

#RevivingTownshipEconomies campaign helps to restore small businesses

Small businesses are in crisis following the devastation caused by the recent looting and vandalism which swept across Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. What began as a response by supporters of the former President Jacob Zuma, soon descended into rampant destruction affecting hundreds of small businesses and costing South Africa's already fragile economy billions. So says Alef Meulenberg, CEO of Afrika Tikkun NPC, observing the aftermath of the violent looting sprees.



Alef Meulenberg, CEO of Afrika Tikkun NPC

Township economies have suffered most as a result of the impulsive and misguided acts of those who took part in looting, targeting the same small businesses which are the backbone of these communities. Responding to the call to join hands with communities in repairing some of the damage done, Afrika Tikkun NPC has launched its #RevivingTownshipEconomies campaign. The initiative aims to assist in the rebuilding of community-based organisations severely affected by the protests across South Africa.

“It is extremely disheartening to witness the destruction and weakening of structures and businesses that are the fabric of vibrant communities,” says Meulenberg. “It is these very structures that have helped us build relationships in these communities that have helped our services impact even the most hard-to-reach places especially during the Covid-19 hard lockdowns.”

The urgency of the situation small businesses find themselves in cannot be understated. The damages caused by the protests are estimated at more than R5bn for the retail industry alone, according to analysis by Business Leadership South Africa. More than 800 stores have reportedly been looted and 100 completely burnt.

Time to rebuild and restore

“We now look forward to working with various concerned parties to begin to rebuild township economies one business at a time. The strategies and resources that go into supporting small businesses are designed for the long-haul and we aim to create a lasting impact on the businesses we support that will also benefit the communities that rely on them.” Our partners at Afrika Tikkun Services are also providing support for this initiative in the form of training resources.

Afrika Tikkun has begun the selection process for small medium businesses to receive support, particularly in the hard-hit Greater Johannesburg Region. The NPC will soon extend their support to other affected areas in the country. Organisations will be contacted to identify their needs both in terms of funding and other resources.

The success Afrika Tikkun has achieved over the past 27 years is largely owed to strong partnerships with a range of public and private organisations who have helped grow and maintain wide reach with lasting impact.

“We are calling for donations from the public, donors, partners and friends of Afrika Tikkun in the spirit of rebuilding these organisations in the aftermath of the protests. These can be monetary donations or donations in kind,” says Meulenberg. “Those who wish to extend a helping hand are urged to visit www.satownships.co.za to access our donation channels.”

The funds will come directly to Afrika Tikkun but the organisation will act only as a repository. These donations will be distributed directly to the organisations once the campaign is over, later this year. Organisations will receive monetary support or donations in kind to help rebuild their businesses.

“Most of the targeted establishments are currently not trading, meaning employees are not receiving an income. Some of the immediate needs we are tending to include food parcels and material to help them rebuild damaged infrastructure,” Meulenberg explains. The campaign is expected to run until the end of September 2021.

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