

Child Welfare Threatened by Budget Cuts

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Protesters from many different non-profit organisations (NPOs) and child protection organisations (CPOs) say the Department of Social Development (DSD) is cutting budgets which will hamper their ability to operate. Beneficiaries, workers from NPOs including social workers and child carers, took to the streets outside the DSD on 20 April 2023, to submit a memorandum and make the Department listen.

Many of the marchers who were present at the protest action are wheelchair-bound and rely on the programme of the DSD to improve their social security.

The Department says it is reprioritising budgets.

Social worker, Viwe Nzuzo, says the budget cuts will affect them personally but also the organisations operationally. Nzuzo, who works with children providing protection for them, lamented the impending wage cuts in her sector.

“It is not a matter of retrenchment but they’re literally cutting our salaries by 61%,” she said, highlighting the huge adjustment in lifestyle that those affected will have to make.

Another protester (name withheld on request) said that he attended the march to support his partner who is wheelchair-bound. He complained about the lack of work opportunities for the disabled, saying the Department often gave out temporary posts.

“The disabled have families to support at length, I mean who does not want to work?” asked the man before going off to join in on the action.

According to Nzuzo, the DSD was not transparent about its plans on the percentage it would cut. She told Karibu that the initial idea of the cut that the child protection organisations originally had was that it would be as much as 50% but were surprised to learn that the reduction in funding sat at 61% of the amount the Department gives them annually.

Despite the reduction in financial support, the Department still wanted the same amount of work to be completed by the organisations and maintains the same workforce. “They are keeping the same amount of work, workload, and cases,” said Nzuzo.

According to reports, many organisations have already received official communication from the Department about their financial sponsorship for the fiscal year beginning in April 2023. Some of the organisations focused on HIV/AIDS counseling and education, with some extended focus beyond the scope of health, were completely dropped by the Department, leading to unconfirmed reports of collapse due to the inability to fund operations.

Nzuzo said the organisations had much more presence and did quality work in the communities, not the Department of Social Development itself.

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