

GRAPE

Global Reformed Advocacy
Platforms for Engagement

FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL TO LOCAL

Universal Basic Income Guarantee Grape Pledge South Africa

South Africa is still characterised by extremely high rates of poverty. 25.2% of South Africans live well below the poverty line, and the rising cost of living aggravates this situation. Urgent action is needed to effectively address hunger and deprivation while at the same time advancing economic empowerment and social justice for all. The Grape platform, therefore, advocates for a universal basic income guarantee (UBIG) as a commitment by the government to ensure that everyone has a minimum level of income to meet their basic needs and to restructure the economy.

The role of social grants in relieving extreme poverty is illustrated by the fact that 24.4% of households report social grants as their main source of income. The current social grants system in South Africa includes old-age pensions, child support grants, and disability grants. Since COVID-19, it has also included the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant, introduced in April 2020 and recently extended to March 2025. However, gaps remain in the social grant system, and millions of people remain exposed to extreme poverty and precarious living conditions without government assistance. South Africa does not have any permanent income support for able-bodied people between the ages of 18 and 59, even though a large number of them have no income or means of survival due in large part to the unavailability of employment.

Current Challenges - where are we?

- 25.2% of South Africans live below the Food Poverty Line of R760.00 per month and are unable to meet basic nutritional needs.
- 55.5% of the population live below the Upper-Bound Poverty Line (UBPL) of R1 558.00 per month.
- 64.2% of Black South Africans are living below the UBPL.
- The narrow unemployment rate is 31.9%, while the expanded unemployment rate is 41.2%.
- South Africa has the highest inequality in the world, with a Gini coefficient of 0.67

Demands - what are we calling for?

Introduction of a Universal Basic Income as a guarantee (UBIG) to provide essential income support to individuals aged 18-59. The UBIG should initially be set at a minimum of R760 per person monthly, aligned with the Food Poverty Line, and adjusted over time as the economy grows.

The evidence shows that a basic income has many positive effects and goes beyond immediate poverty alleviation. These include:

- Immediate relief from hunger and deprivation
- It targets poverty, helps grow the economy, and promotes local economic development. This is especially so since people spend the money they receive in local communities
- Reduces inequality
- Upholds human dignity, social equity, and justice
- Improves Health Outcomes
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation
- Education and Skill Development
- Reduces Crime
- Increases Consumer Spending
- Provides financial security
- Basic income improves social cohesion: A UBIG is a fairer way of sharing the wealth in our society, and this can help to improve social solidarity, stability, and democratic participation

Campaign Strategy - how do we get involved?

Churches, especially in the Global South, have often been and still are an integral part of the struggle for political freedom and social and economic justice. They have become people's platforms, where human rights and social justice issues are taken up directly and by people in their own contexts.

The churches, with their intimate connection to communities and their local, national, regional and global networks, have a pivotal role in leading the pursuit of social and economic justice by advocating for this structural intervention to create a more equitable and sustainable future for all. The lobbying for UBIG now is a practical expression of this pursuit for social and economic justice!

Drawing inspiration from theology, particularly the story of "Manna from Heaven" in Exodus 16, it provides a profound understanding of breaking the cycle of starvation and moving out of slavery into liberation. The daily provision of manna sustained God's people on their arduous journey through the desert. The manna not only fed them but freed people from the daily struggle for survival, thereby enabling them to move forward through the desert. The unconditional and universal provision of manna highlights the importance of empowerment of the individual and, at the same time, the importance of an undivided and equal community. This parallels the concept of a Universal Basic Income Guarantee (UBIG), which empowers individuals universally, allowing them to walk on the path of liberation without exclusion, freeing them from the daily struggle for survival to take charge of their economic affairs and, at the same time, creating a more equal society.

Contrary to targeted approaches, a UBIG is akin to a God-given right, providing everyone with the means to sustain themselves. This approach ensures daily bread security without administrative exclusions, especially benefiting larger households where people pool and share their resources.

UBIG is a prerequisite for social justice and economic empowerment in South Africa. Through church advocacy and policy action, we can build a more equitable future for all!