

## WCFID BUDGET TIPS 2024



### Spending priorities of government

This budget tip is provided on behalf the Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability (WCFID), an NPO with about 180 members, including NPOs. WCFID is concerned that the current fiscal policy trend to address the budget shortfall via budget cuts to departments that address socio-economic rights (e.g. social development, education, health) will de-prioritise the human and Constitutional rights of children and adults with disabilities even further. The Life Esidimeni tragedy demonstrates the most dire consequences of deprioritising the rights of persons with disabilities despite the warnings from civil society.

This tip is prompted especially by a letter (to us, our member NPOs, and NPOs serving other sectors of the disability community), from the Department of Social Development (DSD) in the Western Cape (WC) (8 December 2023):

*The [Western Cape] provincial government has had its conditional grants from national government reduced by R642, 2 million and has a shortfall in its wages budget of R1,1 billion in the current financial year. The cuts are largely due to the nationally determined wage increases and worsening economic environment.*

***These budget cuts will have an impact on the transfer allocations and number of NPOs that the department will be able to fund during the next funding cycle.***

***The department will do everything within its ability to mitigate the impact of this situation on the NPO sector. We are, however, unable to guarantee continued funding to your organisation from 1 April 2024.***

These NPOs support children and adults with disabilities in the absence of public services since the Government of South Africa took the positive step of de-institutionalisation and moved persons with disabilities to live in communities and/or with their families. Although the (residential) institutions have been reduced, the needs and rights of persons with disabilities in the community demand government support (including funding).

Persons with disabilities face multidimensional systemic, financial and social barriers that impact on their economic status:

[They] are affected by issues relating to multidimensional poverty such as lower educational attainment and fewer employment opportunities. In addition, households of people with

disabilities (with the exception of milder visual problems) earn significantly less than households without people with disabilities, and this particularly applies to households with people with severe disabilities. This vulnerability also varies by disability type. The country's social protection mechanisms, in terms of social grants, counteract economic vulnerability to some extent but do not consider the nuanced economic impact of diverse conditions nor the increased out-of-pocket costs related to disability. [...] This calls for more equitable social protection mechanisms that include accessible services, livelihood programmes and disability benefits.

As the WCFID we also represent special care centres for children with intellectual disability who have been excluded from public schools and public-school funding. National Treasury (NT) is a respondent in our case ([Case18678/2007](#)) and has a joint responsibility to implement the structural order, in particular to provide funds to centres for adequate staff and facilities.

Although NT has approved a conditional grant to the Department of Basic Education for the education of children with severe to profound intellectual disability, WCFID has repeatedly made submissions ( <https://shorturl.at/gjwEW> ) to parliament about the failure of the grant to meet the terms of the structural order, particularly, to provide funds to these centres. These centres are therefore already under-funded.

A decrease in funding will decrease the ability of NPOs to provide services. E.g., a centre providing services to 500 individuals with disability receiving a 40% cut in funding equates to a 40% cut in service provision. The responsibility for 200 individuals with disability will need to revert to the relevant department (e.g. DSD). This is neither cost effective nor rights based. If the relevant department does not provide these services to the most vulnerable - the risk and consequences lie with that department, e.g., Life Esidimeni.

WCFID calls on the Finance Minister and National Treasury to stop budget cuts that will have disastrous consequences for already vulnerable and marginalised children and adults with disabilities.



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