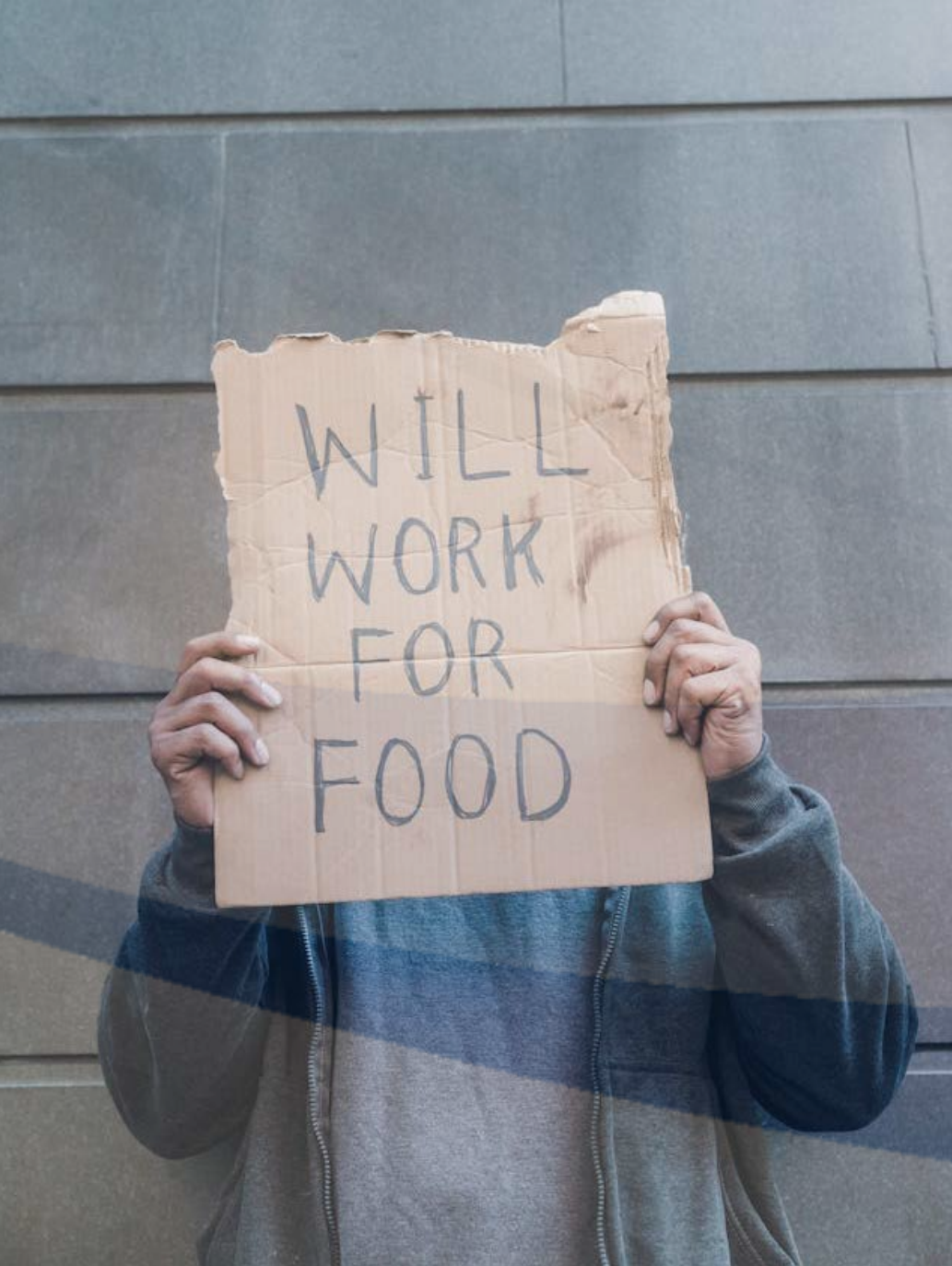




The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) cordially invites you to a webinar on

Financing and Funding Options
for Social Protection in South Africa

Date: 25 March 2026

Time: 14:00 – 15:40 (SAST)

Venue: Zoom

RSVP: [Click here](#) to register

Background

South Africa’s social protection system plays a vital role in reducing poverty and inequality, promoting social inclusion, and improving livelihoods. It encompasses a wide range of interventions, including social grants, public employment programmes, subsidised basic services, and healthcare, which collectively benefit millions of citizens in vulnerable situations.

However, overall coverage and spending on social protection remain limited, hindering progress toward SDGs 1 and 3. Sustaining and expanding these interventions has become more challenging amid high unemployment, weak economic growth, and tightening fiscal constraints. Therefore, ASSAf, through its Standing Committee on Science for the Reduction of Poverty and Inequality (SCfRPI), is hosting a webinar in a series on “Social Protection and Employment Creation” to explore the financing and funding options for social protection in South Africa.

Objectives

- To highlight a suite of financing models at disposal for social protection in South Africa.
- To propose practical responses for social protection financing amid the country’s declining fiscal resources and international donor funding.
- To analyse sustainable funding options specifically for the Basic Income Grant, taking into account macroeconomic and fiscal effects.

Programme

Moderator: Professor Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu, University of Pretoria (UP)

14:00-14:10	Opening and setting the scene	Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu
14:10 - 14:25	Financing Social Protection in an Era of Fiscal Tightening and Declining Donor Support (Challenges and Opportunities)	Dr Eleni Yitbarek, University of Pretoria
14:25 - 14:40	Financing options for social protection in South Africa	Mr Andrew Donaldson, Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)
14:40 - 14:55	Progressive Tax Reform and Wealth Taxes as Sustainable Financing for Social Protection in South Africa	Dr Gilad Isaacs, Institute for Economic Justice (IEJ)
14:55 - 15:20	Q and A	All
15:20 - 15:30	Key Takeaways and Closure	Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu

End of the webinar

Speakers



Prof Margaret Chitiga-Mabugu is an economist and the current Dean of the Faculty of Economic Management Sciences at the University of Pretoria. She was previously the Director of the School for Public Management and Administration in the faculty. Before she rejoined the University of Pretoria, she was the Executive Director of Economic Performance and Development at the Human Science Research Council (HSRC). Prof Chitiga-Mabugu conducts research on economic developmental issues and is mainly interested in analysing the impact of policies on society and the economy at large



Dr Eleni Abraham Yitbarek is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at the University of Pretoria and a Research Fellow with Partnership for Economic Policy (PEP) and Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA). Her research focuses on development economics, particularly poverty, inequality, social mobility, and the socioeconomic impacts of economic shocks in developing countries. She holds a PhD in Development Economics from Maastricht University in the Netherlands and has developed a research career that combines rigorous empirical analysis with policy-relevant insights. Prior to joining academia, she worked with institutions such as the National Bank of Ethiopia and the Netherlands Development Organisation and completed a fellowship at the World Bank Group, gaining practical experience in economic policy and development programmes. Dr. Yitbarek collaborates with international organisations and research networks, contributing to research that informs policies aimed at promoting inclusive and sustainable development in Africa.



Mr Andrew Donaldson is a South African economist and senior research associate at the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU) at the University of Cape Town, where he provides expert analysis on social security, health financing, infrastructure investment, and macroeconomic policy. Before his current research role, he had a long and distinguished career in public service, including serving as Deputy Director-General of the National Treasury, where he was responsible for the Budget Office and public finance, and he played a key role in establishing the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC). Mr Donaldson's work covers economic policy design, fiscal strategy, and labour market issues, and he often comments on how government programmes can address unemployment and inclusive growth in South Africa. He has also taught economics at several South African universities and continues to engage with policy debates through research, public commentary, and advisory work aimed at informing development-oriented economic strategies.



Dr Gilad Isaacs is the Executive Director at the IEJ. He is also an economist at Wits University, where he previously coordinated the National Minimum Wage Research Initiative and lectured. Gilad has a PhD and a master's in economics from SOAS University of London, and a master's in political economy from New York University. He has worked as a consultant for the United Nations' International Labour Organisation (ILO) and Global Labour University. He serves on the Global Council of the Fight Inequality Alliance and the Board of the Indlulamithi Scenarios. He also serves in various advisory positions, most recently on the South African government's Medium-Term Development Plan (MTDP) Reference Group and the International Advisory Council of the T20 Brazil. He has a background in civil society activism, working for the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and founding the Social Justice Coalition (SJC). His research expertise is in financialisation, macroeconomics, and labour markets.

