



24 April 2023

Joint statement: Equal Education and the Equal Education Law Centre welcome National Treasury's three year extension of the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant to help tackle overcrowding in our schools

Equal Education (EE) and the Equal Education Law Centre (EELC) welcome the decision by National Treasury to maintain the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant (SIBG) for another three financial years. We also welcome the Department of Basic Education's (DBE) decision to put overcrowding on its national agenda for this year. Both decisions come at a time when there are still huge historic infrastructure backlogs and a lot of work needs to be done to #FixOurSchools.

The SIBG, which gives the DBE funds to urgently address the worst school infrastructure problems through the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative (ASIDI) programme, was meant to end in March 2023 without having met its original targets. The extension of this grant is a big victory because we have in the past raised [concerns](#) about National Treasury's proposed merging of the SIBG into the Education Infrastructure Grant (EIG).

The urgent need to address classroom shortages and overcrowding in schools was the motivation for extending the SIBG. According to the DBE's latest information, over 8 000 schools in the country have a shortage of classrooms, with over 70 000 additional classrooms needed to address overcrowding in our schools. Because education departments measure school overcrowding in an overly simplified way, we know that the actual classroom shortage is much higher. The extension of the SIBG, despite poor spending since its introduction in 2011, will provide much-needed additional funds to fast-track school infrastructure delivery and, hopefully, lessen the current infrastructure crisis.

Even though keeping the SIBG conditional grant will help infrastructure delivery and assist the DBE with fulfilling its legal duty under the Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for Public School Infrastructure, it is crucial that National Treasury, the DBE, and provinces investigate a suitable approach to the eventual SIBG-EIG merger while ensuring that school infrastructure delivery is not compromised.

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