



SUBMISSION

Draft amendments to the Social Relief of Distress grant regulations

6 March 2026

The Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ) is grateful for the opportunity to make the following written submission on the draft amendments to the Social Relief of Distress (SRD) grant regulations. Given the centrality of public participation in our constitutional democracy, we trust that you will give this submission and its considered, substantiated proposals meaningful consideration.

Should you have any questions regarding this submission, please contact Kelle Howson, Senior Researcher, Social Protection, at kelle.howson@iej.org.za.

1. Introduction

The IEJ is a member of the Universal Basic Income Coalition (UBIC), a grouping of South African civil society organisations and labour organisations that collectively advocate for the realisation of a comprehensive social protection floor by transitioning the SRD grant into an adequate and universal basic income. The IEJ, UBIC, and its other members have consistently engaged with the Department of Social Development (DSD) on previous amendments to these regulations, raising concerns about the grant's design, implementations, and existing barriers to accessibility. To date, our engagements have not received sufficient and satisfactory responses.

While we acknowledge that the 2026 draft amendments relate specifically to Regulations 5 and 6C, we are concerned that they do not address the systemic issues raised in our

previous submissions. These unresolved issues continue to undermine the SRD grant's potential to achieve its intended purpose of providing relief to the most vulnerable individuals and households, in line with the right to social assistance set out in Section 27 of the Constitution.

This submission will recount the long-standing systemic issues raised in previous submissions that remain unaddressed by the DSD and SASSA and address specific concerns regarding Regulations 4, 5 and 6C in the current draft amendments.

2. Longstanding issues with Regulations

The IEJ and UBIC have long maintained that the SRD Regulations, as currently drafted, are flawed and unconstitutionally exclude millions of beneficiaries eligible for assistance.¹ We previously highlighted the following challenges.²

- Restricting the grant application process to an online platform and being available only in English excludes beneficiaries without devices or internet access.
- Maintaining the grant value at R370 excludes vulnerable grants, which are profoundly inadequate and fall significantly below the food poverty line of R855.³
- The means-test of R624 also excludes many individuals living in food poverty.
- Given that bank and database verification are inaccurate and highly intrusive methods for determining eligibility, we proposed allowing declarations of eligibility accompanied by random audits.
- The limited appeals system whereby appellants can't produce any supporting/additional evidence.
- The regulation states that grant disbursements are limited to the budget envelope
- The power given to SASSA to suspend and cancel grants of people deemed "untraceable."

The limited scope of the current SRD grant regulations amendments and their failure to address these long-standing issues will simply perpetuate the plight of many excluded beneficiaries and prevent the grant from achieving its intended objective.

3. Amendment of Regulations 4 and 5

The IEJ welcomes the extension of the SRD grant's applicability period to March 2027. The extension is necessary to ensure continuity and offers much-needed relief for beneficiaries. However, the IEJ and UBIC have also previously submitted that the yearly extension of the grant perpetuates uncertainty and distress among beneficiaries,

¹ [UBIC 2025](#)

² [UBIC 2025](#); [UBIC 2024](#); [IEJ 2023](#); [Black Sash 2024](#)

³ [UBIC 2025](#); [Stats SA National Poverty Lines, 2025](#)

preventing them from planning, while creating anxiety about their future financial security.⁴ It is even more concerning that the Basic Income Support policy will only be presented to Cabinet in March 2027.⁵ This means that the (draft) SRD grant regulations will expire before the BIS has been introduced. We call for the extension of the regulations to allow sufficient time for the BIS to be approved and implemented. Government must adopt a binding timeframe for this and ensure the continuity of social protection coverage throughout.

4. Amendment of Regulation 6C

The IEJ welcomes the amendment of regulation 6C as it provides for uninterrupted payments during the transition period, allowing SASSA to use historical data. We are, however, concerned that, despite previously highlighting the challenges posed by SASSA's reliance on outdated government databases and so-called “bank verification” methods, this issue has not been addressed. In previous submissions, the IEJ and UBIC have both advocated greater reliance on self-declarations rather than invasive, punitive, and inaccurate verification methods. As stated previously, the UIF, SARS, and NSFAS databases are not updated in a timely manner to avoid systemic exclusions of eligible beneficiaries.

5. Conclusion

The IEJ urges DSD to take meaningful action to address our concerns, as expressed across multiple iterations of comments on the SRD grant regulations. Our overall assessment is that the 2026 draft assessments represent yet another missed opportunity to rectify the systemic flaws outlined above and will further prevent the government from fulfilling its constitutional obligation to provide adequate social assistance to beneficiaries in genuine need.

We humbly request that DSD respond sufficiently to our concerns and take immediate steps to implement much-needed reforms.

6. List of recommendations/proposals

- Expand regulation amendments to address the existing systemic exclusions created by online applications and punitive assessments.
- Ensure that the expiry date of the regulations is determined in light of the timeline for implementing the BIS. This requires an extension longer than one year.
- Liaise with National Treasury to find sustainable ways to increase grant value and adjust the mean-test threshold to the upper-bound poverty line.

⁴ [UBIC 2025](#); [UBIC 2024](#); [IEJ 2023](#);

⁵ [Gound Up 2026](#)

- Utilise self-declarations rather than historical data due to outdated databases and accuracy challenges.



The Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ) is a progressive economic policy think tank committed to advancing economic justice, systemic change, and the equitable distribution of resources to ensure rights realisation and planetary wellbeing.

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