

Rapid Analysis of Initial Impacts of the US Government's Stop Work Orders on Education Organisations in South Africa

Two weeks after USAID and related US funding stop orders were announced, SII Africa, the National Association for Social Change Agents in Education (NASCEE), Southern Hemisphere, Benita Williams Evaluation and other organisations in the education sector designed and disseminated a survey to measure the impact on the South African social development sector and how the sector is responding.

The survey is not a representative sample of all social development organisations in the country. It was circulated through professional networks by email, whatsapp and LinkedIn. 160 organisations from all social sectors responded. Data was collected 13-22 February 2025.

This brief summarises the results for 111 organisations in the education sector.

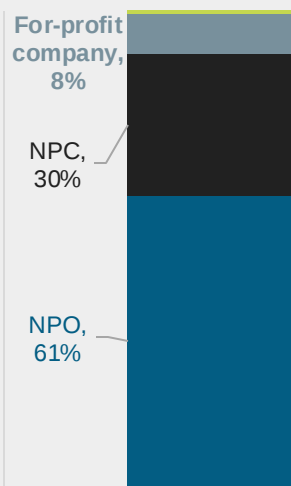


Contact: Dr Tara Polzer Ngwato, tara@socialimpactinsights.co.za, for more information

The 111 respondents represent the full spectrum of non-governmental organisations active in education in South Africa.

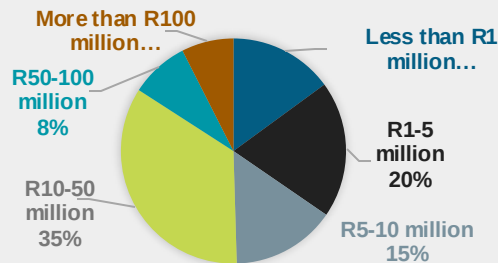


Most are small and mid-sized NPOs working exclusively in South Africa.

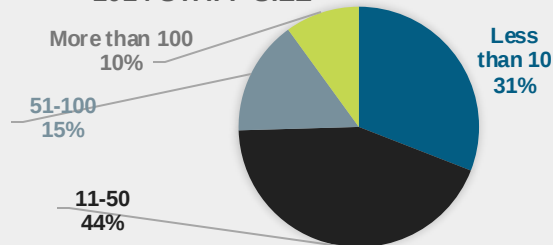


REGISTRATION TYPE

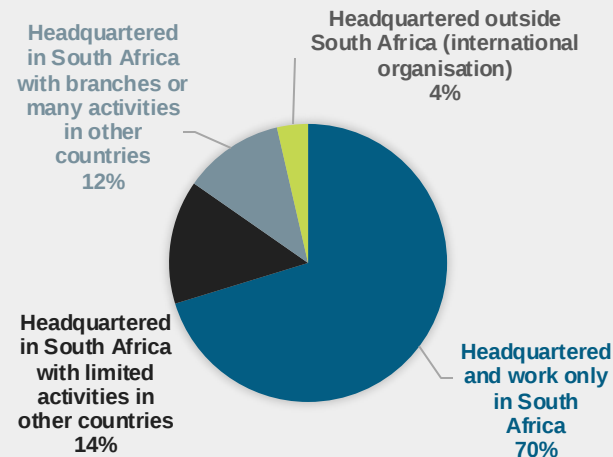
2024 ORGANISATION TURNOVER



2024 STAFF SIZE



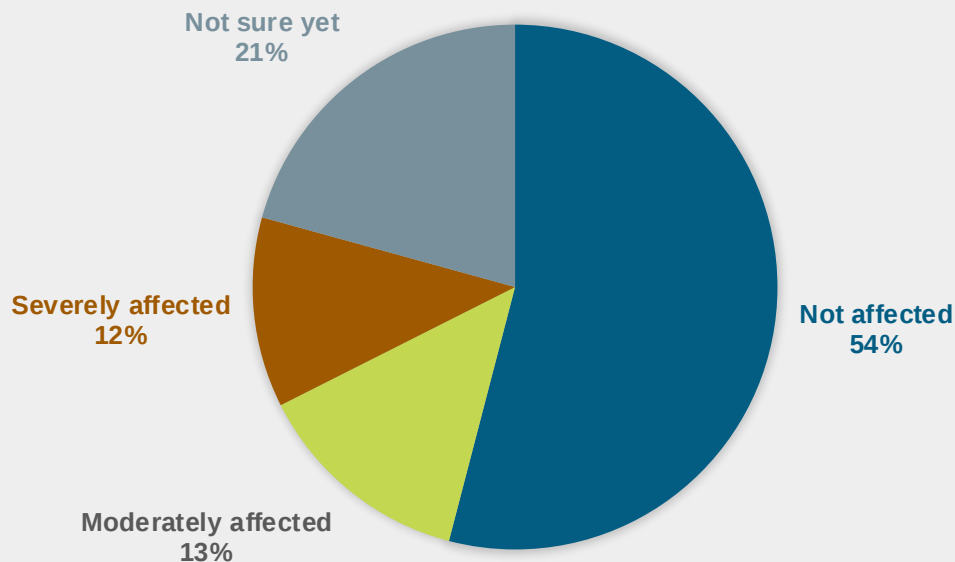
HQ LOCATION AND FOCUS COUNTRIES



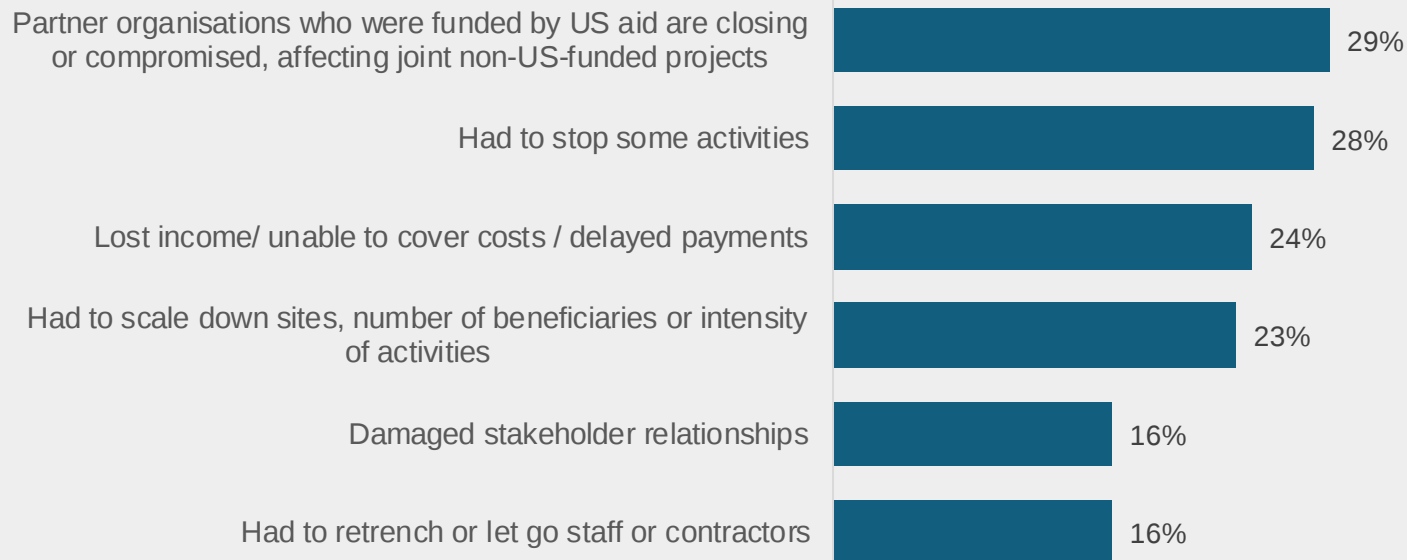
Nearly half (46%) of education organisations are impacted by US stop orders or facing uncertainty



HAS YOUR ORGANISATION BEEN AFFECTED BY THE US DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FREEZE SINCE 20 JAN 2025?



South African Education sector will see organisations closing, scaling down and losing jobs

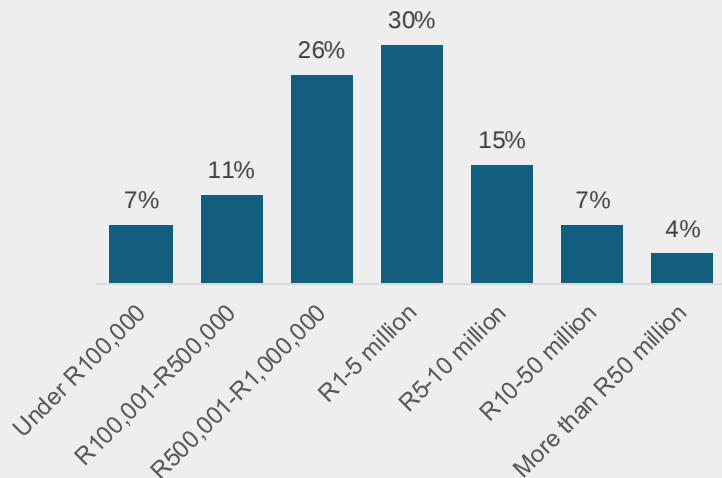


% are for the entire sector, including those organisations who report not being affected

The scale of losses has been severe for some organisations that have lost funding or have / are expecting to retrench staff.

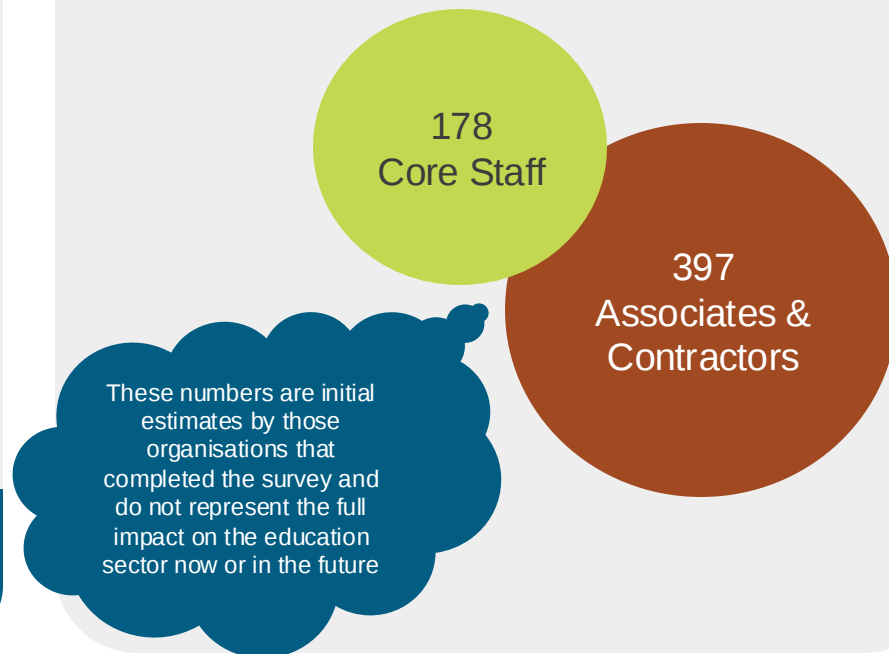


Scale of lost income (N=27)

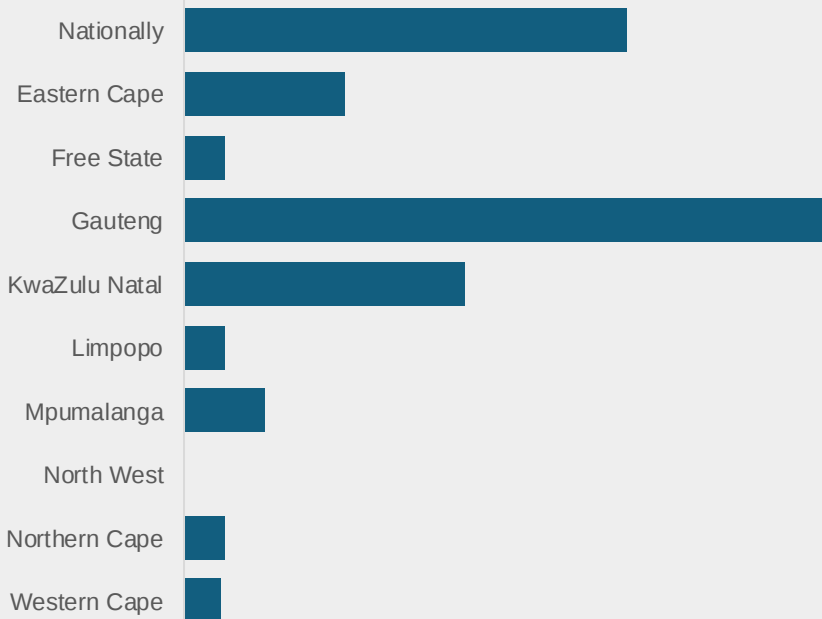


Most affected organisations lost funding for expenses already incurred and future planned expenses. This includes main grantees (8), sub-grantees (13) and organisations that have lost income indirectly due to the US stop order.

Scale of lost staff (N=17)



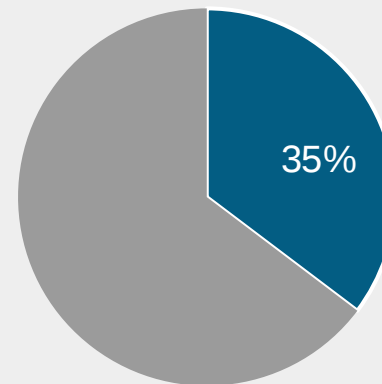
Where are activities stopping / being scaled down?



Many national programmes are affected.

The worst hit provinces are Gauteng, KZN and the Eastern Cape.

Over a third of affected organisations in the education sector provide essential or life-saving services.



The types of education-related activities that have been stopped or scaled down include:



Early Childhood Development (ECD) & Education

- Training and resource provision for parents, teachers, and ECD practitioners.
- Grade R program in Gauteng, including development of Grade R maths materials and training of trainers for special needs schools.
- Home-based and early learning centre ECD programmes in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Home visit literacy programmes for young children.

Workshops & Training

- DEI (Diversity, Equity & Inclusion) workshops and strategy development.
- Leadership development and personal mastery workshops for youth and women.
- Social behaviour change and family strengthening programmes.

Advocacy & Awareness Campaigns

- Anti-Human Trafficking and Anti-GBVF campaigns.
- HIV and teenage pregnancy prevention initiatives.

Organisations are experiencing the following current and expected impacts:



Financial Uncertainty & Funding Cuts

Programmatic uncertainty due to potential donor withdrawals.

Clients unable to afford services, affecting NGO revenues.

Private donors reducing funding due to global economic uncertainty.

Loss of USAID funding impacting large NGOs and international organizations like UNICEF with knock-on effects for SA NGOs.

Social enterprises suffering as their nonprofit clients lose funding.

Retrenchments leading to long-term setbacks in NGO growth.

Operational Disruptions

Research projects abruptly ended.

Planned initiatives and conferences uncertain or cancelled.

South Africa's HIV programme and public health budget affected, resulting on rise in HIV in schools.

Impact on Beneficiaries

Increased vulnerability of at-risk groups (children, HIV+ individuals, people with special needs).

Loss of access to food, medication, education, and other essential services.

Evictions and financial distress among beneficiaries.

Emotional & Reputational Consequences

Demoralization and mental health issues among staff.

PTSD due to financial instability and abrupt changes.

Loss of credibility and reputational risk due to project closures.

Future Uncertainty

Concerns over continued donor support.

Difficulty planning long-term projects due to financial instability.

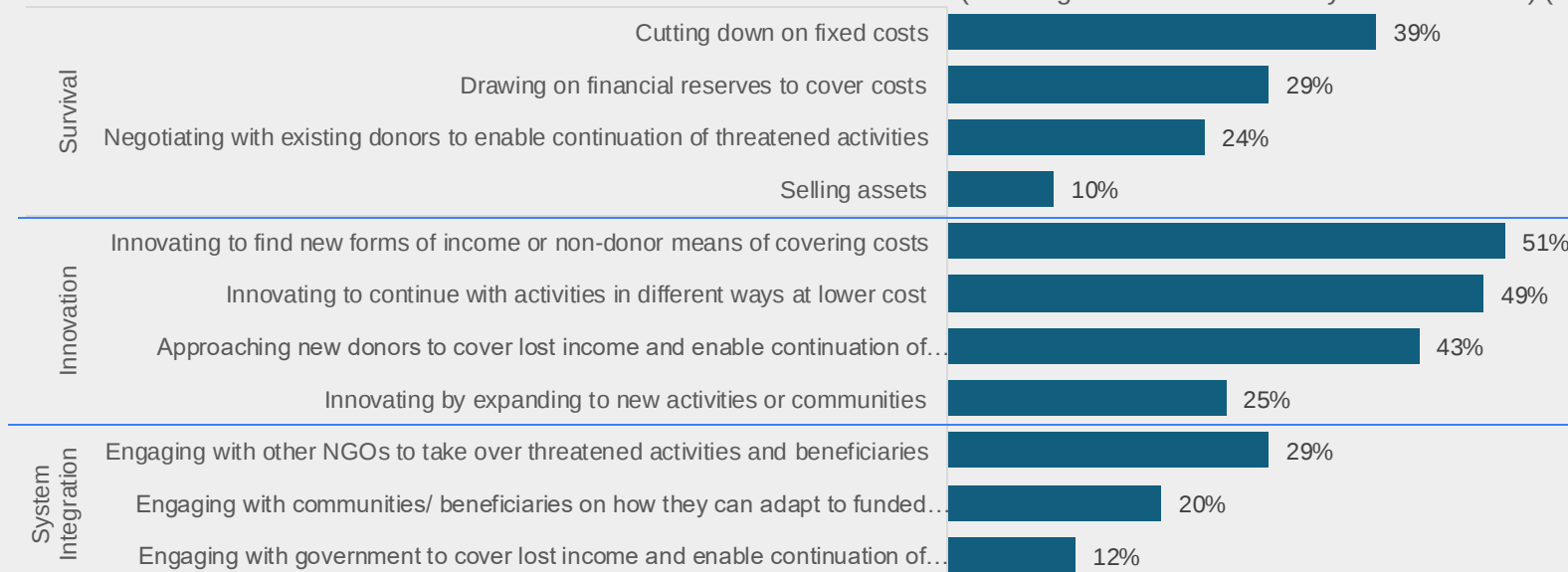
Fear of further funding cuts by US-based donors and potentially from other countries.

Affected organisations are adapting to the funding freeze in various ways

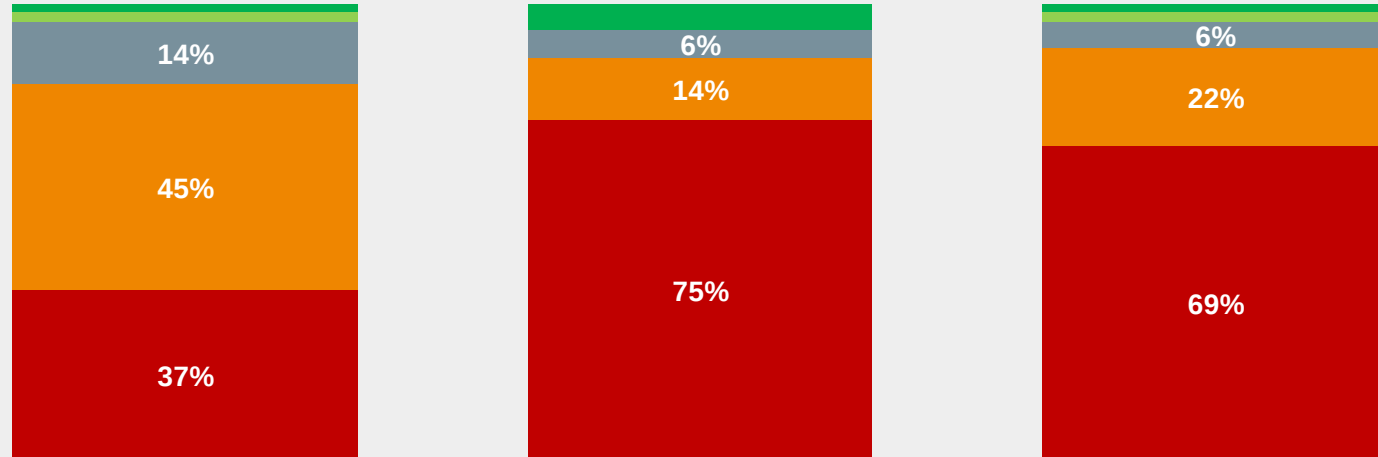


Most are still in survival mode, given the novelty and uncertainty of the situation, but there are already forms of innovation and system integration.

(% of organisations affected by loss of income) (N=51)



Education professionals expect the aid freeze to have a large negative effect on the sector and the country in the next 12 months.



Effect on your organisation Effect on the South African social development sector Effect for South African society and people

■ Large negative effect ■ Small negative effect ■ No effect / neutral ■ Small positive effect ■ Large positive effect

Summary Impact of US Aid Stop Orders on South African Education Sector (survey of 111 organisations, status 22 Feb 2025)



Scale of Impact

46%

of Education
Organizations
Affected



Severe Financial Losses & Retrenchments

397

Associates &
Contractors lost

178

Core Staff
retrenched

Funding lost for both
past and future
expenses



Most Affected Regions

Gauteng,
KZN,
Eastern
Cape



Key Programs Stopped or Scaled Down Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Training, literacy,
Grade R math
materials

Workshops & Training

Leadership, DEI,
youth programs

Advocacy & Awareness

HIV prevention,
anti-human
trafficking



Major Consequences

Increased
**vulnerability of
at-risk groups**
(children, HIV+
individuals, special
needs)

Operational disruptions

Cancelled research
& public health
impact

Emotional toll

PTSD & mental
health strain on staff



Future Uncertainty

Risk of further
**funding cuts &
donor
withdrawals**

Struggles with
**long-term
planning & NGO
sustainability**

The data on which this presentation is based is freely available and has been shared with all respondents who requested it.

To request a copy, contact
aidfreeze@socialimpactinsights.co.za

