



Pretoria-based Ifa Lethu Foundation may have to close its doors if it does not receive emergency funding

Apartheid artefact repatriation firm cash strapped

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Published: 2011/03/15 06:33:54 PM

Pretoria-based Ifa Lethu Foundation which repatriates arts and heritage objects taken out of SA during the apartheid years, may have to close its doors if it does not receive substantive core funding, either from the private sector, or from government.

This emerged on Wednesday last week when the CEO of the non- governmental organisation, Narissa Ramdhani, appeared before the Portfolio Committee on Arts and Culture in Parliament.

She told committee members that the organisation which is also involved in creative entrepreneurial development in poor rural areas and in human rights education in schools, is under threat.

Among the works repatriated from abroad are those by Gerard Sekoto, Dumile Feni, Eric Mbatha, Nat Mokgosi and Siphon Ndebele.

Narissa Ramdhani, CEO of Ifa Lethu, told Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Arts and Culture in Parliament that last week that said while the Department of Arts and Culture had provided initial seed funding and ad-hoc allocations, this was not sufficient to support the foundation's continued work.

Annelie Lotriet, the Democratic Alliance's Shadow Minister of Arts and Culture said the lack of support for Ifa Lethu had "serious implications for the repatriation of a large body of works of art with important cultural and heritage significance in SA".

"I shall be writing to the Minister of Arts and Culture to request an investigation, in collaboration with the Ifa Lethu board, into an alternative funding model that will ensure the sustainability of the foundation. We cannot allow a situation where significant works that provide important insight into a period of our history cannot be repatriated to SA to be enjoyed and appreciated by all South Africans", she said.

Yesterday Ms Ramdhani said that Ifa Lethu had done valuable work that did not seem to be recognised.

"We have used this collection to run human rights workshops in schools around the country. It was also one of the main art attractions at Constitution Hill during the World Cup. We find it is possible to find funding for individual projects, but not for the running of the organisation which costs R2m a year to run with a skeleton staff of four. Unless proper funding is found, we will have to close down in two years time".

Ms Ramdhani said Ifa Lethu currently had a "The collection is currently travelling abroad to Australia where it will be shown in Brisbane and then Canberra. "We are flying the heritage flag for SA. We really need support for the work we do", she said. Ms Ramdhani said.

Mack Lewele, communications director for the Department of Arts and Culture said he was not aware of Ifa Lethu, and would have to speak to the acting Director General, Veliswa Baduza, but that she was away on business.