

Final R500k for children's charities as StreetSmart SA closes its doors

After 19 years and R14m raised for children's charities, StreetSmart South Africa has ceased operations. As part of its farewell, the NGO disbursed a final R500,000 to 19 children's charities across the country.



Image: Supplied

Founded in 2005 under the leadership of Margi Biggs, with Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu as its patron, StreetSmart South Africa raised money for vulnerable children by aligning with hospitality partners and businesses across the country.

Diners and business patrons of participating fundraising partners have been donating to StreetSmart at their own discretion, by adding an additional amount for this purpose to their bills. Every cent collected this way has been directed to charities that run educational and skills training and family re-unification programmes for street and other vulnerable children.

StreetSmart's support has uniquely included the paying of salaries to the many social workers, auxiliary social workers, family re-integration workers, street-outreach workers, skills trainers, aftercare teachers, as well as school-bridging facilitators - not where most CSI departments or trusts usually allocate their funds.

StreetSmart has maintained detailed oversight for each funded programme to ensure that all funds have been spent as

mutually agreed with the relevant charities.

However, the organisation has had to shut its doors because it can no longer cover its own running costs. Until now, these have been funded by sponsorships, fundraisers, corporate and other donor organisations, whose own pressures have been mounting in the face of the persistently depressed South African economy.

Said board chair Zaid Adams: “StreetSmart SA has always guaranteed that every rand raised by our fundraising partners would go towards helping children to build life and learning skills. Ironically, since the post-Covid bounce back, fundraising partners have started to come on board again to play their part. But the simple reality is that in the present economic climate, financial support from other sponsors, donors and various fundraising initiatives has proved insufficient to cover our own costs. That makes it impossible for us to continue operating. We shall cease fundraising at the end of [January]. This will be followed by a final audit before winding down the company.”

He confirmed that since 2005, StreetSmart has:

- Disbursed R14m to 36 charitable organisations working with children
- Funded over 304 different programmes to improve the lives of children
- Helped over 18,000 vulnerable children and their families

“It is very sad, but the Board is proud of the real impact we have made in children’s lives over the past almost 19 years. We are proud of surviving Covid; and very proud that we close this chapter with a significant R500,000 donation to children’s welfare. Our heart-felt gratitude goes out to all who have supported us over the past almost 19 years and made these donations possible.”

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