

End job losses! Fight poverty and unemployment!

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South African mining, manufacturing and farming are losing thousands of jobs. And thousands more workers have been told they will lose their jobs in a few weeks.

Even before this job loss bloodbath, unemployment was too high, with two out of every five workers unable to find a job. And every employed worker is supporting other family members, including young people who left school but can't find work. So for every worker who loses their job, five to ten people suffer impoverishment and hunger. Mass unemployment means our communities are being torn apart by joblessness, poverty and despair.

At the same time, many workers are still facing exploitation on the job. In workplaces, apartheid continues, even if it has ended on TV and in legislation. There has often been no real change in access to training, promotions, job security and facilities. Employers are casualising and outsourcing workers so as to get around the labour laws.

In our communities, many local governments are emphasising cost recovery over service delivery. The cost of water and electricity is soaring while many households still have no access at all. Pre-paid meters make life even harder for poor families.

Some of the biggest and examples of lost jobs include:

- In mining, more than 4500 jobs disappeared with the liquidation of DRDGold's North West operations, while Harmony Gold is seeking to retrench another 12 000 miners and the diamond mines want to retrench over 1000.
- The clothing industry is losing around 1000 jobs a month, including the threatened closure of the Rex Trueform factory with the loss of 1200 jobs.
- 4000 farm workers could lose their jobs because of the drought.

In just one poor, small town, Dimbaza in the Eastern Cape, the clothing industry has been virtually wiped out. It employs less than 800 workers, compared to around 6000 three years ago.

Overall employment grew last year. This is welcome news, but most of these new jobs were in construction and retail, which are mostly badly paid and casual. Meanwhile we are losing economic capacity and employment from the core of the economy. In the first quarter of 2005, manufacturing production actually declined, and gold output has fallen to levels last seen in 1931.

We demand action to stop job losses!

Unemployment and retrenchments are a national crisis. But business and even government refuse to take real action.

Too often, employers see retrenchment as the first and best way to solve their problems.

Too often, government is afraid to put pressure on business – and workers pay the price.

Some in government and business say that some industries, including gold mining, are doomed and cannot be saved. *That is simply not true.* The bosses and the government can save gold mining for another thirty years – or they can decide to kill it now.

We have to find solutions to the crisis of jobs and poverty! We cannot afford 'business as usual'!

COSATU's demands

In many workplaces, strong unions have stopped mass retrenchments. Now we must use our power to save jobs across the country. We must demand action to create new jobs for all our people, to end racism and exploitation in the workplace, and to ensure access to services in our communities.

From business, we want:

1. A promise to support our industry by buying South African. Retailers must stock at least 75% local goods.
2. More effort to avoid job losses. The mining companies must invest more in South Africa, rather than buying foreign mines.
3. An end to casualisation and racist practices in our workplaces. Any casual worker employed for over three months should be treated as permanent.

From government, we want:

1. Stronger pressure on business to save jobs. When the bosses announce mass retrenchments, the government should be helping unions and communities to fight them. It can use its power and resources to save jobs.
2. All government policies must aim to grow employment. Government must do more to ensure a competitive exchange rate. Since 2002, the high rand has wiped out exports while the country is flooded with imports. The government must support growth and job creation in all major industries.
3. Government must also buy locally. Even now, government does not require its agencies to favour South African goods and services.
4. Trade policies should aim to save and create jobs. South Africa has the right to impose tariffs to protect industries threatened by rising imports.
5. Government must provide services like water and sanitation for all our people, at prices we can afford. Local governments must stop trying to privatise basic services, which leads to job losses and higher costs for our people.

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