
The title of the publication might give rise to a misconception that the book has been overtaken by events in South Africa. This misconception might derive from the Constitutional Court’s consideration of the concept of minimum core obligations engendered by socio-economic rights. In Republic of South Africa and Others v Grootboom and Others 2000 (11) BCLR 1169 (CC), the argument was advanced that section 26 of the Constitution imposed a minimum core obligation on the state to satisfy minimum essential levels of socio-economic rights, including the right to housing. Reliance was placed on the ‘minimum core’ concept developed by the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights. The Court rejected this contention. Instead, it held that the test to be satisfied is that of reasonableness. This position was reaffirmed in Minister of Health and Others v Treatment Action Campaign and Others 2002 (10) BCLR 1033 (CC).

However, in spite of these developments in South African jurisprudence, the book has made a remarkable contribution to the development of the content of socio-economic rights such as adequate housing, health, adequate food, social security, education, work and trade union rights.

In doing so, it has dispelled a critique often levelled against the justiciability of socio-economic rights, namely that they are inherently vague and lack specificity. The authors converge on the point that these rights have content, which can form the basis for their judicial enforcement.

The book provides a useful framework for South African policy-makers. It provides them with important principles to guide policy formulation. In addition, it provides the courts with insight into considerations that are relevant to the test of reasonableness.

Activists, practitioners, academics and all other interested parties also stand to gain a deeper understanding of the specifics of socio-economic rights. Those interested in international human rights will benefit considerably from the book’s coverage of the fledgling international and regional jurisprudence on the subject. Overall, this publication makes an important contribution to the ultimate realisation of socio-economic rights. 