of these frameworks is pertinent in this study to comprehend the impact brought by the regulations on the livelihoods of the CSG beneficiaries. The inclusion of the disaster management framework is to explore the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown and to identify the obligations upheld by the government and relevant stakeholders in the execution of the Disaster Management Act. It thus answers the research question of this study: What were the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

3.2 FRAMEWORKS FOR SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE CSG PROVISION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The necessity of combating poverty and supporting underprivileged populations through social assistance is incorporated into several legal frameworks and policies aimed at improving human development in South Africa. It is important to identify and discuss here the social security frameworks and policies to understand the provision of the CSG. Furthermore, the CSG programme outline is discussed to show how the implementation approaches and delivery mixes (governmental and sectoral) correlate in implementation of the CSG programme. These are evident in the discussion of the CSG requirements, delivery structures, and application process and payment methods highlighted in this section. The overall provision of social security for all, especially the vulnerable, is incorporated in the RSA Constitution, 1996.

3.2.1 Republic of South Africa Constitution of Act No.108 of 1996

The RSA Constitution, Act No.108 of 1996 stipulates that all South African have a right to access social security, especially in instances when people are not able to independently support themselves and their dependents. The 1996 Constitution (Act No.108 of 1996) also provides that the state should take reasonable legislative measures, and other measures such as provision of CSG, to ensure the realisation of these rights to all South Africans of all ages. Chapter 2 of the Constitution speaks directly to democratic values and freedoms, equality, human development, and well-being through the Bill of Rights which serves as a keystone of democracy in South Africa. The Constitution ensures that children are not left behind. Therefore, section 28(1)(c) of the Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution guarantees every child the right to social security: "Every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care services, and social services" (RSA, 1996). Section 7(2) obliges the state to "respect, protect, promote and fulfill the rights in the Bill of Rights", (RSA, 1996). Therefore, even during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, the South African government ensured that children were not deprived of these basic social security rights by providing an increase in the CSG amount they receive monthly for five months to cope with the challenges accompanying the lockdown.

To ensure that government departments adhere to the provisions of mandated services, basic democratic ideas and concepts that direct South Africa's public administration are laid out in the Constitution, Act No.108, chapter 10 section 195. The following guidelines are provided by these fundamental democratic principles and values:

- a) A high standard of professional ethics must be promoted and maintained.
- b) Efficient, economic and effective use of resources must be promoted.
- c) Public administration must be development-oriented.
- d) Services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias.
- e) People's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making.
- f) Public administration must be accountable.

- g) Transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- h) Good human-resource management and career-development practices, to maximize human potential, must be cultivated.
- i) Public administration must be broadly representative of the South African people with employment and personnel management practices based on ability, objectivity, fairness, and the need to redress the imbalances of the past to achieve broad representation.

Further addressing the imbalances of the social welfare system and the realisation of the Bill of Rights is the White Paper for Social Welfare (1997). This policy offers a framework for social welfare and aims to adjust prior welfare policies and programmes that were "inequitable, inappropriate, and ineffective in addressing poverty, basic human needs, and the social development priorities of all people" (RSA, 1997).

3.2.2 White Paper on Social Welfare 1997

The approach and strategies contained in the White Paper for Social Welfare are informed by the RSA Constitution Act No.108 of 1996 to guarantee access to social security rights by all eligible citizens (RSA, 1997). Additionally, it provides for the restructuring and decentralising of services and social welfare programmes in both the public and the private sectors in the realisation of people's social security rights (RSA, 1997). It states that all forms of discrimination in the social welfare system should be removed, as stipulated by the Constitution of the RSA. Therefore, the social security strategies and frameworks must be inclusive and considerate of those with special needs, the vulnerable, and those living in extreme poverty (RSA, 1997).

Moreover, in securing basic welfare rights, the White Paper obliges the government to take steps to ensure the progressive achievement of social security for all, including appropriate social assistance for those unable to support themselves and their dependents (RSA, 1997). This obligation also prioritises the best interests of children as dependents. The CSG, amongst other social grants programmes, is a policy that is informed by the White Paper on Social Welfare Policy aimed at preventing and alleviating poverty as well as developing people's capacity to take real control of their conditions (RSA, 1997). To capacitate citizens in combatting poverty and other social inequalities, the Social Assistance Act No.13 of 2004 is designed to address social security challenges at proximity through social assistance programmes.

3.2.3 Social Assistance Act No.13 of 2004

The Social Assistance Act No.13 of 2004 is informed by the White Paper on Social Welfare 1997, which obliges the government to take steps to ensure the sustainable and progressive achievement of social security for all (RSA, 1997). The primary aim of the Social Assistance Act is to:

“To provide for the rendering of social assistance to persons; 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”, (RSA, 2004)

The provision of social assistance is guided by the main objectives of the Act, which are to:

- (a) provide for the administration of social assistance and payment of social grants;
- (b) make provision for social assistance and to determine the qualification requirements in respect thereof;
- (c) ensure that minimum norms and standards are prescribed for the delivery of social assistance; and
- (d) provide for the establishment of an inspectorate for social assistance, (RSA, 2004)

The right to social security is thus assured by the Constitution, which guarantees this right to all people, particularly the most vulnerable, those who are unable to sustain themselves and their dependents and do not have access to adequate social assistance. The Social Assistance Act was enacted in response to this clause to enable the protection of the Republic's citizens' well-being. Persons who are entitled to social assistance are main caregivers, the elderly, the disabled, foster parents, and people who require frequent attendance by another person owing to a medical or mental condition (RSA, 2004). Such support is provided to beneficiaries through social grant programmes in the form of cash payments. Chapter 2 section 4(a) of the Social Assistance Act states that it is the responsibility of the Minister of Finance to administer finances appropriated from the Parliament to make them available for social grants (RSA, 2004).

South Africa has numerous social grant programmes to ensure that everyone deserving of social assistance is not deprived of this right. The social grant programmes include the old age pension; child support grant; foster child grant; care dependency grant; grant-in-aid; disability grant; war veteran grant; and social relief of distress (SASSA, 2020). The CSG, amongst other social grants programmes, is a policy programme aimed at preventing and alleviating poverty as well as developing people's capacity to take real control of their conditions (RSA, 2004).

Section 5 of the Social Assistance Act also gives criteria used to select beneficiaries to identify the most vulnerable for benefit, which are income thresholds, age, disability, means testing and family relationships (RSA, 2004). The required criterion used to determine rightful CSG beneficiaries (the focus of this research) for those who are South African citizens is to produce a primary caregiver's identity document and a child's birth certificate. However, for refugees lawfully residing in South Africa, essential documents such as valid refugee permits or passports, refugee's identity documents, child's birth certificate, and confirmation of birth are all required for eligibility to access the CSG (SASSA, 2020:4). Section 6 of the Social Assistance Act provides that a person will only be eligible for child support grants if he or she is a primary caregiver of the child (RSA, 2004). A primary caregiver is defined as "a person older than 16 years, whether or not related to a child, who takes primary responsibility for meeting the daily care needs of that child" (RSA, 2004). This

is to ensure that child poverty is closely addressed and that children are afforded their basic needs. Having such inclusive criteria made it easy to identify, reach and assist the CSG beneficiaries through social grants top-ups during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

The South African Social Security Agency is responsible for administering social assistance and grants under Chapter 3 of the Social Assistance Act (RSA, 2004). The SASSA Act No.9 of 2004 mandates serve as an additional guide for the agency in ensuring that social grant programmes are managed appropriately.

3.2.4 South African Social Security Agency Act No. 9 of 2004

The SASSA Act No.9 of 2004 provides mandates for the execution of social assistance to people. It creates a standard norm and a flexible service-delivery mechanism to ensure that government pays the right amount to the right person, at the right time and in a dignified manner (RSA, 2004).

The Act aims to:

“To provide for the establishment of the South African Social Security Agency as an agent for the administration and payment of social assistance; to provide for the prospective administration and payment of social security by the Agency and the provision of services related thereto; and to provide for matters connected therewith,” (RSA, 2004).

The agency also facilitates the administration and delivery of social grants, thus ensuring effectiveness through different mandates of the SASSA Act, stipulated to attain the identified objectives. The objects of the Agency are to-

- (a) act, eventually, as the sole agent that will ensure the efficient and effective
- (b) serve as an agent for the prospective administration and payment of social
- (c) render services relating to such payments (RSA, 2004).

The Act relates to the intersectoral response to social security encoded in the White Paper of Social Welfare 1997, which calls for government and civil society to work together to adequately address welfare needs (RSA, 1997). Subsection 2(a) states that the agency may agree with the minister and any person to effectively deliver social grants to beneficiaries, but with adherence to particular provisions stipulated in subsection 3 (RSA, 2004). Subsection 3(e) of the Act provides that the agreement must ensure that mechanisms to regulate community participation and consultation are in place to ensure the effective implementation of social grants (RSA, 2004). Such mechanisms invite the public, as social grants beneficiaries, and CSOs, as representatives, to participate in the implementation process, whether through sharing of experiences and opinions, advocacy, or submissions such as research, monitoring, and evaluation reports. The mandate of this Act is to ensure that social grants are accessible to every eligible beneficiary as part of protecting children's best

interests, especially fulfilling their right to social security as a means to reduce child poverty and inequalities. These rights are further emphasised by the Children's Act No.38 of 2005.

3.2.5 Children's Act No.38 of 2005

The Children's Act No.38 of 2005 is informed by the SASSA Act No.9 of 2004 to ensure that children enjoy their social security rights and other rights stipulated in the RSA Constitution for the protection for children. The Children's Act tackles socio-economic issues such as poverty and inequality among children as of paramount importance

The Act also aims to protect the children's best interests despite the circumstances. Taking its mandate from the Constitution of South Africa, the Act strives toward the preservation and strengthening of families. It aims to give South African children their constitutional rights which are their rights to appropriate care when removed from the family environment and protection from abuse and neglect (RSA, 2005). The Children's Act also aims to set up structures and services that promote and monitor the psychological, intellectual, social, and emotional development of South African children. Most importantly, this Act thrives to ensure that structures that are meant to assist children are strengthened at the community level.

The Act was also designed to promote and protect the well-being of all children in South Africa despite their race, religion and colour (RSA, 2005). It is important to note the relevancy of this Act to this study as a means to ensure the realisation of children's rights even under pressing circumstances such as the COVID-19 lockdown. It is evident from the CSO advocacy efforts for the CSG increase, that challenges associated with the COVID-19 lockdown in South Africa were punitive to children. To strengthen the realisation of children's rights in all spheres of government is the National Plan of Action for Children (NPAC) in South Africa 2012–2017, which incorporates numerous policies and actors involved in the delivery of children's rights.

3.2.6 National Plan of Action for Children in South Africa 2012–2017

The NPAC 2012-2017 sets the foundation for integrating all policies and strategies made by government agencies and civil society to improve children's well-being. In addition, it aims to provide children with universal access to adequate, coordinated, and high-quality early childhood development programmes (NPAC, 2012:5). The policy has a section dedicated to social security with the goal of guaranteeing that all eligible children get the child support grant, as well as educating caregivers and children about the purpose and best practices for using the child support and care dependence grants (NPAC, 2013:92). The policy protects the rights of children and child-headed families by assuring a complete standard of living, child protection, and access to social grants (NPAC, 2012:77-78). A birth certificate is required for access to a child's social grant, thus the NPAC assures the implementation of strategies ensuring official birth registration for all children.

The NPAC emphasises the necessity of birth registration to ensure that, all newborns in South Africa will have a birth certificate within one month of their birth and that all children aged

15 and above will have an identification document. The Department of Home Affairs is mandated to implement the national policy for birth registration in hospitals as early as possible after birth, and align birth registration processes with traditional child-naming practices assuring official birth registration for all children, indicating that relevant departments need to collaborate (NPAC, 2012:96). The policy directs the Department of Social Development to develop laws, policies, and programmes that protect children and to providing social assistance to the most disadvantaged.

As mentioned in this study, South Africa has numerous social grant programmes. Following the obligation to reduce social exclusion by identifying and reaching out to people who are eligible for current social assistance benefits, the CSGs a social grant programme that prioritises the well-being of children. Furthermore, the policy provides mandates and services for children's best interests, which require collaboration within prominent departments and CSOs to fulfil their respective roles. Ensuring the effective execution of children's social security rights, the CSG was developed to reduce child poverty amongst children in South Africa.

3.3 CHILD SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAMME

The CSG aims to combat child poverty in South Africa and ensures that cash transfers are provided as financial support for caregivers of young children living in extreme poverty (RSA, 2004). One of the goals of the grant is to guarantee that children go to school and finish their education (SASSA, 2020:5). When applying for a CSG, applicants must meet several administrative requirements as the qualifying criteria.

3.3.1 Child Support Grant Qualification Requirements

To ensure that the CSG is accessed by the deserving and identified target population, SASSA uses a criterion system. Any application that does not meet the stipulated requirements is unlikely to be processed by SASSA officials (SASSA, 2020:4). To access the CSG the following is required:

- The primary caregiver must be a South African citizen, permanent resident, or refugee;
- Both the applicant and the child must reside in South Africa;
- The child must be 18 years of age or younger;
- Must provide a birth certificate for the child;
- Must provide a 13-digit barcoded identity document or smart ID card for the applicant;
- Applicant must be the primary caregiver of the child/children concerned;
- The applicant and spouse must meet the requirements of the means test;
- Cannot apply for more than six non-biological children;
- Child cannot be cared for in a State institution.
- It should be noted that one of the intentions of the child support grant is to ensure that children attend and complete schooling. It is therefore a requirement that a school

attendance certificate is produced for children aged between 7 and 18 years. However, failure to produce this certificate or failure to attend school will not result in the refusal to pay their child support grant (SASSA, 2020:4-5).

Challenges in acquiring documents, particularly in rural areas continue to be a barrier to accessing the CSG. Eligible beneficiaries are recommended to contact their nearby SASSA office for information on alternative papers that are authorised for award applications (SASSA, 2020:5). The Integrated Community Registration Outreach Programme (ICROP) created by SASSA, consists of officials from relevant departments to increase access for individuals in remote areas by utilising mobile units serving as one-stop shops of customised trucks equipped with information and communication technology infrastructure to process grant applications (SASSA, 2017). These mobile trucks have a positive impact on SASSA's delivery structure.

3.3.2 Delivery Structures

The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) states that "*The National Department is responsible for national norms and standards for rendering services and for ensuring uniformity in the application of particular functions is maintained*". The SASSA works under the direction of the national Department of Social Development (DSD) to regulate and support the administration and delivery of social assistance transfers (SASSA, 2020/25:14). Its head office has responsibilities that offer strategic direction, policy provisions, advice, and supervision. Services are executed through a network of provincial, district, and local offices. Within this structure, SASSA has nine provincial offices, 46 district offices, and 389 local offices (SASSA, 2020/25:24). Provincial offices are responsible for providing managing operations, delivering services, and engaging stakeholders, while district offices oversee the local offices and are in charge of resource management, quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluations (SASSA, 2020/25:24).

According to SASSA (2020/25:24), local offices operate as customer service centres and are responsible for providing SASSA clients and beneficiaries with services, thus the majority are affiliated with municipalities. However, due to service requirements and the distances that beneficiaries had to travel to get services, the agency had to create extra local offices in some areas. Therefore, SASSA has 1 163 service points that operate as extensions of local offices, using halls and multipurpose centres in certain districts (SASSA, 2020/25: 25). Additionally, SASSA has 38 mobile trucks that provide mobile grants administration services to communities in the most distant locations and are also used for community engagement programmes. The agency's local offices reinforce the implementation of the CSG programme.

3.3.3 Child Support Grant Application Process

The application process outlines the consistency that must be used in the administration of the CSG and acts as a guideline for all officials participating in the CSG process, and for what is expected of CSG applicants. People are urged to apply at their local SASSA office to

guarantee that travel costs do not prevent applicants from receiving the grant. Alternatively, if an applicant is too elderly or unwell to go to the SASSA office to apply for a grant, a family member or friend may apply on their behalf with a letter from the applicant authorising the application to proceed. The applicant may also phone the SASSA office to arrange a home visit. The application is documented and the form completed in the presence of an official from SASSA at no fee (SASSA, 2020/25: 25).

The first attesting officer completes the application form, checks the completeness of required documentation, completes the checklist of required documentation, captures data into the system, and updates the screening register. The second attesting officer is responsible for the verification, pin construction, and card issuing (DSD, 2015:14). If the grant is approved, the applicant receives the money on the day of application and a receipt is provided as the proof of application (SASSA, 2016:5). If SASSA does not approve the application, the applicant must be notified in writing why the application was denied and may request within 90 days of notification for a reconsideration of the decision if they are dissatisfied with the outcome (SASSA, 2020/25:26). Uniformity is to be maintained throughout the whole delivery process of the CSG, including that of the payment method.

3.3.4 Payment Methods

Beneficiaries have various alternatives for receiving the CSG payment. The grant may be paid into the new SASSA card account. There are no fees if beneficiaries use the SASSA card for services other than those covered by SASSA. South African Post Office (SAPO) officials enroll and issue SASSA cards to beneficiaries on the same day of application (SASSA, 2020:5). To ensure flexible and effective access, the grant can alternatively be directly transferred into a beneficiary's bank account. However, a certain form must be filled out verifying the bank account data, and the beneficiary is consequently held accountable for all fees associated with that account (SASSA, 2020:5). The agency also uses cash pay-points for grants, which are authorised centres that provide mobile payment infrastructure in locations where National Payment System infrastructure is lacking. According to the SASSA Strategic Plan 2020/25, the agency has 1 740 cash pay-points and SAPO provides the cash payment service, which aims to ensure that recipients get social benefits closer to their homes. The amount of R440 is transferred electronically to every beneficiary every month (SASSA Strategic Plan, 2020:7).

In reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic, South Africa announced a 500 billion Rand assistance programme for the most economically disadvantaged households (National Treasury, 2020). During the lockdown, government introduced various relief programmes such as the food parcels, the SRD grant, increased all other existing grants by R250 and introduced the CSG top-up to minimise the social and economic effects of the epidemic. Of these programmes, this study focuses on the CSG top-up.

3.3.5 Child Support Grant Top-Up

The CSG top-up was put into place to mitigate any undue financial hardships that may be experienced by CSG beneficiaries and to ensure that child poverty is reduced even in crises. According to SASSA (2020/25:10), the CSG is given to approximately 12.4 million beneficiaries. Every month, R440 is transferred electronically to each recipient (SASSA, 2020:7). For May 2020, the CSG was raised by R300 per recipient. However, from June to October 2020, this was supplemented by an exclusively dedicated benefit for primary caregivers of children in low-income households: each primary caregiver receiving CSG for their children became eligible for a new benefit called the Caregiver Social Relief of Distress (Caregiver-SRD), which was paid at R500 per month (SASSA, 2020). The CSG top-up and the caregiver grants were allocated using data of the existing CSG recipients. Therefore, implementing the caregiver grant was technically simple for the 7.1 million primary caregivers to receive the grant in addition to the CSG, because its payment system was already in place (South African Government, 2020). The delivery and payment method remained the same. No new additional application requirements and process was required, and thus, no new eligible beneficiaries could apply for the CSG during this time and benefit from the CSG top-up as the application process was also implicated by the closure of all SASSA local offices during the period of the level 5 lockdown (DSD, SASSA and NDA, 2020). In June 2022, the CSG top-up was dedicated to primary caregivers looking after orphan children at the amount of R480 for the child and the additional amount of R240 amounting to R720 using the same payment method (SASSA, 2022). Eligible caregivers of orphan children are required to submit proof such as certified copies of death certificates of the child's parents. Where death certificate of one parent cannot be obtained by the applicant, an affidavit by the applicant attesting to the unknown status of the child's other parent is required (SASSA, 2022). This study focuses on the CSG top-up implemented during lockdown that was attached to each grant recipient and later attached to each primary caregiver.

The legislation and policy regarding children's right to social security informs the provision of the CSG as a tool to alleviate poverty amongst children in South Africa. These frameworks and documents obligate the government to ensure children's wellbeing and the realisation of the social security right within its available resources to ensure that children are not exposed to extreme poverty. Furthermore, government departments such as the DSD and agencies (SASSA) are compelled to ensure the delivery of the CSG in an effective and efficient manner and integrate services with relevant departments to avoid gaps in the delivery. Therefore, commitment of actors involved in the delivery of social assistance is crucial in handling crises or disasters like the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, especially when creating and executing responses connected therewith such as the CSG top-up. The CSG has been substantially extended due to publicity campaigns by CSOs (SASSA and UNICEF, 2013:63). This depicts the influence that CSOs have on implementation policy programmes. It is therefore important for the study to explore legislative framework and policies providing the operational environment of CSOs.

3.4 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Civil society organisations play an important role in addressing problems and designing interventions. Their efforts to reduce child poverty, whether through advocacy, involvement in policy decision-making, implementation, or monitoring of designed programmes, are acknowledged by several policies and legal frameworks and are recognised throughout the world. The foundation for public participation in South Africa is embedded in the RSA Constitution of 1996, which contains important clauses establishing public participation as the standard in daily governance.

3.4.1 Republic of South Africa Constitution Act No.108 of 1996

Public participation is embedded in the Constitution in several sections (17, 18, 59, 72, 115, and 118) that serve as the guidelines for public participation in programmes and the policy-making process. Chapter 2 of the RSA Constitution (1996), sections 17 and 18, provides everyone with the right to "freedom of expression, peacefully and unarmed, to assemble, to demonstrate, to picket and to present petitions" (RSA, 1996). These provisions acknowledge the CSOs and citizens' right to openly communicate their ideas and concerns. Section 59(2) provides that legislatures may not exclude the public and media "unless it is reasonable and justifiable to do so in an open and democratic society" (RSA, 1996).

(i) Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in Public Participation Outlined in the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act No.108 of 1996

The notion of public participation in all spheres of government is embedded in the South African Constitution. The public can provide information or evidence to the provincial legislature under Sections 56(d), 69(d), and 115(d) of the Constitution, which promotes public participation. These sections permit any interested individual or institution to submit petitions, representations, or comments to the National Assembly, National Council of Provinces, or any of their committees, as appropriate (RSA, 1996). Section 72(1a) of the Constitution further obliges the National Council of Provinces "to facilitate public involvement in the legislative and other processes of the Council and its committees" (RSA, 1996). Moreover, Section 118(1) also states that legislators must openly perform their business and may only restrict access for legitimate reasons (RSA, 1996). Addressing the local spheres of government, the Constitution states:

- Section 151(1) (e). Municipalities are obliged to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in local government.
- Section 152. The objects of local government (are) to encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of local government.
- Section 195 (e). In terms of the basic values and principles governing public administration – people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making (RSA, 1996).

(a) Public Hearings

The Legislature and its Committees usually hold public hearings on draft legislation and other matters (KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Legislature, 2020). This allows the public an opportunity to learn more about what the legislation means and to have a say in the process through a given opportunity to raise questions or to make comments. During the hearing, representatives from the department responsible for the bill will make a presentation on the contents and effects of the new law and may also invite individuals or representatives from organisations to make a presentation (KZN Legislature, 2020).

(ii) Strategies of Public Participation Outlined in the Republic of South Africa Constitution Act No.108 of 1996

(a) Petitions

The right to petition is specifically included in the Bill of Rights. Several legislative institutions have developed provincial legislation that regulates the process of petitioning by the public to ensure the recognition of petitions as a platform of public participation. The Gauteng Provincial Legislature was at the forefront of passing the Gauteng Petition Act No. 5 of 2002 to govern the petitions. This Gauteng Petition Act states that a petition "means a complaint, request, representation or submission addressed by a petitioner to the Committee". The Act further states that petitions may be in the form of:

- a) a single petition, which is an individual submission from a single petitioner concerning a particular complaint or request;
- b) an association petition, which is an individual submission from an association, or an individual mandated by an association, concerning a particular complaint or request;
- c) a collective petition, which is a collection of signatures from some petitioners concerning a particular complaint or request;
- d) a mass/group petition, made up of individual or group submissions from a number of petitioners concerning the same or substantially similar complaints or requests (Gauteng Legislature, 2002).

The KwaZulu-Natal Petition Act No.4 of 2003 shares the same sentiments with the Gauteng Petition Act. Its main objective is:

“To provide for the right to submit a petition to the Parliament of KwaZulu-Natal; to establish the procedure to be followed in submitting a petition to Parliament; to provide for the functions of the Private Members' Legislative Proposals, Pensions and Petitions Standing Committee of Parliament; to lay down the general principles and procedure for public participation in the process of government in the Province; and to provide for incidental matters” (KZN, 2003:3).

Section 16(1) further outlines the procedure to be followed in the submission of petitions. Based on this procedure, the Act outlines the powers, roles, and responsibilities of the respective committees. Section 12 of Annexure A provides for the petitioner's right to appeal based on the outcome of the petition and the protocol to be followed. One of the ways that the public can make their voice heard is by making submissions to the National Assembly

Committees, the National Council of Provinces Committees, or Joint Committees (RSA Parliament, 2022).

(b) Submissions

The RSA Constitution of 1996 complements submissions as a mechanism of public participation. According to the RSA Parliament (2022), a submission is the presentation of views or opinions on a matter or piece of legislation under consideration by a committee of Parliament or a relevant department (RSA Parliament, 2022). The majority of submissions are written and if the individual or organisation submitting the material is allowed to speak in front of the committee, they can support their arguments there as well. By submitting their ideas, any member of the public has the chance to offer amendments or other alternatives that could be taken to ensure that the laws established by Parliament or any other topic being discussed by Parliament are effective (RSA Parliament, 2022).

It is worthwhile to note here the provisions of the Constitution on public participation to understand the realisation of public participation, the existing structures, mechanisms, and processes of public participation that enable the participation of CSOs. Many key pieces of legislation set out to create working processes for the ideals stated in the Constitution.

3.4.2 The White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997

The South African White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) is also an important piece of legislation that is useful for civil society. It applies to the study of civil society's role and the CSG during the Covid-19 lockdown in South Africa because it calls upon South Africans to participate in the development of an equitable, people-centred and appropriate social welfare system. The White Paper identifies the participation of the public and all welfare constituencies in decision-making about welfare policies and programmes as a means to promote democracy (RSA, 1997). Therefore, appropriate and effective mechanisms such as consultation with all role players, including beneficiaries and service providers, through their representatives and organisations where possible, must be conducted (RSA, 1997). This will not only deepen democracy and public participation, but will also be beneficial in the implementation of the programmes or policies.

Concerning government collaboration with civil society in embarking on the social welfare challenges, the preamble of the White Paper for Social Welfare identifies the lack of developmentally appropriate and integrated strategies to address economic and social exclusions in the vast sector of the population as a setback on the delivery of social welfare services (RSA, 1997). According to the White Paper on Social Welfare "An intersectoral response is needed within government and between government and civil society to adequately address welfare needs" (RSA, 1997). Chapter 1(20) further highlights a fairly developed social security system and a rich institutional framework of welfare services as strategies to address the economic and social imbalances experienced by the majority of the population living in poverty. In working with CSOs such as "non-governmental organisations; voluntary welfare organisations; religious organisations; community-based

organisations and informal family and community networks”, the White Paper considered these organisations to have the expertise, infrastructure and other resources, which could play a significant role in reconstruction and development (RSA,1997).

The White Paper 3(23) points out those organisations in civil society that are particularly well placed to:

- (a) Innovate and pioneer new services and programmes, which, if successful, could be replicated on a wider scale.
- (b) Identify local needs.
- (c) Respond speedily, appropriately, and flexibly to local needs.
- (d) Promote grass-roots participation in decision-making and direct service delivery.
- (e) Represent their particular constituencies on structures, such as policy-making and coordinating programmes, at all levels of government, to ensure that interventions are appropriate.
- (f) Mobilise communities to take action to meet their needs.
- (g) Co-ordinate action at the local level.
- (h) Take advantage of economies of scale; and
- (i) Monitor strategies aimed at achieving equity (RSA, 1997).

The operation of CSOs is further informed by the NPO Act No. 71 of 1997 to legitimise civil society participation.

3.4.3 Non-Profit Organisations Act No. 71 of 1997

The NPO Act No.71 of 1997 permits the registration of organisations with the main objective of supporting the contributions of NPOs in meeting the diverse needs of the population (RSA, 1997). This Act aims at providing an environment in which CSOs and any other non-profit making organisation can effectively carry out their mandate (RSA, 1997). The Act provides a regulatory framework in which CSOs catering to the needs and welfare of children can operate. The main objectives of the Act are to encourage and support NPOs by:

- (a) Creating an environment in which non-profit organisations can flourish;
- (b) Establishing an administrative and regulatory framework within which non-profit organisations can conduct their affairs;
- (c) Encouraging non-profit organisations to maintain adequate standards of governance, transparency, and accountability and to improve those standards;
- (d) Creating an environment within which the public may have access to information concerning registered non-profit organisations
- (e) Promoting a spirit of cooperation and shared responsibility within government, donors, and other interested persons in their dealings with non-profit organisations (NPO Act,1997).

The government is mandated by the Act to create a favourable environment for the non-profit sector. Every state institution must establish and facilitate the activities of its policies and

procedures in such a way that encourages support and strengthens the ability of NGOs that are having difficulty accessing government funding, forming partnerships, obtaining funds, and creating the capacity necessary to fulfil their mandates (RSA, 1997). Therefore, the NPO Act encourages and supports CSOs in their efforts to meet the diverse needs of various children in South Africa. The Act provides that NPOs must maintain adequate standards of governance, transparency, and accountability and improve those standards; creating an environment within which the public may have access to information concerning registered NPOs (RSA, 1997).

3.4.4 National Development Agency Act No.108 of 1998

The NDA Act No.108 of 1998 is one of the legal instruments that is useful in promoting partnerships between CSOs and the South African government. The Act focuses on poverty eradication and establishes how an agency that manages poverty nationally should function (RSA, 1998). This Act, in 3(1) asserts that its main aims are to contribute toward poverty eradication in South Africa through the provision of funds to CSOs to initiate and manage projects that contribute to meeting the developmental needs of poor communities in South Africa with the following primary objectives:

- (a) Carrying out projects or programmes aimed at meeting the development needs of poor communities; and
- (b) Strengthening the institutional capacity of other civil society organisations involved in direct service provision to poor communities (National Development Agency Act of 1998).

The secondary objective of the NDA Act was to set up an enabling environment encouraging the public and constituencies to participate in policy-making and programmes through consultations, debates, and dialogues based on the experiences of the relevant stakeholders (RSA, 1998). Furthermore, the RSA (1998) highlights the undertaking of research and publication aimed at improving development policy as a fundamental role to ensure effective implementation. The NDA Act is tasked to direct funds to organisations involved in poverty eradication and development initiatives (RSA, 1998). According to Section 4(2) of the Act, the NDA may grant money from its resources to any CSO for any project that the organisation may have proposed (RSA, 1998). This means that the legal framework environment in which CSOs operate places them at a greater advantage to access resources and funding in a time of national crisis to protect children. The FSWS of 2013 strengthens the participation of civil society in local communities.

3.4.5 Framework for Social Welfare Services of 2013

The FSWS in South Africa "seeks to operationalise developmental social welfare by creating synergy between collaborative partners and organisations that employ practitioners and clients" (The FSWS, 2013). The framework aims to make it easier to put in place a complete, integrated, rights-based developmental social welfare service that is focused on socio-economic rights, including the right to social assistance and anti-poverty measures.

According to the framework, achieving effective social security requires a rights-based component of a developmental approach that emphasises social justice, a minimum standard of living, equitable access and equal opportunity to services and benefits, and a dedication to meeting the needs of all South Africans, particularly the most disadvantaged (FSWS, 2013:13). This policy framework also acknowledges the range of stakeholders who have a part in implementing social security. The framework state that:

"the successful implementation of developmental social welfare services depends on role players who bring expert knowledge, skills, financial resources and commitment to achieve the goals of the sector attainable through the Welfare pluralism/ collaborative partnership approach" (FSWS, 2013:17).

The framework confirms that the effective implementation of progressive social welfare services is dependent on role actors bringing professional knowledge, skills, financial resources, and a dedication to the sector's objectives (FSWS, 2013:14). The framework traces the success of delivering progressive social welfare services to CSOs and their organisational structures. Civil society organisations are praised for their contributions to human rights initiatives, such as interventions for preserving the rights of marginalised groups, promoting rights via education on rights and obligations, promoting access to rights, and challenging policies and social structures that compromise rights through advocacy (FSWS, 2013:13). Additionally, the FSWS emphasises that all players involved (public, corporate, civil society, training institutions, and research institutions) must have a clear definition of each partner's tasks and responsibilities to make informed decisions and to guarantee the provision of appropriate service that satisfies society's social needs (FSWS, 2013:19).

The legislation and policies discussed in this section underpin the participation of civil society in policy making. These frameworks oblige government to create a favourable environment for the non-profit sector and facilitate the activities of its policies and procedures. Moreover, partnerships and collaboration are lauded by these civil society frameworks to ensure effective implementation of policies and programmes and where all actors involved have a clear definition of each partner's tasks and responsibilities to make informed decisions and to guarantee the provision of appropriate services as mandated, even in disaster crises. This leads to the last section of a chapter that discusses the Disaster Management Act No. 57 of 2002 in SA, and the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) promulgated on 25 March 2020, entailing the government response strategy on the declared disaster.

3.5 DISASTER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORKS

South Africa has Disaster Management frameworks safeguarding the tactics and responses to the declared state disaster. Discussing the Disaster Management frameworks is underpinned by the research topic of this study and the research question. It is discussed here to understand the mandate and responsibilities of government and prominent sectors involved in the execution of services during crises. The Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) is discussed here to understand the provisions

and regulations issued to regulate the COVID-19 disaster and thus, to explore experiences that CSG beneficiaries experienced during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

3.5.1 Disaster Management Act No.57 of 2002

The Disaster Management Act No.57 of 2002 is one of the important pieces of RSA legislation to ensure that both human dignity and human well-being are provided, even during a crisis. This Act aims:

"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).

The Act commands decentralisation at all levels of government, including local, provincial, and national, as well as within government departments. It advocates for the creation of an integrated and coordinated disaster risk reduction policy, with a focus on disaster risk reduction and post-disaster recovery (RSA, 2002). Moreover, the Act asserts that disaster response guidelines must be developed at all levels of government, with a focus on involving local 'at risk' communities, the private sector, government, research institutions, and higher education institutions, as well as civil society organisations and traditional leaders (RSA, 2002). Chapter 3 of this Act gives the National Government authority to design disaster management plans and declare a national state of disaster (RSA, 2002). Concerning the COVID-19 crisis, the South African government introduced Covid-19 regulations under the Disaster Management Act (No. 57 of 2002) Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) which regulated the movement and access to goods and services of citizens (RSA, 2020).

3.5.2 The Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) promulgated on 25 March 2020

Exploring the COVID-19 lockdown regulations, restrictions, and the activities implemented within the five level strategy is underpinned by two research questions of this study: What were the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?; and: What were the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries in relation to regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

The main objective of the amended regulations was to mitigate the spread of the virus. The five levels of COVID-19 regulations were implemented as part of the risk-adjusted strategy to further handle the progressive relaxation of the lockdown (RSA, 2020). Several factors drove this risk-adjusted strategy, including the extent of infection and transmission rates, health institutions' capacity, the extent of public health intervention implementation, and the

economic and social effects of ongoing restrictions (RSA, 2020). Chapter 2, regulation 11A, defines lockdown as "restriction of movement of persons during the period for which the regulation is in force and effect namely from 23:59 on Thursday 16 April 2020, and during which time the movement of persons is restricted" (RSA, 2020).

South Africa went into Alert level 5 from 26 March to 16 April 2020, which was extended to 30 April 2020. Under the regulations of level 5 COVID-19 lockdown measures, Chapter 2, regulation 11B provides for the restriction of movement of persons and goods. Sub-section 1(a) specifies that "for a period of lockdown, everyone is confined to his or her place of residence unless strictly to perform an essential service, obtain an essential good or service, collecting social grant or seeking emergency life-saving or chronic medical attention" (RSA, 2020). This regulation meant the closing of companies, schools, and other facilities not providing essential goods and services. Furthermore, Chapter 2, regulation 11 sub-section IV (b) and (e) emphasise the closure of businesses, formal and informal sectors that are not involved in providing essential goods or services to remain closed and not accessible to all persons for the duration of the lockdown (RSA, 2020). Section 11B (c and d) stresses that only retail stores that provide essential services are permitted to operate, but necessary safety measures are to be in place and implemented (RSA, 2020). Sub-section 11C provides the mandate on the Prohibition of Transport. Regulation 11C (1) under level 5, commuter transport services are prohibited except for those providing services for purposes of rendering or obtaining essential services, providing transport for citizens seeking medical attention and or attending funerals, or receiving grant payments (RSA, 2020). In addition, public transport is restricted to curfew hours, the capacity of public transport is restricted to 50%, and the adherence to COVID-19 safety measures and hygiene regulations is to be complied with, (RSA, 2020). Section 11C (2) compels the employer to provide necessary transport arrangements for employees who are unable to travel (RSA, 2020).

Chapter 2, Annexure B provides for the categorisation of essential goods and services during the lockdown. Food is prioritised; including non-alcoholic beverages, cleaning, hygiene products and medical products are declared essential goods accessible to all people during the COVID-19 lockdown (RSA, 2020). Access to essential goods is necessary to fight and combat the spread of the virus. Annexure B declares social grants and the Department of Home Affairs services on birth and death certificates and replacement of identity documents as essential services (RSA, 2020). Having access to these services during the crisis signifies the importance of having reliable service delivery and recognition of the vulnerable and the challenges they may encounter in the absence of assistance in the form of social grants. Furthermore, the annexure identifies services related to the essential functioning of courts, judicial officers, the master of the high court, sheriffs, and legal practitioners rendering those services to continue operating and being accessible to citizens (RSA, 2020). This also instils the protection of children as a means to ensure the realisation of their rights.

Alert level 4 was implemented from 1 May to 31 May 2020 and while certain activities such as agriculture, manufacturing, wholesales, and retail trade resumed, it was with strict adherence to health protocols and COVID-19 safety measures at all times (RSA, 2020).

However, in some manufacturing businesses, all workers were not allowed to return to their workplaces simultaneously, and shift and rotation systems were also implemented to limit workplace and public transportation congestion (RSA, 2020). Public transport availability continued to operate with limited passenger capacity, as well as strict hygiene standards (RSA, 2020).

Alert level 3 was implemented from 1 June to 18 August 2020 with more numerous permitted activities, such as religious gatherings, reopening of schools, interprovincial movement, movement of children between homes, formal and informal businesses, with employees returning to work mostly scaled up to 100%, but with mandatory strict adherence to health protocols and safety regulations (RSA, 2020). Alert level 2 was implemented on 18 August 2020, emphasising physical distancing and limits on leisure and social activities, enforced to stop a recurrence of the virus (RSA, 2020). While public transport was acceptable to carry 100% licensed capacity on local trips and not more than 70% of licensed capacity for long-distance travel, gatherings were prohibited for 50 people or less (RSA, 2020). For Alert level 1, most normal activities could continue if health guidelines were followed at all times (RSA, 2020). Although people were advised to limit their movements to necessary trips and adhere to the 22:00 – 04:00 daily curfews (RSA, 2020).

3.6 CONCLUSION

The chapter provided an overview of the legislative framework and policies for the CSG and social security frameworks in South Africa. These frameworks explicitly articulate children as vulnerable and deserving of great protection from all forms of deprivation. Children's right to social security is emphasised as a basic right and thus government and state parties are obliged to create essential measures to ensure that provisions are made within its available resources for the full realisation of this right, hence the implementation of the CSG programme in South Africa. The COVID-19 pandemic posed extraordinary social and economic obstacles. Social relief responses were created to respond to economic difficulties experienced by low- and no-income individuals and households. Furthermore, the South African government initiated a social assistance response, which entailed the CSG top-up for CSG beneficiaries to cope with challenges accompanying the COVID-19 lockdown.

Public participation legislative frameworks in South African contexts emphasise that the government is mandated to involve the public and CSOs in public policy-making to make informed decisions through available mechanisms of participation. It is through different public participation platforms that CSOs can contribute to the decision-making processes. In South Africa, civil society participation is recognised in all spheres of government. The strategies of participation include, petitions, submissions, and public hearings as platforms that enable CSOs to influence policies. Particularly on social assistance policies, the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997) outlined the responsibilities of CSOs on social welfare programmes as direct service delivery, advocacy, information systems, accountability, and participation, and, thus, sharing knowledge and encouraging local communities to act to address their needs.

The South African Disaster Management Act No.57 of 2002 emphasised the importance of participatory decision-making by highlighting the importance of involving local at risk' communities, the private sector, government, research institutions, higher education institutions, CSOs and traditional leaders when developing disaster response guidelines. The Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) promulgated on 25 March 2020 was developed as part of the disaster response to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus by restricting movements of people. The next chapter provides the findings of the case study focusing on the CSG programme with particular emphasis on CSOs' advocacy role on the CSG during COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings and analysis of the study in its exploration of the impact of the Disaster Management Act, 2002: in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown on the CSG beneficiaries and the role of CSOs in advocating for their interests during this period. This chapter presents the findings and the analysis for the research questions of the study, re-presented here:

- What were the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries in relation to regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
- What strategies did CSOs employ to advocate for the interests of CSG beneficiaries during lockdown?
- What changes did the CSOs propose around the CSG during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
- What changes did the South African government implement to the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- What were the experiences of the CSOs in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

The study is a desktop study and used secondary studies and reports on the impact of level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries, CSOs advocacy strategies, and CSOs advocacy challenges during level 5 lockdown. Content analysis was employed to collect data from these sources and content thematic analysis was used to analyse the findings. The findings are analysed under the broad themes that are derived from the research questions and conceptual framework of the study. The broad themes include the impact of lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries; Public Participation and Civil Society Organisations during lockdown; role of CSOs in relation to the CSG; CSOs' advocacy strategies employed during the lockdown; C-19 People's Coalition and advocacy guidelines; changes proposed by CSOs around the CSG during the lockdown; changes implemented by the Government on the CSG during the lockdown; and CSOs' advocacy challenges during the lockdown.

4.2 IMPACT OF LEVEL 5 LOCKDOWN ON CSG BENEFICIARIES

This section is underpinned by the research question of this study aimed at discussing and answering the question: What were the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries in relation to regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown? Therefore, the objective of including this discussion here is to explore the impact of the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID -19 level 5 lockdown on CSG beneficiaries.

4.2.1 Child Support Grant Beneficiary Challenges

The challenges of CSG beneficiaries due to lockdown regulations included household and livelihood instability, food insecurity, and child nutrition, closure of SASSA mobile pay points and community halls; limited transport access and increased transport costs and confusion around staggered grants collection dates.

(i) Instability in Households and Livelihoods

Haider et al. (2020:3) point to the importance of the economic context that the social assistance policy may respond to in combating the impact associated with the COVID-19 lockdown. They (Haider et al., 2020:3) reported that the hard lockdown (level 5) posed extraordinary social and economic obstacles which forced low-income individuals and households to undergo economic difficulties due to the lockdown and its extension.

"The economic consequences of stringent regulatory measures resulted in high unemployment rates and increased poverty and undermined the survival tactics of the vulnerable" (Haider et al., 2020:3).

On the same sentiment, the Black Sash (2020), reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the scale of social issues in such a way that they can no longer be ignored and this is because the South African context is characterised by the highest levels of social and economic inequality in the world. The South African Social Security Agency (2020/21:24) reported that disruptions in livelihoods occasioned by the sudden loss of income and unemployment directly added reliance on the social assistance programmes, particularly for the CSG and SRD. In addition, Bassier et al (2020) also argued that:

"In the poorest half of the population, the child support grant reaches 80% of individuals who are in informal worker households. Additionally, the child grant benefits poor individuals the most and is well targeted to the most vulnerable".

The Black Sash (2021:10) reported that the epidemic damaged the social and reciprocal networks that caregivers often use to get other economic means to augment their CSG income.

"These networks enable caregivers to engage in informal work and to borrow food and other items. Since the pandemic, especially during lockdown levels 5, 4, and 3, it has been much more difficult for caregivers to access these usual forms of assistance and support" (Black Sash, 2021:10).

Furthermore, the Black Sash (2021:12), stated that some caregivers reported on getting COVID-19 and getting quite sick, which made it difficult for them to look after their children and some of them as breadwinners this resulted in a stressful income reduction and an excessive dependency on the CSG.

"Oh my darling I had Covid I almost died. I didn't have income and was at home. My husband also had one. My son was luckily negative, he is the one who was helping me so well. Put my oxygen on and brought my pills and brought my water to wash he helped me a lot. He said "Mama when mama was lying there and mama dies what would happen to me if mama died" (Black Sash, 2021:12).

Bhorat et al. (2020:4) reported that during the level 5 lockdown, policymakers, researchers, and civil society organizations were most concerned with ways to mitigate the lockdown's effects on the vulnerable and those who are unlikely to have access to unemployment insurance or private income safety nets. In addition, Ranchod and Daniels (2020;1), mentioned that South Africa has extensive social grant programmes that include a range of means-tested unconditional cash transfers that could also be useful in reaching an extensive segment of the population, especially the disadvantaged. Income loss during the level 5 lockdown resulted in persistent issues of food insecurity among children.

Brynard et al. (2011:147) emphasise the importance of understanding the social, economic, political, and legal settings of a policy, which gives a policy its context and thus direction to the implementation plan. Moreover, De Vries (2016:181) recognised that problems are complex and regarded unemployment as a problem associated with political, economic, social, and psychological components that may be seen at both the micro and macro levels. According to (Brynard et al., 2011:147), there is a great need for strategic planning regarding the context for policy implementation to succeed. The authors emphasised determining the scope of the policy to be implemented, examining the strategies in place to ensure its success, and determining whether the policy informs its intended goals (Brynard et al., 2011: 147).

(ii) Food Insecurity

The COVID-19 Level 5 lockdown regulations bore much impact on CSG beneficiaries' food security (PLAAS, 2020). Mphahlele (2020), in a *City Press* article reported that children are exposed to numerous deprivations due to lockdown and the pandemic itself affecting their well-being. The Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian ing, as many parents, guardians, and caregivers experience financial insecurity. According to the Children's Institute (2020), children are financially dependent on their parents, therefore losses in adult salaries and revenues from the informal sector will have a direct effect on children's survival and well-being. It was noted in the Children's Institute and Stats SA (2020:18) that:

"Before lockdown higher rates of child, poverty was found among children from bigger households with unemployed adults with no education or lower levels of education".

The ability to afford basic nutritious food was also a major concern amongst CSG beneficiaries. An *IOL* (2020) online newspaper article reported that most families in South Africa experienced ever-increasing levels of hunger, poverty, and desperation as a result of the ongoing increase in food prices, especially where the majority of households have almost

no capacity to withstand shocks and where social grant assistance is hardly adequate. The C-19 Peoples Coalition (2020) pointed out that,

"During level 5 lockdown, the food basket rose by 7%, or R220, which is concerning because this rise alone is comparable to half the value of the monthly child support grant".

On the same sentiments, Van der Berg et al. (2020:15) reported that the CSG as the source of income does not have value in the absence of other incomes, and access to other crucial services. The authors found that:

"The CSG of R440 p.m. compares poorly to the loss of income of even the least skilled workers that have lost formal sector jobs, and even after the top-up, the CSG remains small in comparison to other sources of income," (Van der Berg et al., 2020:15).

As a result, the feasibility of the CSG was questionable. The Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian (2020), reported that before the lockdown, the CSG was already not enough because it is frequently shared and diverted to household needs, particularly in households with individuals without income or children. Furthermore, due to the high costs of food prices and a cash crisis, many households were soon unable to buy from formal shops; hence, an immediate rise in the CSG would be appreciated to alleviate financial strains for a large number of people (PLAAS, 2020). Moreover, the Black Sash (2021:9) stated that caregivers and their households constantly faced food shortages during the hard lockdown.

"Diets were generally starch-based with little diversity. Caregivers engaged in different strategies to make sure that they did not end up completely without food. These included the caregivers skipping meals so that there would be more food for their children, or meal rationing which led to all household members, including children, having smaller portions of food to eat at mealtimes, (Black Sash, 2021:9).

Other possible interventions were also identified by CSG beneficiaries. Caregivers interviewed in a *Daily Maverick* article by Zembe-Mkabile et al. (2020) stated that because they consider the CSG increase to be insufficient, CSG beneficiaries should be helped further with consistent and reliable non-cash assistance in the form of food parcels or food vouchers. Caregivers cited some outcomes that show this inadequacy, including increased demand for food as a result of children staying home; loss of non-grant income in some households; people's inability to rely on their typical reciprocity networks for borrowing money and food; and rising food costs. These responses on the inadequacy of the CSG demonstrate what De Vries (2016: 200); assert that there is no size fit all solution to problems, as problems have contextual differences as one may turn into worst practice in another, therefore hindering the effectiveness and efficiency of the copied policy. Hill (1997:218) argues that even policies that are technically or politically feasible may yet fail to attain their stated goals, because expectations may be set too high to be achieved efficiently, especially when people's attitudes or behaviours are required to change.

De Vries (2016:181) argued that problems addressed mostly have several dimensions and are mutually related making it difficult to decide where to start in defining and resolving the problem. Thus, such exposure to food insecurity and insufficiency of the CSG confirms what De Vries (2016:191) asserted, that the definition of the identified social problem is not only determined by its actual nature and magnitude, and thus public policies to address such problems are not judged for their effectiveness and efficiency or their rationality and legitimisation. Moreover, the framework in which SASSA operates is affected by several variables, including the high levels of poverty, unemployment, and disasters that people face throughout the year (SASSA, 2020/21).

Van der Berg et al. (2020:5) identified that high unemployment; high poverty; lack of or interrupted access to products and services; and unstable income-generating activities were all risk factors for food insecurity and household hunger during level 5 lockdown. Therefore, increasing social grants is the simplest and most efficient solution to address the food security issue (Maeko and Mathe, 2020). Hendrick et al. (2020: i) argued that the state has an immediate obligation to address the increase in hunger and food insecurity affecting children during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brynard (2005:152) affirms that identifying the pertinent characteristics of the identified problem that are both directly and indirectly impacted by a policy is crucial since it makes it simpler to identify pertinent clients who are obliged and have the power to influence the implementation process.

(iii) Children's Nutrition

Research conducted by Haider et al. (2020) reported that lockdown was implemented as a strategy to curb the spread of the virus, thus, there was broad agreement that the lockdown was a necessary public health response but it resulted in persistent inequalities and deprivations. Lockdown greatly increased the exposure of children to many forms of deprivation. Van Bruwaene et al. (2020:1), in a journal article reported that:

"Children are the victims of the measures taken to halt the spread of COVID-19. They have been denied basic rights of access to healthcare and education. Schools have been closed, and for many vulnerable pupils, this has meant an experience of isolation, anxiety, and hunger".

The lockdown regulations posed the regulatory approach, providing specific rules to be followed without fail. Movements of persons were restricted, and schools were closed in compliance with social distancing regulations (RSA, 2020). Section 27 (2020) critiqued the Department of Basic Education's decision on closing schools and Early Childhood Development facilities in compliance with promulgated lockdown regulations and highlighted that it impacted negatively the nutrition stability of about 9,6 million children benefiting from the national school nutrition programme. School nutrition programmes provide kids two meals a day to supplement small CSG thus school closures caused caregivers to spend a bigger percentage of their grant money on food (Black Sash, 2021:40).

Moreover, schools were reported to be the focal point enabling access to other essential services. Mphahlele (2020) in the *Spotlight* article, pointed out that,

"In many cases schools are also the only places where some children receive care such as immunisations, mental-health care through social workers, and rigorous physical activity needed for healthy development. In some rural communities accessing water means traveling long distances with buckets to collect this precious resource from dams or boreholes. But, when schools are open access to clean water and taps are often easier and so too a measure of psycho-social and medical support".

The presented arguments affirm what Cloete and De Coning (2011:141) argue the content of the policy is determined by the policy objectives; how it problematises the issue; and how it aims to solve the perceived problem. Moreover, Brynard et al. (2006:196) argue that the content of implementation is either characterised by distributive, regulatory, and redistributive approaches in determining the policy response. This shows that the characteristics of the problem are likely to determine the type of response or initiative to be designed and implemented. Access to water and health care services in schools aligns with Cloete and De Coning's (2011:136), assertion that the provision of services by the government among the various spheres of government; national, provincial, and local as well as within departments providing interconnected services has been gaining momentum in South Africa. Some of the CSG beneficiaries' experiences during the lockdown were impacted by the gaps in CSG programme implementation.

(iv) Closure of South African Social Security Agency Mobile Pay Points and Community Halls

Marking the collection of social grants as essential service shows recognition that some people are dependent on grants as means to access their basic needs (Mzembe-Mkabile et al., 2020).

"Before the lockdown, some 17 million South Africans were relying on social grants for their household income and food security" (Mzembe-Mkabile et al., 2020).

The CSG beneficiaries encountered numerous challenges related to the collection of grants. Some of the marginalised communities faced difficulties in collecting the grant due to the closure of community halls and SASSA mobile pay points. Human (2021) reported that,

"At the start of the lockdown in March 2020, several community halls in Cape Town were closed to slow the spread of Covid-19. This meant that hundreds of social grant beneficiaries who relied on getting their payments and other services at local centers now had to spend the little they had to travel to the nearest South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) offices that were already overwhelmed with recipients," (Human, 2021).

Closure of local or mobile SASSA pay points resulted in high demand for restricted public transportation commuters who rely on public transport was severely affected by these regulations as beneficiaries had to travel to get grants, and some had to wake up early or sleep in SASSA offices (Seekings, 2020). Moreover, Ornellas and Zatrau, (2020:34) reported that CSG beneficiaries we most affected by the closure of SASSA offices and alternative pay points, they found that:

"In Vulamehlo, KwaZulu-Natal, where beneficiaries were previously able to walk to the community-based pay points (on average less than 2 kilometers), beneficiaries now have to travel between 28–47 kilometers to the nearest secure payment point. Beneficiaries in this area highlighted that they often have to borrow money for taxis or other means of transport", (Ornellas and Zatrau, 2020:34).

These challenges confirm the importance of allocating resources and implementation activities appropriately to produce desirable results, as resources and actions need to align with the identified objective as the inadequacy of resource mobilisation can affect the delivery of services within communities, especially the disadvantaged (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:29). In addition, Najam (1995:43) cautioned the importance of mutual adaptation between implementing agencies and the policy being implemented as lack of adaptation may affect the agencies' level of commitment to the established programme and their ability to implement it. Therefore, decision-makers and implementing agencies must be wary of factors that are likely to promote or hinder successful implementation.

(v) Limited Transport Access and Increased Transport Costs

In accessing the grant Banton (2020) reported that social grants payments were made available for collection from the 30 March 2020 and some retail stores announced that they will open as early as 06H00 for collection, however, restricted access to transport resulted in delay on grant payments as the staff struggled to get transport (Banton, 2020). And thus, for some, such transport is not readily available. Ornellas and Zatrau (2020:35) found that:

"In Walkraal, Limpopo, beneficiaries said that there was no access to public transportation in their area. Beneficiaries had to walk to the closest major road and wait for transport to pass by" (Ornellas and Zatrau, 2020:35).

An additional barrier to receiving the CSG was the increase in transportation costs needed to get to and from the new pay points, particularly in rural areas where people must wake up early to stand in line for a taxi to the pay point station, queue to receive the grant and line up once more to get home, which can take an entire day (Black Sash, 2020). Transport access challenges deprived women of their safety and subjected them to gender-based violence. Ornellas and Zatrau (2020:40) reported that:

"In Nkonxeni, Eastern Cape, another female beneficiary was on her way back from the Ntabeni Supermarket ATM when she was robbed of her grant payments for her

two children. She reported this to the Chief but was told to let it go because he was from a poor family" (Ornellas and Zatrau: 2020:40).

Anderson (1997:61) argued that in policymaking, the president is not acting alone; numerous staff agencies serve as advisors and aid the president in carrying out his duties, which include policy development and implementation (Anderson, 1997:61). However, hand these policies are implemented by street-level bureaucrats who have been characterised by direct interaction with implementation programme and beneficiaries (Lipsky, 1980:45). This may result to policy design and implementation gap as the implementers and beneficiaries of the particular policy or programme do not partake in the policy design, therefore hindering in finding accurate interventions.

(vi) Confusion around Staggered Grants Collection Dates

SASSA implemented a staggered dates payment plan for social grants collection, however, some of the challenges were related to lack of compliance to the proposed grant collection dates and the fact that beneficiaries had run out of money and mean for financial support to access basic needs (Zembe-Mkabile et al., 2020). The South African Social Security Agency in the RSA Government, (2020) media statement reported that:

"The grant payment for April 2020 was brought forward to 30 March 2020, and the first two days were dedicated to people with disabilities and older persons to ensure compliance with the State of Disaster requirements. Child Support grant beneficiaries could not wait for the 1st of April and descended upon payment channels as early as 30 March", (RSA Government, 2020).

The development of the social assistance response is essentially an administrative effort, and as a result, the influential department or agency tasked with creating the intervention must involve the public in the decision-making process (Seeking, 2020:20). This echoes what De Vries (2016:181) identified as the ownership of the problem which sometimes contributes into hindering the implementation of the programme when the agency does not submit into acknowledging the problem. In the virtual portfolio meeting between DSD, SASSA and NDA (2020), members of the committee voiced their concerns about the DSD and SASSA's lack of engagement and information sharing with the public during the level 5 lockdown. To ensure effective reach to the social grant beneficiaries especially those in rural areas, members of the committee proposed working with the SABC to collaborate on a grant information banner that would be displayed at the bottom of television screens, as well as the use of loud hailers and community radio stations (DSD, SASSA and NDA, 2020). Access to accurate and timely information promotes more effective participation of people with whom they work in decisions that affect their lives (Sprechmann and Pelton, 2001:91). Additionally, the reopening of SASSA offices as a point of contact for the general public was also strongly advised. As a result of the lack of communication, SASSA (2020) reported that further disruptions on the social distancing plan at the grant pay points increased exposure to a variety of health issues especially the coronavirus.

"...These include long queues, overcrowding, and failure to comply with social distancing and hygiene guidelines at some pay outlets. There were also reported cases of depletion of cash at some Post Office outlets due to a higher-than-normal number of people" (SASSA, 2020).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:30) argue that monitoring the progress and impact of policy change are essential for the implemented programme to maintain accountability, make choices regarding the implemented policy in connection to the desired results, and improve or change the implementation plan.

4.2.2 Child Support Grant Implementation Challenges

The CSG beneficiaries and the grant programme implementers experienced many challenges related to the delivery of the CSG during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown. These challenges were implementing agent's challenges, delivering the additional grant amount and lack of capacity to process the grant.

(i) Implementing Agent's Challenges

Many changes might occur during the implementation stages that are frequently outside the control of policymakers and important organisations (Burger, 1986:173). The regular operations in the delivery of social grants were challenged during the level 5 lockdown, as all SASSA and DSD offices were closed in compliance with the promulgated lockdown regulations (DSD, SASSA, NDA, 2020). The DSD (2020:34) reported that this impacted the effective operation of the department's services and those of service providers working hand in hand with the department to ensure the delivery of social grants to beneficiaries. De Vries (2016:191) claimed that when examining how problems are defined and resolved, internal operations of the public sector cannot be ignored. The DSD (2020:34) reported that the level 5 lockdown forced the it to adopt a hybrid model of remote working from home, which placed a demand on work tools. In addition, the advent of the COVID-19 virus disaster exacerbated the demand for SASSA services (SASSA, 2020/21). As a result, SASSA (2020/21) reported that:

"The implementation of top-up of existing grants (including CSG top-up for May), was effected during the May payment cycle which commenced on 04 May 2020 and all went off well".

New working tactics were employed to ensure ongoing delivery of the CSG to beneficiaries. However, to ensure that the changes are implemented, and payments are prepared for the May pay cycle, SASSA had a limited amount of time to modify the Social Security Pension System because offices had to be closed during the level 5 lockdown as per regulations. As a result, on the first day of the payment cycle duplicate payments were reported in KZN and the Western Cape, causing further technical issues that affected beneficiary payments and the amount of time necessary to implement rigorous testing and quality control on other grants

payments, (SASSA, 2020/21). In addition, beneficiaries of child grants were urged not to attempt to withdraw the money earlier than the 6 May 2020 (Grobler and Ngqakamba, 2020).

Lack of capacity by the implementing department was also evident. Government departments had to align their operations with lockdown regulations and implement alternative ways of working (RSA 2020). As asserted by Anderson (1997:66), an administrative agency can spot needed changes in existing policies, possibly close gaps, and identify new problems that, in their opinion, are appropriate targets for legislation. A report by DSD (2020) illustrated that, with the introduction of lockdown at Alert level 5, it became evident that officials lack the essential tools to deliver services. And thus, new eligible beneficiaries were not captured during the hard lockdown. It was reported in *IOL* (2020), that:

"Sassa cannot enroll new beneficiaries into the social grant system during lockdown because the required verification and biometric requirements cannot be completed. The quickest and simplest way to channel much-needed cash into poor households is via existing beneficiaries".

Additionally, it was discovered that resources such as laptops, work cell phones, data, and transportation were weak or insufficient in both the government and non-governmental organisation sectors which contribute to social welfare services, particularly child protection (DSD, 2020:6). In this case of COVID-19 lockdown, administrative agencies had discretionary authority to determine coping mechanisms to continue delivering services in a stringent environment (Lipsky, 1980:2). Officials are deemed street-level bureaucrats characterised by direct interaction with implementation programmes and beneficiaries. However when the demand for effort among bureaucrats is high or the availability of resources becomes scarce, bureaucrats tend to 'limit' their services (Lipsky, 1980:45). As Cloete and De Coning (2011:158) reiterated, the lack of access and appropriate technological expertise causes dissatisfaction. However, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:26) argued that those responsible for implementing the policy must demonstrate commitment and the necessity of the policy, even though it may require significant expenditure.

(ii) Delivering the Additional Amount

Some delivery challenges were traceable administrative and collaboration gaps between prominent stakeholders involved in the payment of grants (Seekings, 2020). According to Seekings (2020:19), the SAPO was appointed as South Africa's national grant paymaster in 2018. The majority of the 8,086 pay stations that SASSA had previously utilised to distribute grants were steadily closed as part of its cost-cutting efforts. Only 1,740 pay points remained operational in February 2020 (Seekings, 2020:19). Both internal and external clients and coalition partners play a critical role to ensure effective policy implementation. Sandy Godlwana, KZN SASSA spokesperson, reported in a *South African Government News Agency* article that, on the 1 April 2020, social grants payments started in most SAPO outlets and retail stores by 07:30 and were paid at 195 post office locations throughout the province. Godlwana stated that,

"By midday, we had an average of about 13 outlets that had completely run out [of funds] and nine were very low on funds. This was the order of the day as by midday close to 60 outlets were out of cash. Shortly thereafter we also experienced the system going down which [was] later restored, although some reversals were experienced during this time" (South African Government News Agency, 2020)

The South African Government News Agency (2020) reported that SASSA representatives were stationed at SAPO facilities and retail stores to monitor payments and make sure that social distancing was maintained. However, because a large number of recipients of CSG showed up to collect their payments, increasing the total number, it was difficult to maintain an acceptable measure of social distance outside of post offices and in retail settings (South African Government News Agency, 2020). Brynard (2005:662) argued that clients and coalitions are concerned about the government's capacity to put together alliances of influential external entities that actively support a particular implementation process (Brynard, 2005:662). However, De Vries (2016:181) stated that the growth of an organisation may lead to a crisis associated with its leadership, control, and complexity. Solutions may be delegation and collaboration, but these may also lead to new crises and affect decision-making processes of the number of stakeholders and organisations involved (De Vries, 2016:181). Therefore, it is crucial to maintain control over internal and external actors involved to make sure that the group is manageable, and that policy is implemented without significant obstacles (Brynard, 2005:662).

(iii) Lack of Capacity to Process the Grant

During the level 5 lockdown, beneficiaries who had used pay points before the lockdown had to collect their grants from ATMs, retailers, SAPO branches, or one of the few remaining pay points (Seekings, 2020:4). According to SASSA (2020), the majority of the beneficiaries' bank accounts are with the SAPO and PostBank and are subsidised by SASSA through the special disbursement account agreed to between the parties. Cloete and De Coning (2011:14) remarked that the availability and accessibility of intangible resources are crucial for policy implementation. Some of the non-compliance issues relating to the SASSA/SAPO collaboration identified by April 2020 include instability of the Integrated Grants Payments System (IGPS), cash pay points reschedule, pay points and post offices without chairs, shelter, and water for beneficiaries on grant payment days (SASSA, 2020/21). However, despite the minor problems, it was reported by DSD Minister Zulu that

"around R3.7 billion had been processed through SASSA and Post Office cards. In addition, 3.1 million beneficiaries were paid through various commercial banks" (RSA Government, 2020).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:121) identified a lack of coordination as a contributing factor in implementation, especially when it is associated with insufficient capacity to execute the policy. With deficient resources, there is likely to be a high level of conflict between the relevant departments which negatively influences the implemented programme (Brinkerhoff, 2002:121). The presented argument affirms what Cloete and COVID-19 De Coning

(2011:148) highlighted, that the availability of capacity is an important variable for programme implementation, as it either promotes the implementation of the policy or can make it more challenging, thus, hindering its effectiveness (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:148).

Public participation enables CSOs to contribute and influence policymaking. The theme of the next section is derived from the conceptual framework of this study and it discusses public participation with the purpose of understanding the notion of civil society participation in policy or programme implementation such as the CSG.

4.3 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

This section is drawn from the conceptual framework of this study, as public participation underpins civil society participation in policy making and influences the civil society advocacy role. The section focuses attention on public participation mechanisms and structures during lockdown to comprehend the motive behind CSOs' advocacy role and strategies during lockdown as part of the research questions posed in this study.

Chabana (2020), in a *News24* article, stated that:

"Public participation should be at the center of any government activity. The government has the responsibility to provide tools so that the people can be part of the oversight and public participation work".

Chabana's view resonates with Theron and Mchunu's view that characterises public participation as a collective effort and a structured framework where the people affected combine resources and efforts to achieve well-defined goals and objectives they have developed (Theron and Mchunu, 2014:13). In addition, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:89) assert that participation is managed by determining appropriate roles and responsibilities of the actors involved in different participation structures and mechanisms (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:89). Therefore, public participation mechanisms enable the actors involved to affirm their roles and responsibilities in policy making and programme implementation.

4.3.1 Public Participation Mechanisms and Structures during Lockdown

In the online article by the *Daily Maverick* "COVID-19 policy: Public engagement is crucial", Tugendhaft et al. (2020) argued that:

"Public engagement in decision-making is important for transparency, at least to generate trust and buy-in. This in turn would increase the success rate of Covid-19 interventions. It would also manage expectations and improve public understanding of the various issues."

Civil Society Organisations have been posited as mediated representation to intervene between the state and 'the poor' to bargain, negotiate and secure democratic results for the

disadvantaged groups (Piper and von Lieres, 2016:324). The interactions usually occur in invited spaces, which Piper and Von Lieres (2016:316) define as formal spaces created by the government facilitated through legal or participatory structures, for example, public hearings and izimbizo (Piper and Von Lieres, 2016:316). The authors (2016: 324) caution that there is a high risk that the failure of the mediator translates to a failure of effective and legitimate representation for poor communities who have little access to formal institutions of representation. Therefore, CSOs, as representative mediators, need to prioritise and strategise effectively on the identified policy problem. During the lockdown, CSOs held the government accountable for the oversight of public participation mechanisms.

(i) Information-Sharing Mechanisms in the National Sphere of Government Through the Parliamentary Committee

Chabana (2020) argued that

"The oversight work of Parliament cannot be efficient or effective outside of the involvement of the public or society. Members of Parliament were not visible, as far as oversight is concerned, for a considerable time after the state of the disaster declaration. The executive went on about its business without due accountability".

Parliament is mandated to facilitate public involvement in its legislative and other processes and to conduct its business openly, thus, representing the people and ensuring that government delivers on its promises and undertakings to the public (Peoples Assembly, 2020). During the lockdown, this was scarce. The research by Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII) (2021:36) indicates that lockdowns, curfews, and other emergency restrictions, as well as relief responses, were applied prematurely, with little planning, and with little to no communication with civil society and the public, leading to undesired consequences. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:66) assert that policy participation is managed through consulting with stakeholders, particularly in invited spaces where relevant stakeholders are invited to propose their perceptions on a particular policy or programme.

In a research study, the Dullah Omar Institute, the University of the Western Cape, and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group, highlighted that the core function of Parliament is, "To facilitate public participation and involvement". Therefore, they urged it to commit to the public that the improved levels of openness developed through moving online would be protected beyond the COVID-19 disaster (Dullah Omar Institute et al., 2020/21:4). In addition, Parliament must commit to taking all necessary steps to rectify the injustices that prevent the most marginalised members of society from engaging with legislatures and achieving democratic control over the executive (Dullah Omar Institute et al., 2020/21:23). Runji (2020), in *Democratic Works Foundation* article, stated that maintaining physical distance and bans on mass gatherings results in lack of transparency and accountability:

"Under such circumstances, the executive branch of government is left largely unchecked, with wide powers leaving ordinary citizens not only vulnerable to a highly contagious and deadly disease but to abuses of power, including procurement

irregularities, mismanagement of relief funds as well maladministration, corruption, and fraud – all cloaked under the guise of protecting the health of the public" (Runji, 2020).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65) argue that information-sharing mechanisms support the engagement and participation of various stakeholders. However, managers of organisational policies, laws, and regulations, have control over the information that can be disclosed. Lack of transparency and information-sharing methods limits the ability of civil society organisations involved in shared decision-making to collaborate effectively without information and explanation of the factors influencing policy decisions (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:65).

(ii) Consultative Mechanisms in the Provincial Sphere of Government through Legislature Committees

Parliament suspended the operation of legislatures "until further notice", while finding strategies to cope with the pandemic (RSA, 2020). The letters sent on 25 March 2020, and again on 3 April 2020 by eleven CSOs to the presiding officers of the legislatures, the secretaries of the legislatures, and the Chief Whips in the National Parliament showed the lack of CSO participation in provincial legislatures (Dullah Omar Institute, 2020). In the letters, they pleaded with the legislature to take all necessary steps to address and lessen COVID-19's effects on the nation, including fostering greater social cohesion by doing more to connect the voices of marginalised groups to decision-making structures. Theron and Mchunu (2014:124) assert that in committee meetings, engagement takes place in a form of a dialogue between stakeholders, and CSOs' can participate as an advisory or expert panel, and the dialogue may influence and direct future policy outcomes. In the letter, the Dullah Omar Institute highlighted the use of virtual platforms as a prominent platform for participation and stated that,

"Allow committees of the legislatures to meet using electronic media technologies – noting that many platforms (Skype, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc) allow for video connections which can also be recorded and made public. The recording and publishing of any online meetings must be mandatory. If necessary, the Rules of the legislatures may need to be temporarily amended to allow for such remote committee meetings. When time allows, these temporary measures should be more thoroughly debated as potential longer-term solutions to improving the functionality of committees" (Dullah Omar Institute, 2020).

Central government sets up the structures within which certain participation can be functional, managing the possibility and nature of the interaction between government, private and non-profit sectors involved (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:89). Therefore, adopting online public participation platforms would have enabled CSOs to engage with the government, and present and support their petitions developed to address the challenges of the CSG beneficiaries during the level 5 lockdown. Friedman (2008:5) argued that through public participation, ordinary people are involved in the design, planning, and evaluation of

development programmes. The presence of the general public, members of civil society, and key stakeholders, whether in a physical location or online, enhances transparency and improves access to prospective interaction (Dullah Omar Institute, 2020).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:66) argue that a key component of the consultative mechanism of participation should be the identification of pertinent stakeholders and encouragement of their involvement, as this would lead to meaningful engagement and the development of attainable goals. This can only be effective when there are enough opportunities granted to stakeholders to have an advanced understanding of the identified issues to participate in an informed and meaningful manner (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:66).

(iii) Civil Society Organisations and Collaborative Mechanisms

Civil Society Organisations have a critical role to play in advancing the call for comprehensive social protection schemes and, more specifically, social grant programmes, (SPII, 2020:5). The Social Justice Coalition stated:

"The pandemic was a humanitarian crisis and not a security crisis. We need the state to work with us. We understand and know our communities the best," (Ellis, 2020).

Through collaborative mechanisms, the policy-making process is shared among the relevant stakeholders, who collaborate to achieve well-defined goals through roles and duties and steering committees (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:67). The C-19 People's Coalition (2020) emphasised collaborative efforts to ensure public participation and involvement of CSOs' in decision-making during the COVID-19 lockdown. They (2020) stated:

"We recognize that the government's role in coordinating the nationwide Covid-19 action is vital. As such, we are committed to sharing our expertise and networks in the interest of fostering measures that advance equity, more transparent approaches, broad participation, and community ownership of the state's programme. We further believe that given our presence on the ground, we are well positioned to alert the government's leadership to emerging problems, and undesired outcomes and make recommendations as to how shortcomings can be addressed".

Runji (2020), in a *Democratic Works Foundation* article reported that encouraging grassroots organisations to interact with government and relevant institutions is a crucial step in ensuring that democracy benefits the majority of people, not just a privileged few. Developing participatory institutions and the decentralisation of power is significant to enable citizens to participate in the decision-making process and the implementation of policies (Theron and Mchunu, 2014:114). Swilling and Russell (2001:5) argued that civil society is a crucial player in policy design and implementation to ensure effective access to services, as well as acting as a "social watch" and service providers of accountability. However, Scribner and Crosby (1997:8-9) cautioned that for the public to participate and CSOs' to effectively influence policy decisions and their implementation, the political environment must be conducive so that the interests of the marginalised can gain recognition on government

agendas and action taken. Therefore, the political environment may hinder or promote civil society participation and practising a particular role in the implementation programme. The next section discusses the role of CSOs in the CSG programme.

4.4 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ROLE IN RELATION TO THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT IN SOUTH AFRICA

This section discusses the research question: What is the CSOs' role in relation to the CSG in South Africa? The objective of this question is to explore the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG in South Africa to understand the influence they have on policy making, in particular the CSG programme. Civil society provides input to policies through evidence-based research, advocacy, and community-based monitoring, bringing experience of the most vulnerable groups, in particular, women and children, who are often the main beneficiaries of government services (Black Sash, 2016:1; Sloth-Nielsen, 2018:12). The CSOs' role in relation to the CSG in South Africa is further informed and legitimised by the White Paper on Social Welfare (1997), discussed in the legislative framework chapter. Based on the reviewed literature, the study found the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG to be associated with influencing the CSG programme implementation, the watchdog role, and the advocacy role.

4.4.1 Influencing the Child Support Grant Programme Implementation

According to Jabeen (2018:262), NGOs are working with the government to administer and manage social development programmes aimed at enhancing the lives of underprivileged children in South Africa. Their goal is to make sure that social security programmes like the CSG are effectively managed and administered on behalf of vulnerable children and that they are accessible to children in areas where the government has the resources to do so. The CSG seeks to address poverty among children in South Africa (RSA, 2004:8). It has been substantially extended since its initiation. Several studies and reports attest that the changes in the CSG access and implementation occurred in response to the robust CSOs (Black Sash, 2010:4; Overy, 2010:3; Denelay and Jehoma, 2016:61; Seekings, 2016:10; UNICEF, 2020:2). A study by Patel (2016:374) argued that in the early days of the CSG implementation, NGOs played a key role in promoting the new grant by actively supporting beneficiaries to access the grant. The Grants Awareness Campaign was established by the government and the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), to encourage higher CSG uptake with a focus on marginalised groups, the poor and rural areas, to identify some of the barriers to CSG access and to formulate methods to address them (ACCESS, 2006). The Grants Awareness Campaign was implemented through the formation of alliances or coalitions, and advocacy techniques such as media advocacy, social mobilisation, influencing policies and legislation, lobbying and outcome evaluation, were among the others employed during the campaign (Prudlock, 2011:20). During the Grants Awareness Campaign, CSOs aimed to keep the public informed about the latest debates, legal and policy development, and distributing mass-based social security literacy material to target audiences, mainly the citizens, media and the public (Prudlock, 2011:21).

Several studies have identified that the elimination of administrative challenges to access, progressive changes in eligibility criteria, and educational and publicity campaigns by CSOs led to an increase in CSG recipients (SASSA and UNICEF, 2013:63; Patel and Plagerson, 2016:40; Seekings, 2016:10). Delany et al. (2016:29) affirm that CSOs have influenced the implementation of the CSG programme, stating that:

"The CSG was initially introduced for children under the age of seven years to support the nutritional needs of young children. However, with the active advocacy of civil society, the reach of the grant has expanded substantially. This has been driven largely by increases in the age eligibility criteria and changes to the means test and income threshold. Increased awareness of the grant through both government and civil society efforts, and improvements in implementation also contributed to the expansion. Since 2012, the grant has been available to all children under 18 years whose caregivers meet the means test requirements" (Delany et al., 2016:29)

In welcoming the changes in the CSG regulations, the Black Sash stated:

"The amended regulations, which extend the age of eligibility for the grant to 18 years, came into effect on 1 January 2012 and mark a significant milestone in our long journey to realise the Constitutional rights of all our children to social assistance" (Black Sash, 2012).

Throughout the CSG, CSOs, such as the Black Sash and the Children's Institute, played a key role in advocating for the expansion of the grants (Patel, 2016:40).

4.4.2 Advocacy Role

The CSOs are acknowledged for their capacity to have on-the-ground knowledge and experience, to do research and campaigns on a comprehensive understanding of legislation, and to be able to raise issues through advocacy efforts (Black Sash, 2018:5). In relation to the CSG, the Children's Institute plays an advocacy role and holds the objective of advocating for the expansion of the child support grant and to resolve the foster care crisis:

"We have continued to promote debate and discussion on social assistance reforms in support of children. The reform options presented in the Child Gauge [2017] included: increasing the Child Support Grant (CSG) amount for all children in poverty; increasing the CSG amount for relatives caring for orphans (CSG top-up); providing the CSG to everyone irrespective of income (universalisation); increasing the CSG age threshold from 18 to 21 for young adults still in education; and providing a maternity benefit for pregnant women" (Children's Institute, 2017:20).

The Children's Institute went on to claim that to effectively support children's well-being, the CSG must be a component of an integrated social protection plan that addresses broader social and economic policies and takes into account not only the well-being of the child, but also that of their caregivers and the households in which they reside (Children's Institute 2017:21). The extension of the CSG from 14 to 18 years was largely influenced by civil

society placard protests, marches, and memoranda directed at the DSD, Parliament, and party conferences, as well as petitions and memoranda addressing particular issues (Overy, 2010:3). Simbi (2013:62), in a research study, argued that advocacy methods are intertwined and complement each other. Furthermore, Simbi (2013:62) discovered that advocacy methods involving direct contact with relevant policymakers are more effective than textual communication strategies. In addition, the Black Sash influenced policy by attending committee meetings and making written and oral submissions to the national and provincial legislatures (Black Sash, 2017). Moreover, CSOs went as far as helping eligible applicants to apply for the CSG and played an oversight role in assessing the implementation of the CSG (Overy, 2010).

4.4.3 Watchdog Role

Civil society organisations and researchers working with applicants identified a range of administrative requirements that were barriers to access (Patel, 2016:377). Civil society groups also operated as watchdogs, ensuring that government followed through on their obligations and pointing out shortcomings and errors (Community of Democracies, 2017:15). According to Overy (2010), civil society litigation about the CSG's age eligibility criteria expansion was largely supported by evidence from civil society research, and as a result, the means test was changed, which boosted the number of grant applications (Overy, 2010). Furthermore, as part of a larger effort to extend the CSG, the child rights activists appeared in court. The court held that the group of children between the ages of 14 and 18 were being discriminated against and denied their entitlement to social security since they were just as deserving of assistance as the younger group of children who received the grant (Overy, 2010:5). Goldblatt (2014) reported that,

"In 2010, while judgment was still pending in the case, the government extended the Child Support Grant to all children under the age of 18 (over a phased period until the end of 2012). The combination of sophisticated research, strong arguments, public pressure, and the threat of an adverse court ruling seems to have led to this positive outcome" (Goldblatt, 2014).

Thus, CSOs worked as investigators of service delivery issues that hindered the implementation of the CSG, focusing on administration, needed documentation, the means test, and the grant's actual delivery methods (Overy, 2010:4; DSD, SASSA and UNICEF, 2012:27; Patel and Plagerson, 2016:40). Patel (2016:41) claimed that the regulations on reducing the demand on documents required to put pressure on the government's adherence to Chapter 2 of the Constitution, were therefore implemented for the proper reasons and with a positive consequence. In addition, civil society litigation in relation to the CSG resulted in changes in the grant's administration and requirements that have extended its reach to more children by allowing alternative forms of identification in the absence of official documentation (Overy, 2010:3). In order to qualify to access the CSG, beneficiaries must have essential documents such as birth certificates of the child and the identity document of the caregiver as proof of citizenship and eligibility (SASSA, 2020/21:4). Requiring essential documents has proved to be problematical for some potential CSG beneficiaries and getting

the required supporting documentation is a burden for many poor South Africans (SASSA, 2016:37). Therefore, in the absence of the required documents, applicants may submit supporting documents such as, "Affidavit, temporary ID or certificate, proof that you have applied for an ID and/or birth certificate at the Department of Home Affairs" (Parent24, 2020).

Monitoring for the realisation of child social security rights is core to the work of the Black Sash organisation. The Black Sash identified that the CSOs role in relation to the CSG is a partnership, stating that,

Our submissions are informed by our ongoing work with the DSD and the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) to ensure the constitutional right to social security and social protection, with emphasis on social assistance through advocacy, community-based monitoring, research, education, and training" (Black Sash, 2020).

The Black Sash is constantly monitoring events on the ground to assess their impact and is engaging important stakeholders to ensure that the right to social security is not threatened, (Black Sash, 2017). In order to enhance the delivery of government services to the disadvantaged and marginalised, the organisation's Community Based Monitoring programme and the Hands off Our Grants Campaign examine how social grants are implemented and how social assistance policy is implemented in local communities (Black Sash, 2017). The Hands off Our Grants Campaign was also implemented to make the government aware of unlawful and fraudulent deductions that grant beneficiaries have experienced (Black Sash, 2017).

Moreover, not only have CSG policies been impacted by studies from civil society, but many government offices that contribute to the implementation of the CSG have also undergone certain changes (Overy, 2010:4). According to Department of Home Affairs Strategic Plan (2020/25:27), part of the interventions responding to its inability to reach citizens includes integrated online birth registration where home affairs registrars are placed in health facilities to register and issue birth certificates to new-born babies free of charge. In response to the documentation challenges which are related to geographical access, the DHA and the DSD have adopted mobile services and integrated outreach programmes designed by the South African government (national, provincial, and local) intending to ensure that social services reach the poor and marginalised population (SASSA Annual Report, 2018/19:25).

The CIVICUS report indicated that the coronavirus pandemic has triggered an intense wave of civil society activity. Civil society worked to monitor the violation of human rights, campaigned and advocated for policies that recognise marginalised people, and for the introduction of emergency basic income interventions during the pandemic (CIVICUS, 2020:4, 36). The next section discusses advocacy strategies to answer the question: What strategies do CSOs employ to advocate for the interests of CSG beneficiaries during a lockdown?

4.5 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS ADVOCACY STRATEGIES AND THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT DURING LOCKDOWN

This section discusses CSO's advocacy strategies in relation to the CSG during lockdown. It is worth noting here the advocacy strategies used by CSOs during lockdown to lobby for the CSG increase in order to understand how CSOs influence the implementation of the CSG programme. Hence, the study seeks to explore the advocacy strategies used during the level 5 lockdown. In the absence of invited mechanisms of participation such as public hearings, meetings, dialogues, and debates, CSOs employed media campaigning, evidence-based research, lobbying through litigation, online petitions and lobbying through the submission of letters as advocacy strategies. The media play a role in policymaking as information providers and transmitters, agenda setters, and attitude shapers (Anderson, 1997:76).

4.5.1 Media Campaigning

Both the public and the government rely on the media as a major source of information through their ability to raise awareness of the identified problem. Citizens become aware of what is happening and how they are affected (Anderson, 1997:76). The C-19 People's Coalition issued a media statement, "A call for social solidarity in South Africa", on 24 March 2020 to emphasise their vigour in protecting the vulnerable, stating that:

"We [CSOs] have a particular duty to safeguard those who are most vulnerable, those who are already living with hunger, weakened immune systems, and poor access to health care. Greater restrictions and shutdowns are coming, but they will only work if full support is provided to working-class and poor communities. Drastic measures are needed if we are to avoid disaster. Each of us must act now" (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020).

During level 5 lockdown, CSOs made submissions to hold the government accountable for the realisation of children's basic rights, and proposed the right to social security in a form of a child support grant. Advocates using this strategy affect policy change by influencing policymakers, but they do so indirectly rather than through direct tactics (Gen and Wright, 2018:29). The media are engaged by advocates for the obvious reason of raising public awareness of and support for advocates' issues, and when covered by mass media can set the policy agenda by drawing public attention to it (Gen and Wright, 2013:178). The Children's Institute published several advocacy briefs and webinar series urging the government to prioritise children in its COVID-19 response and recovery strategies to advocate for children's well-being and access to basic rights (Children's Institute, 2022). Technology has much advanced the media platform and is dominating as a public participation platform (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:202-203). In prioritising public participation of civil society in programme implementation and children's right to social security, prominent stakeholders made use of virtual meetings to plan and make informed decisions, commented on here:

"In April, a virtual meeting took place between the SASSA CEO and the Black Sash to discuss arrangements for the staggering social grant payment from May 2020 pay run onwards" (Black Sash, 2020:5).

The Democratic Works Foundation connected the organisations with decision-makers and public representatives in provincial legislatures, facilitated their access to national and provincial networks, and helped the organisations amplify their views (Democratic Works Foundation, 2020). According to Theron and Mchunu (2014:112-115, 124), in decision-making forums, CSOs articulate the interests of the public through interactive dialogue and debates with other stakeholders involved, making informed decisions when choosing a problem to work on, identifying solutions to the problem and setting achievable realistic goals. The Democratic Works Foundation further initiated a virtual consultative forum where all CSOs and NGOs can meet under one roof to optimise the function of the legislatures, to ultimately provide an avenue through which citizens can participate in their democracy and actively address some of the serious challenges faced by communities during the lockdown. Gen and Wright (2013:172) assert that an effective advocacy strategy should involve multiple engagement and mobilisation tools, both online and face-to-face (Gen and Wright, 2013:172). Three weeks after the call for the provincial legislature to resume its operations, Parliament announced in a media statement issued on 5 April 2020 that it would resume its operations on 13 April 2020 (RSA Parliament, 2020). Gen and Wright (2013:178-179) state that media coverage of policy issues raises the issue to higher levels of policymakers and increases their political will to act on these issues. Therefore, media coverage can shorten the time for policy change as it forces the policymakers to act on the issue being advocated (Gen and Wright, 2013:179).

4.5.2 Evidence-Based Research

Research reports submitted by the Development Policy Research Unit and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit created the basis for the government to become aware of the severity of the lockdown problem, the urgent attention it deserved and for government to make an informed decision on the social assistance response (University of Cape Town, 2020). Before the COVID-19 lockdown, the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit) at the University of Cape Town conducted the National Income Dynamics Study , a survey that addressed the levels of well-being of South Africans, the households they live in, and how these change over time (Bassier et al., 2020:1). This research, "National Income Dynamics Study 2017, Wave 5", was utilised to support the basis of a policy-advisory project commissioned by the South African Presidency (Special Covid-19 working group, 2020; The Presidency, 2020).

The majority of research in the area of civil society was quantitative and focused on the socio-economic effects of lockdown (French Institute of South Africa 2020). During the lockdown, the NIDS survey became an appropriate tool in assisting research organisations to conduct a Coronavirus apid Mobile Survey to determine the impact of the pandemic and lockdown on people. The National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey was conducted by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit as a

special follow-up to randomly selected people from households who were interviewed in 2017 by National Income Dynamics Study. The National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey investigated the socio-economic impacts of the national lockdown associated with the state of disaster declared in South Africa in March 2020, and the social and economic consequences of the global coronavirus pandemic (Bassier et al., 2020:7). The purpose of the study was to collect information that could be useful to policymakers to know the difficulties that people were experiencing in the challenging times. Thus, participants were interviewed via telephone and their participation in the study allowed researchers to show important insights that have informed South Africa's social assistance policymaking during the lockdown (Bassier et al., 2020:1). As asserted by Court et al., evidence-based research efforts by CSOs show their function as a resource bank, conducting and submitting evidence-based research reporting concerns and interests of the public to validate that the problem needs the attention and response of policymakers (2006:9, 32). Thus, policy research that feeds into evidence-based decision-making usually provides an in-depth expert analysis of an emergent policy problem based on empirical data collected in the target context (Young and Quinn, 2012:31).

A group of economists from the University of Cape Town presented their argument for increasing the CSG payments in an article that was published on 31 March in *The Conversation*. They claimed that this was the most efficient way to reach houses that were impacted by the closure of informal businesses during the level 5 lockdown. They used data collected from the NIDS-CRAM survey, which demonstrated that the majority of low-income households with an informal worker also have a CSG recipient (Bassier et al., 2020:4). The DPRU conducted comparative research comparing the progressivity of the CSG per child and the per caregiver, the COVID-19 grant and the post-October policies (Bhorat and Kohler, 2020). The research conducted by Bhorat and Köhler (2020), analyzed how an expansion of the existing grant system could alleviate poverty amongst informal workers and their households. The three grant options that were investigated were: (i) a top-up to the existing Old Age Pension grant (OAP); (ii) a top-up to the existing CSG; and (iii) the introduction of a new "Special covid-Grant" (Co-G) broadly targeting the unemployed and those in informal employment (Bhorat and Kohler, 2020:8). The policy question analyzed in the research concerned the extent to which expanding existing or introducing new social assistance programmes to compensate for the negative impact labour market shocks would have on household welfare (Bhorat and Kohler, 2020:10).

Chilenga-Butua (2022:13) asserted that civil society is not often afforded the space to contribute meaningfully to policymaking in South Africa, but during the social assistance policy-making process during the pandemic, the space for policymaking opened up for some institutions. One research institution interviewed stated,

"Some proposals that we put forward were adopted in some form. The pandemic was thus a unique opportunity in the policy space as 'there were lots of voices...that assisted with the decision making'" (Chilenga-Butua, 2022).

The submission of evidence-based research concurs with Court et al. (2006:33), that it allows CSOs to manipulate and shape the policy agenda, thus giving them value as prominent actors in policymaking, especially if the evidence produced is realistic and proposes attainable solutions to the identified problem (Court et al., 2006:33). Evidence-based decision-making is driven by empirical analysis of policy problems and they often include evidence based on impact, implementation, statistics, descriptive analysis and economic evidence (Young and Quinn, 2012:31). Therefore, CSOs attained the essential role, as identified by Diamond (1994:10) that civil society plays in information dissemination, by aiding citizens in the collective pursuit and defense of their interests and values. They also employed a lobbying strategy as a tool to pursue defense in the interests of the CSG beneficiaries.

4.5.3 Lobbying through Litigation

Lobbying through litigation occurred as a result of the Department of Basic Education closing and its refusal to act on the obligation of providing a school nutrition programme during the lockdown (Hendricks et al., 2020: iii). The Equal Education Law Centre and Section 27, among other CSGs, lobbied to persuade the department to resume the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) to ensure that learners had access to food while schools were closed (Section 27, 2020). Hendricks et al. (2020: i, iii) reported that in the Gauteng province, these organisations went as far as filing urgent papers in the North Gauteng High Court on Friday, 12 June 2020. This was done in a desperate attempt to address the dire situation of hunger where 9 million learners are not receiving food at school as the COVID-19 lockdown put a stop to their only meal for the day (Hendricks et al., 2020: i, iii). In addition to the National School Nutrition Programme case, a Gauteng High Court judgment affirmed that, even in an economic crisis, the government may only introduce regressive measures as a last resort after considering all other options and ensuring that children are the last to be affected (Hendricks et al., 2020: iii). The court further urged the department to resume the NSNP and improvise on the implementation plan to ensure that children had access to nutritious food as the lockdown intensively impacted the family income (Hendricks et al., 2020: i).

Courts are frequently asked to interpret and evaluate the meaning of acts and laws, as well as to examine the constitutionality of legislative and executive branch acts, and to declare them null and invalid if they are found to violate the Constitution (Anderson, 1997:68). Gen and Wright (2013:179) assert that litigation is the most direct method which may compel the courts to critically examine the advocate's argument and any applicable legislation. Therefore, litigation is often a part of an overall advocacy campaign designed to raise awareness on a particular issue or promote the rights of a disadvantaged population. Many groups or individuals who bring litigation also seek to convince others to join their cause, or to influence the government to change its laws, particularly when groups perceive that they do not influence the executive or legislative branches (Gen and Wright, 2013:180). Petitions were also evident as an advocacy tool aimed at bringing CSOs and individual citizens together to convince the government to advance the CSG during the lockdown.

4.5.4 Online Petitions

During lockdown level 5, Amandla.Mobi designed an online petition strategy to gain access to people's experiences with COVID-19 social protection hardships. Amandla.Mobi is an independent, community advocacy organisation with the primary objective to build a more just and people-powered *Mzansi* through initiatives that give Black people genuine power, with a concentration on low-income Black women in particular (Amandla.Mobi, 2020). Amandla.Mobi (2020) stated:

"Our work is to connect people so that our collective voices have maximum impact and power to hold political and corporate interests to account for and advance solutions that build a more just and people-powered Mzansi. Together for justice!"

Masweneng, from the *Times Live* newspaper (online article), reported that the Children's Institute organised an online petition campaign in persuading the government to urgently increase child support grants by R500 for six months and received 557,707 out of a target of 600,000 signatures at the beginning of April 2020 (Masweneng, 2020). Public participation in policy-making forms an important part of democracy, and thus, Section 17 of the RSA Constitution approves many ways to promote public participation (RSA, 1996). One of these ways is by submitting a petition. Many advocacy groups decide to incorporate a public constituent into their campaign because they believe that public or external pressure on decision-makers is necessary to obtain outcomes (Scribner and Crosby, 1997:5).

It is well known that online petitions have been used by various NGOs to demonstrate to the government the concerns around a particular issue. Despite being viewed as a last resort for getting attention and assistance, filing a petition is a useful strategy to influence public policy (People's Assembly, 2020). Media campaigns and petitions were found to be an effective technique to gather the public's views and ideas on specific concerns of the COVID-19 lockdown and the pandemic itself, particularly in the absence or closure of other participation channels. Some of the respondents on the Children's Institute Mandla.Mobi's petition for the CSG top-up by R500 stated their reasons for signing the petition:

"I signed because when lockdown started, we were retrenched from work therefore social grant is currently my only source of income."

"Am not working since there's lockdown"

"Too many jobs have been lost leaving families with little support" (Amandla.Mobi, 2020).

Increased prices of essential goods prices were also a concern:

"Many people lost jobs during the lockdown, and food prices are high".

"I signed because I saw that there is a need for the increase of a social grant as livelihoods of underprivileged people would be affected much by this lockdown".

"Social grant in most South Africans is what put food on their table as we have a high rate of poverty".

"With the uncertainty of COVID-19, we do not know how life will return to normal after the lockdown. With the economy heading into recession -Some single mothers will return to work only to find out that they are retrenched. Demand and supply of goods and services that was increased before and during the lockdown, those recipients of Sassa had to use of the Sassa money to purchase these goods and services since the increase in food prices were beyond their control" (Amandla.Mobi, 2020).

The R500 top-up of the CSG was also highlighted as a major constitutional obligation to the government within its available resources and it appeared that the beneficiaries were deprived of certain basic services during the lockdown. The Budget Justice Coalition (2020:2), in the "Submission to the Committee on Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs", argued that:

"accesses to sufficient food and relief from economic hardship are fundamental rights entrenched in the South African Constitution alongside the right to access healthcare services and education."

Some of the reasons given for signing the petition were based on the entitlement to these human rights:

"Every human being deserves sustenance. It is the duty of our government to assist those who need it".

"Every child deserves to know they are not forgotten by the government. There are communities the government hasn't even been to yet and children are going hungry because only certain areas are being catered for. At least with a raised amount, the parents should be responsible for feeding their children, especially in rural communities".

"It is a child's constitutional right to be protected from hunger and poverty" (Amandla.Mobi, 2020).

Children were deemed vulnerable and prone to level 5 lockdown measures:

"Our children are the most vulnerable to the consequences of an economy in lockdown"

"The [one] who earn grants are vulnerable under normal circumstances, during this lockdown period they are the first and the most ones to suffer. So many households in SA are food insecure; women and children are the most vulnerable. We urge our government to assist in the delivery of this most basic human right".

"Children are a fragile gift, they can't protect themselves from anything, and at a time such as this those who depended on school feeding schemes are starving".

"Because I'm a socialist and it hurts me to see there's no transparency in our government and we now face inequality" (Amandla.Mobi, 2020).

The beneficiaries also stated that the CSG top-up was a good policy option:

"Child support grant is indeed one of the most powerful ways of helping South Africans to support their poor families, it is the only benefit that can reach almost every household in SA."

"R500 will go a long way, some kids used to eat breakfast and lunch at school now that they are home it's a challenge to feed them Three meals a day".

"To ensure that children living under the care of unemployed caregivers or guardians are fed. This is in response to the closure of schools where some of these children are recipients of feeding schemes".

"Innocent children will be suffering cos President said each recipient will collect R500 from June to October but they doing something else think about the children whose parents or parent can't go to work to provide 4 them" (Amandla.Mobi, 2020).

The focus of public participation in this petition was to urge the government to take into account that CSG beneficiaries, particularly children as most susceptible to the unwanted or unexpected effects of its mitigation measures when developing the COVID-19 response initiatives (Van Bruwaene, 2020:1). Additionally, Masweneng's (2020) article in *Dispatch Live*, reported that the idea of getting the participating CSG beneficiaries in the petition to state reasons for signing it was to get descriptive knowledge of how they were affected and how the R500 increase would be the best policy option to assist them in coping during the hard lockdown. This notion of getting beneficiaries to sign and state reasons for participating in the petition also resonates with the CSOs' role argued by Davids (2014:65): that they employ participatory and bottom-up approaches in influencing stages of public policy-making or implementation programmes.

Davids (2014:65) asserts that democracy involves being a part of the decision-making process and that advocacy is the voice of civil society. He also argued that organising and preparing a set of strategically defined and articulated activities is of utmost importance for addressing specific issues through practical changes in programmes and policies, especially at the grass-roots level. Parsons (1995:467) affirms that the process of implementing policy should be centred on the target populations and those who provide services. With the same sentiment, Davids (2014:65) argued that NGOs, as part of civil society, are useful in communicating and mobilising disadvantaged communities and assisting the targeted population to participate in matters affecting them and thus gain control over the quality of their lives. Gen and Wright (2013:165) attest to this idea of grassroots advocacy, which affirms engaging individual citizens in an advocacy effort. Numerous submissions by CSOs

were also made to the President and pertinent departments as an advocacy strategy during the level 5 lockdown.

4.5.5 Lobbying through Submissions of Letters

In South Africa, civil society involvement is enshrined in the Constitution and is practised at many levels of government, including local ward councils, in participatory budgeting and development planning processes, and in written and live processes for gathering public input on Bills and Acts (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2020). The two letters of appeal are discussed next including the letter to the President and the letter to the Ministers of Finance and Social Development, and Women, these letters were sent by the prominent CSOs to the respective authorities.

(i) Letter to the President

According to Heller (2009:125), civil society is an essential part of democratic deepening, because it allows for the efficient exercise of citizens' civil and political rights. In a letter submitted to the President, the C-19 Peoples Coalition (2020) urged the government at the upcoming cabinet meeting to resolve to increase the child support grant by R500 to help people who had lost their income due to the COVID-19 lockdown. The letter stated that:

- The lockdown is important to contain the virus, but it will increase poverty and unemployment
- Pre-regulation food price increases have swallowed families' budgets and forced shoppers to buy less nutritious food
- Social grants are an extremely effective mechanism for protecting children and families against the effects of poverty (C-19 People's Coalition, 2020).

In the Daily Mverick article, organisations also urged the government to work with civil society during the crisis, saying that they understand and best know communities:

"Government has received two letters from a broad platform of civil society organisations, community organisations, and academic institutions. All the evidence is there. The government does have the money and can make R40 billion available over the coming six months. This will reach 13 million grantees. Despite having had all this information and widespread consensus across society, the government has not yet made any announcement. We call on the Cabinet to immediately approve and announce this urgent measure. Immediate relief is now essential" (Ellis, 2020).

The Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian in Ellis (2020), affirmed that

"C-19 People's Coalition is advocating that the most important action government can take right now is to top up the child support grant by R500".

Ruth Hall from the Institute for Poverty, Land, and Agrarian organisation stated that, while the proposal to top up the CSG with R500 has restrictions because the money will not reach

non-citizens, it appears to be the best solution in the current emergency because the government can reach 80% of households most negatively impacted by the lockdown by increasing the child grant (PLAAS, 2020). The key issue was whether people would be able to support themselves and their livelihoods. Moreover, to alleviate traffic problems at large retail stores, in taxis, and at social grant payment lines, in their appeal, the C-19 Peoples Coalition also suggested that the government subsidise a chosen group of extremely nutritious foods and encourage SASSA to reorganise its payment system (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020).

(ii) Letter to the Ministers of Finance and Social Development, and Women

On the 27 April 2020, CSOs submitted a letter to the ministers of finance, social development, and women concerning the social grant component of the disaster relief package. The letter raised concerns about the social assistance package announced by the President. They challenged the Cabinet to rethink its decision on how grants would be distributed, taking into account the urgent need for a pro-poor approach that would safeguard children, the unemployed, and the informal sector. The letter emphasised the need for rapid reform of the package, of its unfairness to women and children and that it further reinforces the inequalities.

According to the Budget Justice Coalition (2020:2), the government's current economic policies are discriminatory to South Africa's poor and working-class, focusing less on human rights, especially of women, children, and refugees, and more on protecting corporate interests. The Institute for Economic Justice (2020) reported that modelled projections demonstrated that, given the recent increases announced for other grants, attaching the R500 CSG increases to the caregiver rather than per child would result in "2 million" more households living below the food poverty level. Hall, in a *Daily Maverick* article, attests to the view that topping up the child support grant with R500 would mean that 13 million grant holders would double their grants and would substitute lost wages, adding that,

"It is the most pro-poor and pro-women initiative we can do at this stage... It will tide people through this emergency period" (Estelle, 2020).

In backing the CSG increase per child, CSOs emphasised the effectiveness of the strategy as a mechanism when compared to other alternatives, stating that:

"The original proposal, to increase every CSG, was not only to protect the children who receive them but to use the CSG as a conduit to protect the poorest households. For this reason, every CSG needed to be increased substantially, as the starting value of the CSG was already well below the per capita food poverty line" (C-19 Coalition, 2020:9)

Additionally, it was acknowledged that although the CSG increase alone would not reach all households who are living in extreme poverty, its poverty targeting was better compared to any of the current social awards. It was also acknowledged that any additional grants,

including a new COVID-19 grant, would take longer to establish and carry out at scale. In closing, the CSOs advised that unemployed caregivers who receive CSGs on behalf of children and who are not eligible for UIF, should remain eligible for the newly implemented COVID-19 grant. However, Simbi (2013:53), in a research study, has argued that advocating through submitting letters is not effective in most cases, as the person to whom the letter is directed may choose to either ignore it or respond to it. An alternative view is that by submitting written submissions to specific political offices and or public officials, interest groups and individual citizens can also engage in the policy-making process by expressing their preferences, interests, and or complaints regarding specific subjects (Cloete, 1998:147). As asserted by Diamond (1994:7-8), civil society is a "vital element for containing the power of democratic governments, checking their potential abuses and violations of the law and subjecting them to scrutiny".

The theme of the next section is derived from the conceptual framework of the study. It notes the guidelines of advocacy to understand the nature of advocacy and the motivations behind CSOs' advocacy work around the CSG during level 5 lockdown. The guidelines are discussed as interconnected to the C-19 Peoples Coalition organisation, one of the prominent coalitions that emerged in response to the COVID-19 virus and lockdown.

4.6 COVID-19 PEOPLE'S COALITION AND ADVOCACY GUIDELINES

The COVID-19 People's Coalition is an organisation formed by a group of civil society members who wanted to make sure that South Africa's response to the COVID-19 crisis originated in social justice and democratic principles. The COVID-19 People's Coalition also wanted to give special attention to the most vulnerable people during the lockdown and the pandemic itself (C-19 People's Coalition, 2020). One of their mandates is that:

"The C19 People's Coalition is committed to ensuring that the South African response to the COVID-19 virus is effective, just, equitable, and meets the needs of the most marginal in our unequal country" (C-19 People's Coalition, 2020).

By their nature, CSOs create a productive ground to promote and support the rights of every citizen and enable them to articulate their concerns (Diamond, 1994:10). Diamond (1994:8) has emphasised that CSOs' advocacy role helps to articulate the needs of the vulnerable, particularly those who have historically been marginalised by the state, such as women, children, and people with disabilities (Diamond, 1994:8). Also articulated by MenEngage (2013:8), policy advocacy seeks to "establish new policies, improve existing policies and/or; and challenge pieces of legislation that impact negatively on particular individuals or groups" (MenEngage, 2013:8). In relation to advocacy purposes, one of the C-19 People's Coalition's objectives is to:

"Further, exercise pressure considering the urgency of the situation. There is a point when "quite a diplomacy" reaches its limits and stronger pressure needs to take place, considering a broad and great majority lacks the channels to voice concerns and urgent needs" (C-19 People's Coalition, 2020:3).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:193) outlined advocacy guidelines that may be useful in enabling advocacy groups to achieve their desired purposes. These are identifying allies, articulating priorities, crafting the message to be communicated, and identifying who needs to be influenced.

4.6.1 Identifying Allies

During level 5 lockdown, the C-19 People's Coalition was made up of 245 civil society organisations that included community structures, trade unions, informal workers' organisations, civics, social movements, rural groups, national and provincial NGOs across all social sectors, frontline responders such as community health workers and shelters, migrants' and refugees' organisations, public interest law firms and faith-based organisations (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020). In strengthening advocacy, creating coalitions may be beneficial to groups in achieving their goals, whether through permanent or temporary alliances with different organisations, this strategy might be advantageous to get support and persuade government officials (Sharma, 1997:88). The coalition was mostly made up of human rights groups representing the interests of the marginalised. Therefore, the C-19 People's Coalition was established to exert pressure on the government to implement fair social relief measures for South Africans who were most at risk during the pandemic (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020). Once the advocacy allies have been identified, the focus should then shift to setting priorities to achieve the identified mission.

4.6.2 Articulating Priorities

The newly formed civil society organisation, the C-19 People's Coalition, wanted to make sure that South Africa's solution to the COVID-19 problem is founded on social justice and democratic values. It went on to specify its area of interest as:

"to prioritise those who are most vulnerable, who face the pandemic with hunger, weakened immune systems, and poor access to housing, health care, and social safety nets" (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020).

According to Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:196), advocacy groups must first determine which themes and topics are significant and then choose which are essential, as not all can be included in an action plan. Identifying the target population and area of interest enables advocacy direction, thus making it easier to identify the pertinent stakeholders to influence. Articulating priorities further empower advocacy groups in crafting relevant arguments and participating in an informed manner.

4.6.3 Crafting the Message to be Communicated

The C-19 Coalition emphasised the message to be communicated through the various media campaigns that it implemented. Several examples of raising CSG through campaigns are #PayTheGrant, Amandla.Mobi and the Programme of Action Campaign, which show that coalition building was innovative in improving the chances of success and enhancing the capacity of the government to promote their social assistance policy priorities in that

precarious time (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020). Having numerous campaigns emphasising one, or a similar message, pressures government to launch an effective intervention to solve the identified problem (Brinkerhoff and Crosby, 2002:198). It also demonstrates the importance of having advocacy groups that share policy concerns and agree to cooperate by building coalitions to convince policymakers to listen to their arguments, as representatives of the marginalised groups.

4.6.4 Identify Who Needs to be Influenced

Through numerous submissions to the President and ministers of pertinent departments, the C-19 Coalition held the government accountable for achieving the progressive realisation of children's rights through creating reasonable legislative and other measures within its available resources during the precarious time of the COVID-19 lockdown (Hendricks et al., 2020). For a greater chance of ensuring that the message advocated reaches the target, Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) emphasised the vitality of understanding the decision-making process and the stakeholders involved. However, understanding the process during lockdown was not simple, but identifying pertinent stakeholders, departments, and government bodies was much more enabling for CSOs to advocate and hold them accountable for the constitutional mandates and their roles. Knowing which stakeholders to persuade became evident through numerous submissions made to the liable ministers and their departments. As asserted by Diamond (1994:7-8), CSOs join forces to perform the watchdog role, and public officials are subject to greater scrutiny (Diamond, 1994:7-8). Diamond (1994:8) argued that this function of CSOs of holding government accountable and checking potential abuses of constitutional obligations particularly helps those who are traditionally marginalised by the state, such as women, children, and the disabled.

The objective of discussing the next section is to explore the changes that were proposed by CSOs around CSG during level 5 lockdown. Therefore, the next section discusses and answers the question: What changes did the CSOs propose around the CSG during lockdown level 5?

4.7 CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS' PROPOSALS FOR CHILD SUPPORT GRANTTOP-UP DURING LOCKDOWN

Exploring CSOs' proposals for the CSG top-up during lockdown stems from this study's research question, with the underlying principle of exploring policy alternatives that were proposed by these organisations on the CSG programme. Civil society advocacy for the rights of the marginalised and making suggestions for potential policy changes to ensure that the policy objectives are upheld even in difficult circumstances (Sharma, 1997:31) is known as policy advocacy. It is emphasized in this study as part of civil society's participation in the implementation of the CSG programme and their efforts in the reform and initiatives of this grant before and during COVID-19 level 5.

A large group of researchers and advocates located at the Children's Institute at the University of Cape Town demanded an urgently needed and immediate increase in the CSG

of R500 for the upcoming six months, claiming that a R500 increase was necessary to lessen the harm that COVID-19 would do to children, families, and the economy. The Children's Institute (2020), further reported that the CSG is the simplest and most efficient means to send money to millions of impoverished homes that would otherwise experience food insecurity and crippling poverty. Bassier et al. (2020) stated,

"Delaying a top-up to the CSG endangers not only the livelihoods of those households which will be worst hit by the lockdown but will also undermine the lockdown itself as households are forced to continue working and trading to survive" (Bassier et al., 2020).

Furthermore, CSOs lauded the CSG feasibility to extend towards supporting a whole household, not only children as beneficiaries, as by far the fastest approach to provide financial assistance to millions of disadvantaged households, including those that depend on the informal sector and are "ineligible for financial relief protection through the UIF (Unemployment Insurance Fund) or TERS (Temporary Employment Relief Scheme)". It would not only protect children from extreme poverty and hunger (Hendricks et al, 2020: iv).

De Vries (2016:189) argued that CSOs do not only want to place the problem high on the policy agenda, but they also strive to get their specific problem framing accepted by influencing public opinion, politicians and policymakers. Notable instances of confusion and misunderstanding around the CSG top-up led CSOs and the public to question the logic of the government's decisions. The demand for clarity around the announced CSG package depicts a lack of transparency. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) assert that public participation seeks to increase support, legitimacy, transparency, and responsiveness of a particular policy through expanded information sharing. Tugendhaft et al. (2020) argue that even though many of the efforts made to combat the pandemic and lessen its impact are evidence-based, when the validity of the decision-making process is disputed it causes low levels of citizen trust in the adoption of the majority of regulations and policies.

Broughton (2020), in a *GroundUp* article titled "Covid-19: Increase in social grants not good enough, say critics", reported that:

"The organisations said that the R500 per caregiver was a way of appearing generous while reducing the disaster relief budget through a saving of R13 billion ... If this was the intention, then the decision is untenable. We need to understand the rationale for this."

Activists called on the government to revise the child support grant increment allocation. Civil society groups specifically demanded that the increased CSG be linked to every grant payment, claiming that this is what the President's announcement at first implied. As a result of this, the pro-poor approach was put forth and received widespread support from academic and civil society groups and the public through a petition that gained close to 600,000 signatures (C-19 Coalition, 2020:8).

The C-19 People Coalition (2020) attests to the caregiver grant as punitive to the CSG beneficiaries. They stated that:

"The child support grant in South Africa applies a 'follow-the-child' method: it is paid to the child's primary caregiver. To no longer 'follow the child' – the grantee – is to divert from this important understanding that caregivers are often grandmothers or women's family members (not only biological parents). It would also provide much less relief to the burden those caregivers – predominantly women – are being forced to endure during this pandemic" (C-19 People Coalition, 2020).

Therefore, CSOs urged the government to include the CSG increase in every grant given to safeguard children, the unemployed, and the informal sector and prevent unemployed caregivers from being denied the COVID-19 grant (Msomi, 2020). Broughton (2020), in a *Mail and Guardian* article, stated:

"The R500 increase is either a caregiver grant or a child support grant. If it is a child support grant, then the adult (caregiver) should also be eligible for the Covid-19 grant. And if it is a caregiver grant, then why is the child support grant not being increased?" (Broughton, 2020).

One of the organisations interviewed, Chilenga-Butau (2022:15), affirmed that government changes around the CSG top-up did not align with the initial plan between government and civil society, stating that:

"What we settled on was R500 for the child support grant...[and] a new unemployed person grant. We said, don't touch the pension, don't touch the pension, the disability grant, any other grant; it's money down the drain".

De Varies et al. (2016:200) assert that different perspectives on policy initiatives make policymaking difficult, and policymakers frequently represent one of the stakeholder groups. In a press conference on 29 April, the Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu, explained that the government could not afford an increase of R500 per child per month and it would have restricted other social response interventions from being implemented. An article in *Business Day* by Paton (2020), quoted Minister Zulu:

"I wish to acknowledge all the proposals and input we received on how we should augment the social grants. One of the key contributions was the call for an increase in the child support grant by R500 per child. While I acknowledge that all the proposals were sound and well-motivated, we were unfortunately not able to provide the necessary funding to accommodate every one of the proposals" (Paton, 2020).

Hall (2020), in the *Daily Maverick*, argued that although the social grant increments and amendments were seen to have been crucial in raising the income of millions of households nationwide, they were only implemented as a result of advocacy by CSOs and research organisations. This indicates the impact of the CSOs on policy change, as Heller (2009:125) asserts: civil society is an essential part of the democratic deepening since it allows for the

efficient exercise of citizens' civil and political rights. In this instance, civil society is seen as a necessary component of democracy and policymaking. Davids (2014:65) identified NGOs as civil society organisations well known for their contributions to the policy process through their involvement in advocacy, decision-making, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation as well as promoting public participation. Such contributions enable CSOs to manipulate and shape the policy agenda, especially when CSOs' propositions are attainable solutions to the identified problem (Court et al., 2006:32). Therefore, informed decisions are made regarding policy change.

The objective of discussing the next section is to explore the changes that were implemented by the South African government to the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown. The next section discusses and answers the question: What changes did the South African government implement to the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown?

4.8 CHANGES IMPLEMENTED BY THE GOVERNMENT ON THE CHILD SUPPORT GRANT PROGRAMME DURING THE LOCKDOWN

It is crucial to explore changes effected by the government to the CSG during lockdown to assess whether the government took the CSG propositions into consideration when making decisions around social assistance response initiatives. Thus, careful exploration of the role played by the government in implementing changes to the CSG programme during the lockdown follows. On 21 April 2020, President Ramaphosa declared that all current social grants would be increased and a new R350 SRD grant would be launched to help the nation's most vulnerable families (RSA, 2020). The topping up of social assistance grants was one of the efforts aimed at assisting the vulnerable in coping with the financial difficulties brought on by the lockdown and its regulations.

4.8.1 Grant Top-Ups

Increments to existing social grants were essential in enabling the government to use the current systems to give financial assistance to those who needed it the most (C-19 Peoples Coalition, 2020:9). Implementing the increments to the existing social grants affirms what Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:25) identified as policy legitimatisation as a significant factor influencing policy implementation. However, before a policy can be implemented, decision-makers must first accept it as legitimate. Thus, President Ramaphosa announced the additional COVID-19 economic and social relief measures, specified in his speech:

"We will direct R50 billion towards relieving the plight of those who are most desperately affected by the coronavirus. This means that child support grant beneficiaries will receive an extra R300 in May and from June to October they will receive an additional R500 each month. All other grant beneficiaries will receive an extra R250 per month for the next six months. In addition, a special Covid-19 Social Relief of Distress grant of R350 a month for the next 6 months will be paid to individuals who are currently unemployed and do not receive any other form of a social grant or UIF payment" (RSA, 2020).

Following the president's announcement, the minister of the DSD elaborated on the disbursement of the grant top-up. She emphasised that SASSA would continue to make sure that everyone eligible for social grants received them without delay because the payment of all social grants continued to be an essential safety net for the underprivileged with no other income during this period (DSD, 2020). However, Cloete and De Coning (2011:148) have affirmed that the most pertinent variable for successful implementation is administrative capacity and other abilities to do the job.

4.8.2 Child Support Grant Top-Up

During the lockdown, topping up the CSG entailed:

"Increase of R300 for the Child Support Grant to be paid in (only) May 2020 per child. Thereafter from June – October 2020, an R500 grant will be paid to caregivers of the Children on the Child Support Grant. The amount per child will revert to R440 per month from June. All existing caregivers will automatically qualify and receive this benefit along with the existing CSG monthly benefit. All other existing social grants (are increased by R250 per month from May to October 2020)" (DSD, 2020).

There were efforts and engagements from relevant stakeholders to ensure payments of the grants. Before the announcement of social grant top-ups, SASSA had discussions with the relevant parties to find a workable solution for paying social grants early to alleviate congestion at retail stores and other pay points (DSD, 2020). The most important agreement was that banks would drastically lower their fees for recipients of social grants to give them access to more pay points where they could collect their grants during the COVID-19 lockdown. These interventions and improvements were to support maintaining social distance in queuing at bank branches and retail stores (The Banking Association of South Africa, 2020). This reflects what Cloete and De Coning (2011:150) contend, that clients and coalitions are significant implementation variables that require the integration and interaction of governments, the private sector, civil society, and communities at large, for successful policy implementation. Furthermore, the negotiations between prominent implementing departments and agencies resonate with Cloete and De Coning's (2011:145) assertion that the success of policy implementation is strongly dependent on the major commitment of the actors accountable for it and their understanding of the value of participatory decision-making.

The South African Social Security Agency introduced staggered payment dates for the recipients of different types of grants to avoid the over-crowding at pay points, post offices, and ATMs (SASSA, 2020). Topping up existing social grants as a policy option was aimed at ensuring that the most vulnerable South Africans were covered to immediately alleviate the consequences of the lockdown: hunger and unemployment (DSD, 2020). Thus, to capture data, SASSA uses the Social Security Pension System, to capture and verify data, and for decision-making regarding grants, both to approve or to reject a grant, ICT equipment and human resources furniture and other infrastructure (SASSA, 2020/21). Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:85) have cautioned that for effective programme implementation, partnerships

are essential to attain shared objectives through the joint efforts of multiple actors, but where they adhere to their respective role to ensure the realisation of the defined objective. To accommodate beneficiaries to ensure effective implementation, adjustments to transport availability were also made. Under the level 5 lockdown, which aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19, public modes of transport were allowed to operate from only 05:00 – 09:00 am and from 16:00 – 20:00 (RSA, 2020). It was clear that further changes in transport operations had to be made, given that the CSG has the highest beneficiary population among all grants (RSA, 2020). The minister of transport announced:

"Effective from tomorrow, 30 March 2020 until Friday, 3 April 2020, buses, and taxis will be permitted to operate from 05:00 until 20:00 to order to cater to the transportation needs of society's most vulnerable", (RSA, 2020).

However, the grant recipients were required to carry their Identity Documents and SASSA cards when travelling on public transport, to assist law enforcement efforts (RSA, 2020). Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:85) have argued that socio-economic problems cannot only be solved by the government alone, but instead different pertinent partners are essential and required. This view is shared by Parsons (1995:497), who classified something like the delivery of the CSG through a sectoral mix as a complex pattern, because there are multiple players involved with particular roles and responsibilities in delivering a service. Moreover, Cloete and De Coning (2011:147) have cautioned that it is crucial for actors involved in the implementation programme to maintain dedication and commitment to a programme throughout implementation, anything less being damaging for the programme itself. Hence, the efforts and engagement that took place between relevant stakeholders to ensure payments of the grants during the lockdown, despite challenges CSOs experienced in their efforts to advocate for the CSG increase during the lockdown.

4.9 SUMMARY OF CSOS' ROLES AND ACTIVITIES ON THE CSG PROGRAMME

NAME OF CSOS	ROLES	ACTIVITIES
Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS)	Influencing the Child Support Grant Programme Implementation	Initiated the Grants Awareness Campaign to encourage higher CSG uptake, identify barriers to CSG access and to formulate methods to address them in the initial stage of the CSG implementation.
Black Sash, the Institute for Democracy in Africa (IDASA), the Alliance for Children's	Influencing the Child Support Grant Programme Implementation Evidence-based research	Made numerous submissions on the implementation of the CSG to Parliament pertaining administration, age restrictions, required documents, the means test, and the grant's actual delivery methods

Entitlement to Social Security (ACCESS), and the Children's Institute		
Black Sash	<p>Influencing the Child Support Grant Programme Implementation</p> <p>Watchdog</p> <p>Evidence-based research</p>	<p>Influenced the extension of the CSG from 14 to 18 years- using placards demonstrations, attended committee meetings, made written and oral submissions to the national and provincial legislatures</p> <p>Community Based Monitoring Programme- constantly monitoring events on the ground, engage important stakeholders (DSD and SASSA) to ensure realisation of social security right</p> <p>Hands off Our Grants Campaign- to examine how social grants are implemented and how social assistance policy is implemented in local communities</p>
COVID-19 People's Coalition	<p>Advocacy</p> <p>Watchdog and holding government accountable</p>	<p>Advocated for democratic valued and social justice based COVID-19 solutions.</p> <p>Lobbying through Submissions of Letters;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to the Ministers of Finance and Social Development, and Women: <p>To rethink its decision on how grants would be distributed, implement a pro-poor approach that would safeguard children, the unemployed, and the informal sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter to the President: <p>To increase the child support grant by R500 to help people who had lost their income due to the COVID-19 lockdown.</p> <p>Campaigns:</p>

		#PayTheGrant and Programme of Action
Children's Institute	<p>Influencing the Child Support Grant Programme Implementation</p> <p>Advocacy</p> <p>Watchdog</p> <p>Evidence-based research</p>	<p>Influenced the extension of the CSG from 14 to 18 years- using placards demonstrations, attended committee meetings, made written and oral submissions to the national and provincial legislatures</p> <p>Published several advocacy briefs and held webinar series to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to gain access to people's experiences with COVID-19 social protection hardships • to urge the government to prioritise children in its COVID-19 response and recovery strategies <p>Proposed immediate increase in the CSG of R500 per child for six months.</p> <p>Created AmandlaAwethu.Mobi- organised an online petition campaign in persuading the government to urgently increase child support grants by R500 for six months during Lockdown</p>
Dullah Omar Institute	Advocacy and holding government accountable	Advocated for public engagement with legislatures during lockdown using electronic media technologies
Democratic Works Foundation	Innovative	<p>Connected the organisations with decision-makers and public representatives in provincial legislatures, facilitated their access to national and provincial networks, and helped CSOs amplify their views during lockdown</p> <p>Initiated a virtual consultative forum for CSOs to improve the function of the legislatures, thus provide an avenue for citizen participation during lockdown</p>

Development Policy Research Unit and the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit	Evidence based research	Conducted comparative research comparing the progressivity of the CSG per child and per caregiver, the COVID-19 grant and the post-October policies. Recommended that the CSG is the simplest and most efficient mechanism to reach millions of impoverished homes during lockdown
The Equal Education Law Centre and Section 27	Lobbying	Lobbied through litigation to persuade the department to resume the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP) to ensure that learners had access to food while schools were closed
Studies in Poverty and Inequality Institute (SPII)	Advocacy	Advocated for the adjustment of lockdowns curfews, and other emergency restrictions and for CSOs to be included in planning for relief responses and in the design of lockdown regulations.

The next section discusses and answers the question: What were the experiences of the CSOs in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

4.10 ADVOCACY CHALLENGES

Part of this study's objective was to examine the policy advocacy challenges that hindered the influence of CSOs on the CSG programme. The next section discusses these challenges faced by CSO such as limited advocacy capacity, lack of response and action from relevant stakeholders, the digital divide and lack of data, lack of public awareness of online petitions, and lack of communication. Discussing advocacy challenges is underpinned by the objective of this study to explore CSOs' experiences in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown.

4.10.1 Limited Advocacy Capacity

Runji (2020), in a *Daily Maverick* article, asserts that the implementation of the lockdown in South Africa to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus proved the vitality of placing civil society at the centre of any democratic discussion to advocate for the rights of the vulnerable and to represent the concerns of the community it works with. However, there was limited advocacy capacity due to the absence of avenues of activism usually available for civil society to participate and influence policies such as protests and demonstrations, town hall

meetings, visiting constituency offices and having direct contact with relevant stakeholders and policymakers because gatherings were prohibited (Runji, 2020).

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65) caution that interest groups should avoid falling into the trap of believing that the legal and constitutional processes are the only ones that are followed. Additionally, Cloete and De Coning (2011:7) emphasised the need of prioritizing programme beneficiaries and collaborating with interest groups to ensure the effectiveness of the implemented programme. Jobson et al. (2021) reported that:

"In the early days of the pandemic, civil society was absent from the consultative processes, as medical experts, scientists, and the private sector were prioritised. Even in the establishment of entities such as the Solidarity Fund, the government turned primarily to the private sector rather than to disaster relief entities or civil society experts".

Although the media and civil society have been instrumental in exposing corruption in South Africa through rigorous investigation and reporting work, given the lack of transparency in governance, the ability to effectively monitor procurement during a state of disaster was incredibly challenging (Budget Justice Coalition, 2020).

4.10.2 Lack of Response from the Relevant Stakeholders

Civil society also had difficulties in getting a response from the government and the departments to whom they had issued submissions. The Budget Justice Coalition wrote to the National Treasury on 9 April asking many questions about the role of civil society, transparency, and public participation in decision-making processes on the impact of COVID-19 on public finances. However, they found that forms of participation were not accommodative:

"Treasury's closed media briefing on 14 April didn't answer the majority of our questions. Since the BJC was not given access to the briefing, we did not have the opportunity to put our questions directly to the minister and his team" (Budget Justice Coalition, 2020).

Furthermore, blocking civil society engagement reflects a lack of respect for transparency and public participation. While the mechanisms for participation are developed, it is transparency itself that encourages public engagement, because it is still a constitutional requirement (Budget Justice Coalition, 2020).

4.10.3 Lack of Public Awareness of Online Petitions

The lack of public awareness around the petition process and the non-attendance of key stakeholders at hearings, plagued delays in processing petitions (Peoples Assembly, 2019). According to an article in *The Citizen* from 2020, the Amandla.Mobi petition on urgently increasing the CSG by R500 sparked conflicting reactions on social media. The majority of people claimed that households were already receiving adequate assistance and that the

government was giving food parcels during the lockdown. Most online petitions however, fail to reach their goals and gather enough signatures to have an impact (Berg, 2017). However, Masweneng (2020) in a *Dispatch Live* newspaper article reported that the campaign to persuade the government to urgently increase child support grants by R500 for six months received 557,707 out of a target of 600,000 signatures. Furthermore, Moosa (2020), in the *Mail and Guardian*, identified the language barrier as a hindrance to the online petition, he reported that in campaigning for social assistance reform through online petitioning "...most South Africans without the means to sign petitions in English or to ensure their opinion is heard by the elected representatives, remain excluded". Wright (2012) argued that the success of an online petition appears to depend on media attention, highlighting the significance of actively securing media attention before starting a petition

4.10.4 The Digital Divide and Lack of Data

The lack of access to technological facilities and generally low levels of technological literacy is cited as one of the challenges that result in the unwillingness to adopt electronic technology infrastructure and face the developmental challenges that this notion causes, particularly, for developing nations (Cloete and De Coning, 2011:159). The lockdown forced everyone to rely almost entirely on digital platforms overnight (More and Dutschke, 2021). In South Africa, however, not everyone has access to internet platforms for an alternate form of advocacy, due to the inequalities. Methods for reaching out moved online, making it difficult for CSOs and research organisations to access relevant participants on the cause and to gain momentum, since the focus was on the pandemic (Sangonet Pulse, 2020).

The study by Adelle and Haywood (2021:22) indicated that access to technological platforms and enabling gadgets became a barrier for CSOs to access the target population and to communicate with each other. Access to data was also highlighted as a contributing factor hindering participation, as online platforms are data-heavy. One of the CSOs interviewed stated that:

"Zoom also became an important platform for communication but is data heavy: "There's a lot of people who don't attend [a zoom meeting]. They will save up money to get data to watch the recording... I haven't found a way of getting past that technology barrier yet, to be able to include everybody" (Adelle and Haywood, 2021:22).

According to the Dullah Omar Institute (2020:12), people who do not have access to stable internet connections and data, still require planning to make the necessary arrangements. Additionally, data and air time are expensive in South Africa and the coverage is still uneven in many areas (especially in townships and rural areas) some of these organisations would normally have relied on free Wi-Fi from the public libraries and other facilities that were now closed (Adelle and Haywood, 2021:22).

4.10.5 Lack of Communication

Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002:65) argue that part of the challenges faced by CSOs is the possibilities associated with the fact that policymakers may restrict the information that the general public has access to. Seekings (2020), in a *Ground Up* article, reported that:

"under the lockdown, it has been difficult to get information on what the national government has been doing. There has been a severe lack of transparency".

A research report by the Dullar Omar Institute, monitored access to information on committee meetings when Parliament resumed its work remotely, towards the end of April 2020. The study reported that lack of communication and access to information was marked as a major contributing factor hindering civil society participation. Brinkerhoff and Crosby (2002) have argued that access to accurate and timely information promotes more effective participation of people with whom they work in decisions that affect their lives. However, during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown effective participation was hindered. Furthermore, the Dullar Omar Institute (2020) argued that:

"Providing notice of only one day, or even two to three days significantly limits people's ability to observe or participate in committee meetings" (Dullar Omar Institute, 2020).

Meeting cancellations, regardless of whether they were arranged online, harm participation, and individuals with fewer resources feel those negative consequences more acutely (Dullar Omar Institute, 2020). In the instance of cancelled meetings where participants have made plans to attend, the plans and any resources used to make them are rendered null and void (Wright, 2018).

4.11 CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 level 5 lockdown regulations fundamentally impacted the realisation of fundamental human rights, and as a result, the CSG beneficiaries suffered much of the damage. Generally, there is a link between the CSG and the improvement in the livelihood of beneficiaries. However, extreme events like the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown exacerbated their underlying vulnerabilities to loss of income, food insecurity, child nutrition, and other deprivations. The CSG was identified as an efficient method to distribute income relief to the most vulnerable, yet there were gaps in the delivery of the grant, lack of transport to collect the grant, and confusion on the staggered dates to access the grant hindering its execution. Furthermore, the level 5 lockdown regulations resulted in the closure of invited spaces of participation that needed face-to-face interaction, such as parliamentary, the provincial legislatures, and ward committees, which enable government, civil society, or the public to participate in the decision-making process. However, invented spaces of participation such as media campaigns, evidence-based research, online petitions, lobbying through litigation, and submission of letters were utilised by CSOs to pressure the government to top up the CSG and for the public to contribute to the design of social assistance response policy. Furthermore, advocacy guidelines identified by Brinkerhoff and

Crosby (2002) were utilised in this study to understand advocacy strategies such as coalitions. The C-19 Peoples Coalition, whose nature of advocacy was largely influenced by the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, lockdown, and the impact of the promulgated regulations on the vulnerable, is an example. While technological and virtual platforms proficiently enabled public participation and policy advocacy, challenges such as lack of advocacy capacity, lack of public awareness of online petitions, the digital divide, and lack of data as well as lack of communication between respective stakeholders and the public, were all evident. The next chapter concludes the study by providing conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the overall roadmap of this research and discusses the summary of the main findings and conclusions of the study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the recommendations and areas for future research. This research study explored the role played by CSOs in the CSG programme during the level 5 lockdown. The main objective was to explore the impact of Covid-19 Level 5 lockdown regulations on CSG beneficiaries and the role of CSOs in the CSG programme. The first chapter served as an introduction to the study by providing pertinent background information and a quick preliminary review of the literature on the COVID-19 lockdown regulations, the CSG programme, the role of CSOs, and related concerns. The chapter then goes on to discuss the research questions, research objectives, methodology, and dissertation structure.

The second chapter discussed the policy and legislative frameworks for the provision of social security for vulnerable children underpinning the implementation of the CSG. It also provided an analysis of the legislative frameworks and policies for the participation of civil society in public policymaking in South Africa. The chapter ended with a discussion of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (ACT No. 57 Of 2002), The Disaster Management Act 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) promulgated on 25 March 2020 which was the context of this research, as well the overview of the CSG implementation programme and its provision during the lockdown.

The third chapter discussed the conceptual framework underpinning the study. The chapter began by conceptualising public policy, outlining its fundamental process, and providing a detailed explanation of the theoretical underpinnings of policy and programme implementation, as well as the implementation approaches and the actors involved. After that, the chapter extensively explored CSOs as actors involved in policymaking, their function in policymaking, the enabling environment that fosters their participation, and policy advocacy.

The fourth chapter provided the findings and analysis of the study. The chapter explored the impact of the Disaster Management Act, of 2002: in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown on the CSG beneficiaries and the role of CSOs in advocating for the interests of the beneficiaries during this level 5 lockdown period. The following broad questions underpinned the investigation:

- What were the regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
- What were the experiences of the CSG beneficiaries in relation to regulations instituted by the Disaster Management Act, 2002: Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?
- What is the role of CSOs in relation to the CSG in South Africa?
- What strategies did CSOs employ to advocate for the interests of CSG beneficiaries before and during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

- What changes did the CSOs propose around the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown level 5?
- What changes did the South African government implement to the CSG during the COVID-19 lockdown?
- What were the experiences of the CSOs in advocating for CSG beneficiaries during the COVID-19 level 5 lockdown?

5.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The COVID-19 lockdown regulations promulgated by the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (No. 57 of 2002) Amendment of Regulations issued in terms of Section 27(2) were issued and designed to curb the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The study focused on level 5 lockdown regulations and revealed that level 5 was hard lockdown due to strict regulations. South Africa went into Alert level 5 from 26 March to 16 April 2020, which was extended to 30 April 2020. Gatherings were prohibited except for funerals with only a 50-person capacity, the movements of people were only permitted when providing or accessing essential goods and services, and the limit of 50% of public transport was available at specified times (RSA 2020). Schools and partial care institutes were closed from 18 March 2020 until 30 April 2020. Movement of people was prohibited, except when a person had a permit, going to work, seeking medical assistance, and purchasing essential goods with adherence to the curfew between 20:00 and 05:00 daily (RSA, 2020).

The experiences of CSG beneficiaries due to lockdown regulations included household and livelihood instability, food insecurity, and child nutrition, closure of SASSA mobile pay points and community halls, limited transport access and increased transport costs and confusion around staggered grants collection dates. The findings of this study revealed that CSG beneficiaries bore much of the impact of the COVID-19 hard lockdown. The value of the CSG was insufficient to address the challenges such as household and livelihood instability, food insecurity, and child nutrition that were exacerbated due to loss of income and other support systems because of the stipulated level 5 lockdown regulations and the pandemic itself. These challenges forced overreliance on social grants, especially the CSG, and affected its implementation. Additionally, the closure of SASSA mobile pay points and community halls mostly affected CSG beneficiaries from rural areas, as they experienced difficulties in accessing transport to collect the grants, which resulted in high transport costs. Transport access challenges also deprived women of their safety and subjected them to gender-based violence. The CSG is implemented through a governmental mix, and the sectoral mix is to ensure that CSG beneficiaries have effective access to the grant. However, the study revealed that some of the experiences that CSG beneficiaries were exposed to were due to implementing agencies' challenges, and lack of administration capacity in processing and delivering the additional grant amount. Closure of the DSD and SASSA offices and the adoption of the remote working hybrid revealed the lack of administrative capacity and working equipment. Furthermore, the study revealed that there were disruptions in the social distancing plan at the grant pay points which increased exposure to a variety of health issues, especially the coronavirus. Some of the SAPO branches and retail stores were reported to

have run out of money, leaving CSG beneficiaries going home empty handed.

The roles of CSOs in the execution of the CSG were in influencing implementation, advocacy and being the watchdog. In influencing the CSG programme implementation, the study revealed that it has been substantially extended since its initiation, and thus the age eligibility criteria and changes to the means test and income threshold of the CSG occurred due to the contributions of the robust CSOs. The study further revealed that CSOs contribute to the CSG programme through advocacy and raising awareness, which also contributed to the increase of CSG recipients and the expansion of the grant. The CSOs' contributions are not only limited to advocacy and implementation of the CSG, but CSOs' role extends to being the watchdog ensuring that governments follow through on their obligations and pointing out shortcomings and errors. The study revealed that CSOs worked as investigators of service delivery issues that hindered the implementation of the CSG, focusing on administration, needed documentation, the means test, and the grant's actual delivery methods. The White Paper on Social Welfare affirms that CSOs are responsible for direct service delivery, advocacy, information systems, accountability, and participation in social welfare programmes.

Strategies employed by CSOs to advocate the CSG top-up during level 5 lockdown included media campaigns, evidence-based research, online petitions, lobbying through litigation, and submission of letters. The findings of the study revealed that in compliance with the COVID-19 lockdown regulations, invited spaces of public participation were not accommodative of CSOs to participate and advocate in decision-making processes due to the closure of participation structures and mechanisms, such as the parliamentary, legislature, and ward committees. Meetings regarding the social assistance response were not publicised, therefore CSOs called for the use of virtual participation spaces in order to ensure transparency and accountability and thus invite CSOs and the public to be part of decision-making processes and make informed decisions. The study revealed that CSOs used the invented spaces of participation as strategies to pressure the government to top up the CSG and for the public to contribute to the design of social assistance response policy. Advocacy and submissions by CSOs resulted in the implementation of grants increments including the CSG top-up.

The CSOs proposition on the CSG was the R500 top-up per child as an effective mechanism for reducing poverty and improving the livelihood of beneficiaries during the precarious period of lockdown. The findings of this study revealed that the R500 top-up per grant paid was lauded by CSOs for its possible feasibility to extend towards supporting a whole household, not only children as beneficiaries, and was by far the fastest approach to provide financial assistance to millions of disadvantaged households, including those that depend on the informal sector. The Changes effected by the government on the CSG were the implementation of an R500 top-up per child in May and R500 per caregiver from June to October. Commitment within participating stakeholders of programme implementation was required to ensure the effective execution of the CSG programme during the hard lockdown. The findings of this study revealed that agreements and amendments were made to ensure

grant collection. These were staggered payment dates, increased transport availability, and lower bank charge fees.

Challenges experienced by CSOs in executing advocacy activities on the CSG top-up were lack of advocacy capacity, lack of public awareness of online petitions, the digital divide, lack of data as well as lack of communication between respective stakeholders and the public. Findings of this study revealed that while technological and virtual platforms proficiently enabled civil society participation and policy advocacy, challenges such as lack of advocacy capacity persisted. Advocacy incapacity was due to the prohibition of venues for activism such as protests and demonstrations, town hall meetings, visiting constituency offices and having direct contact with relevant stakeholders and policymakers. Furthermore, the findings revealed that access to technological platforms, enabling gadgets and data became a barrier for CSOs to access the target population and communicate with each other. Civil society also experienced difficulties in getting a response from the government and the departments to whom they had issued submissions. The lack of public awareness around the petition process and the non-attendance of key stakeholders at hearings resulted in delays in processing petitions. The language barrier was also found to be a hindrance to the online petition resulting in the lack of public awareness of online petitions and people participating. The study also revealed the lack of communication and access to information was marked as a major contributing factor hindering civil society participation in partaking in the social assistance policy response during level 5 lockdown.

5.3 CONCLUSIONS

CSOs can provide platforms where citizens can share their experiences and ideas that can inform the development of appropriate and effective responses to the identified problem. During the COVID-19 lockdown, the opportunity to engage with policy and decision-makers was limited for CSOs and the public to raise their concerns and influence the planning and implementation of disaster responses. Based on the finding of the study, the following conclusions are made:

The value of the CSG is inadequate to attack disaster-related challenges. CSG beneficiaries bore much of the impact of the COVID-19 hard lockdown regulations and the pandemic itself which impacted their household and livelihood stability exacerbating child poverty. Collecting the CSG pay-out is a substantial challenge particularly for CSG beneficiaries in rural areas due to the closure of SASSA mobile pay points and community halls; limited transport access and increased transport costs. There is an inadequate administrative capacity for implementing departments and agents (DSD and SASSA) to maintain consistency when working remotely. Furthermore, the level of reliability is questionable within the appointed service providers such as SAPO and retail stores as they were often reported to have run out of money or systems being offline failing to render services to social grants beneficiaries.

There was inadequate consultation with CSOs in designing COVID-19 lockdown regulations, mitigation strategies, and social assistance responses. CSOs made use of written submissions as a means to hold the government accountable and engage to influence decisions made.

CSOs propositions around the CSG increase were not adopted exactly as suggested but their proposals, evidence-based research, and letters became the basis of the implemented CSG top-up response implemented by the government. Lack of advocacy capacity, public awareness of online petitions, and lack of communication between respective stakeholders and the public hindered CSOs to articulate priorities to the government. As much as CSOs' efforts to reach the public through virtual platforms were evident, restrictions such as network barriers, access to enabling gadgets, and internet data became a major setback for some media campaigns and participation of the targeted population in webinar series or virtual meetings.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

SASSA, SAPO, and selected retail stores to have extensive planning sessions, and conduct a situational analysis. This will enable the implementing agent to understand the capacity that SAPO and the selected retail stores have in rendering services as well as identifying possible risks and contributing factors to implement an appropriate action plan. Additionally, SASSA should consider re-opening the utilisation of SASSA mobile pay points and use of community halls with precocious measures in place to avoid overcrowding in retail stores and SAPO premises and reduce transport access-associated challenges.

SAPO and retail stores to have effective communication channels where grant beneficiaries can be able to get updates about the grant collection dates, the nearest SAPO outlets offering grant collection service, and update on the status of the system and the availability of funds. This will assist to manage overcrowding in one premises and running out of funds, thus will give the beneficiaries an idea of where the nearest facilities are located.

Online consultative mechanisms should be recognised as proper public participation mechanisms. The government needs to conduct the decision-making issues openly, especially in the absence of the operating invited mechanisms of public participation. CSOs should be invited, and notified in advance of the issue at hand needing attention through circulation of the agenda before the meetings. This will enable CSOs to provide evidence-based findings on the subject matter and come up with relevant policy alternatives together with the government.

The issue of internet connectivity barriers, access to data, and enabling gadgets is more complicated, but innovative collaboration between government and internet service providers is of utmost importance especially in rural areas also associated with a large number of vulnerable population groups. Addressing the above issues will not only facilitate better quality reach to the vulnerable but will also enable the government and CSOs to gather informative data to design and implement relevant response strategies. CSOs need to collaborate with service providers in adopting the bulk messages and email system to notify the public on the ongoing or upcoming media campaigns and online petitions. Furthermore, the issue of language barrier is complex but the innovative strategy should somehow include voice messages accessible in different language options.

5.5 AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future studies could focus on monitoring and evaluating the impact of the CSG top-up during the COVID-19 lockdown. These studies could also consider narrowing down the case study into provinces or local communities. Further research could share light on the utilisation of the CSG top-up to understand its capacity as the social assistance response during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Future studies could focus on studying the involvement of CSOs in the planning and implementation of COVID-19 mitigation strategies. This focus will assist in closing the gap between government and CSOs in planning and implementing disaster-related responses. Furthermore, it will enable respective stakeholders to understand each other's roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the South African Disaster Management Act No.57 of 2002.

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