

## **Department of Social Development Cuts Off Vulnerable Groups**

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On April 2023, the Gauteng Premier and the Department of Social Development (DSD) announced that they will be cutting funding for Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). These budget cuts affect the most vulnerable groups in society, including orphaned and vulnerable children and youth.

Many organisations had to close as a result of the budget cuts. These organisations were formed in the community to alleviate hunger by providing families with food parcels, provide psychosocial support and a space for children and youth to learn. The direct result of this senseless act is organisations cutting beneficiaries, which means families going hungry, some organisations such as Benoni Child Welfare who depended on DSD funding had to close their doors as they can no longer serve the community. Other organisations such as Persevere Until Something Happens (PUSH) had to lay off the majority of their staff members as they can't pay stipends anymore.

On 17 April 2023, the various organisations affected by the budget cuts went to demonstrate outside the DSD offices. After the public outcry, Premier Panyaza Lesufi did an interview with Radio 702 where he claimed that DSD was not cutting budgets and this is a misunderstanding from the side of both DSD and the organisations, even though organisations received letters notifying them of budget cuts.

The organisations have suffered deeply, "The DSD funds helped us provide daily meals to children, pay salaries & stipends and covered stationery required to implement programs." said Ricky Bopape, a Coordinator at Rena Le Lona Creative Centre. Bopape also emphasised the negative impact this had on the organisation, while they were forced to adapt to running the organisation on a shoestring budget, the future seem dark, as they scramble every day to feed vulnerable children. Like PUSH, Rena Le Lona was forced to decrease the number of beneficiaries. Solidarity partners like Khanya College make a big difference because they provide meals for their reading and writing programme. The reason Rena Le Lona has not closed is because of solidarity partners, such as British Standard Institution (BSI) which provides the organisation with food, HIV-SA and ISSITEJ. This is an attack on the working class, as the cost of living continues to rise, the rich get richer, and the poor gets poorer.

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