

Covid-19 Youth Brigades Still Wait for Payment 8 Months Later

By Emmanuel Matshomo

Release date: 24 March 2021

When the nation was hit with coronavirus, The Gauteng Department of Education (GDoE) created a programme in 2020 that was meant to employ youth to maintain COVID-19 regulations in the learning environment of schools. The 10 000 young people who have been employed to be under this programme are called 'brigades' and their job description is to check the temperature of everyone who enters the school's premises, sanitise their hands, capturing this data and monitoring the school's compliance with COVID-19 social distancing and health protocols.

Since this programme started in June 2020, the majority of the youth brigades haven't yet received their stipends and it has been more than six months now. Every time they ask their schools' principal about the matter the answer is always the same – that they should be patient and wait for the department to process their stipend payments.

According to Katlego Dipale, one of the brigades at a secondary school in Tsakane (a township on the East Rand of Gauteng); "there are those [school brigades] that got and still get paid but they are very few and that on its own brings about frustration to those who don't get paid."

The GDoE has previously said that there were issues with their payment processing system and that those brigades who haven't received their stipends would get their stipend from January 2021 and backpay from the first month they started working.

In 2020 the GDoE stated that the reason for the problem of processing the brigades' stipends was because of the COVID-19 cases that many schools experienced which hindered the submission of the necessary documentation for capturing and processing the payments.

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