



14 July 2020

Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, President, Republic of South Africa
Ms Lindiwe Zulu, Minister of Social Development
Mr Tito Mboweni, Minister of Finance

A Universal Basic Income Grant Policy Announcement is a Good Start- Towards a People's Victory!

We welcome the announcement by the Minister of Social Development, Lindiwe Zulu, regarding a policy commitment to introduce a universal basic income grant (UBIG) in South Africa, for those within the 18-59 year age cohort. There are various design details still unclear and which need to be worked out. Nonetheless we expected and demanded such a decisive policy shift at level 5 of the lockdown. As Busi Sibeko, economist at the Institute for Economic Justice, has stressed about successful government responses to Covid-19: 'go hard, go early and go household'. Put differently, the South African government is only waking up to how its socio-economic mitigation measures have not worked. A means tested and measly Covid-19 relief grant, of R350, was and is a failure. Comparative international research and literature is affirming how crucial cash transfers are, including through a UBIG, to cushion societies and break with regimes of racialised and gendered inequality based exclusion.

As the South African Food Sovereignty Campaign we have campaigned consistently for #UBIGNOW during Covid-19 through:

- Our online peoples referendum for a #UBIGNOW which was put up during level 5 of lockdown to test support for the idea (available here: <https://copac.org.za/peoples-referendum-bignow/>). It has been supported by over 110 organisations;
- We contributed to the intellectual debate through media articles and hosted a webinar with leading NGOs and social movements to promote the idea of a #UBIGNOW during level 5 and 4 lockdown (available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2qq4ZKptSk>);
- We convened the National Food Crisis Forum, with one of its crucial strategic prongs being about campaigning for a #UBIGNOW to address the worsening food and social crisis. This forum has consistently raised concerns in the public arena, with the President and his cabinet colleagues on the need for a #UBIGNOW;
- On June 16th we convened a Climate Justice Charter Assembly and reaffirmed the need and call for South Africa to embrace a substantive basic income grant as part of a world in permanent existential crisis and to assist with the deep just transition;
- Our #UBIGNOW campaigning has built a consensus amongst more than 110 organisations to secure a #UBIGNOW in South Africa. We are busy with the technical design work on this and will intensify our campaign roll out.

Hence we don't want the Minister of Social Development to advance a #UBIGNOW that is:

- An add on to the existing and fragmented social welfare system. **We want a #UBIGNOW that is the linchpin or backbone for an integrated social welfare system and which is not at the expense of other labour market benefits and public goods;**

- Merely ameliorative and reproduces desperation. **We want a substantive #UBIGNOW based on a serious attempt to redistribute income in one of the most unequal countries in the world;**
- A qualified and exclusionary grant. **We want a universal grant for all living in South Africa, including documented migrants and refugees;**
- A measure merely for Covid-19 relief. **We want a 'locked in' #UBIGNOW through legislation and if necessary amendments to the constitution;**
- Trapped in institutional inertia and mismanagement through SASSA. **We want the most effective institutional and technological mechanisms that would make this happen speedily.**

South African's infections are worsening, unemployment is on the increase, starvation is impacting many households, many women face gender-based violence and xenophobia is being fomented. The Minister of Social Development needs to take these realities into account when working on the modalities and pace of introduction of the #UBIGNOW. South Africa is facing social collapse and hence we will continue engaging society, the government and Minister on our design and technical work on a #UBIGNOW for South Africa.

We maintain: 'society is too big to fail!' The time is now for a transformative and emancipatory universal basic income grant. We will uncompromisingly struggle for the precarious working class, the poor, the vulnerable and generally the people to achieve a victory on the #UBIGNOW.

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