

## **More than 30 schools have closed in Sedibeng West**

It has been more than three weeks since schools reopened. Since then more than 30 schools have closed in Sedibeng West in the West Rand, Johannesburg due to Covid-19 cases.

With the surge of Covid-19 cases, the fear from the public is rising. Denialism is also a major concern. Mamokete is a resident in Bophelong near Ikokobetseng Primary School. Ikokobetseng has recently closed due to a Covid-19 case. "My younger sister attends school at Ikokobetseng Primary School. They were sent home about a week ago due to a teacher who contracted Covid-19," said Mamokete, confirming the Covid-19 outbreak at Ikokobetseng. This was another Covid-19 incident that was treated with denialism, as some refuted the incident. Some thought that the incident was not true and classified it as fake news.

On Wednesday, 24 June 2020, Karibu! visited the Basic Education Department (BED)local office in Sedibeng West at Sebokeng. The team underwent a precautionary process whereby everyone was sanitised at the entrance before entering the reception office. There is a screening process at the reception entrance, the receptionist referred the team to Mrs. Izzel Jubber, the director who confirmed that "more than 30 schools in the district have closed due to Covid-19 cases, whereby teachers and learners have tested positive. Only one school, Ramusukulu High School had closed due to insufficient access to portable water and sanitation".

Mrs. Jubber explained the situation they were currently facing. "Our SADTU members who tried to mediate in schools were chased away because non-union teachers did not want any unions representing them" she said as she was raising some of the frustrations they are facing as a local district office.

Mrs. Jubber explained to the Karibu! team that a circular had been sent from the Gauteng province. She said that "all researchers and the public concerned about stats and the current conditions of the schools may do this online, as the pandemic is rising and soon we might close the local DBE premises and resort to working from home". She also confirmed that there would be no permit granted to Karibu! to access schools, during the pandemic – "but after the pandemic pass and things are back to normal, permits will be granted", she said.

Mrs Jubber indicated that "some of the 30 schools that were affected includes, Tshemedi Primary School, Vaal High School, Pitseng Primary School, Phehelo Primary School, Qhoweng Primary School and Sebokeng Technical School, amongst many others," said Mrs. Jubber.

Although the academic year may need to be saved, the realities of what our communities are facing are overwhelmingly under looked. The resistance around Covid-19 monitoring and the concerns of civil society being blocked, this marks irresponsible and unacceptable policy management. Therefore, it is fair to say that the "reopening of

schools" is but an experiment that will cause the escalation of Covid-19 infections. This will result in budget squandering as the impact rate will be overwhelming.

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