

Informal sector welcomes relief funding

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Informal business owners, whose businesses had to shut down due to lockdown measures, have welcomed the emergency income grant of N\$750, which will support households to cope with their reduced income and other economic hardships resultant from the Covid-19 outbreak.

Finance minister Ipumbu Shiimi announced the multi-billion-dollar economic stimulus and relief package yesterday, saying the grant is a once-off payment to people who have lost their jobs, either in the informal or formal sector, essentially to stave off the vulnerabilities that may arise.

Shiimi said those qualifying are Namibians between the ages 18 and 60, who have lost their jobs and do not receive any other social grants.

“Payment will be made by government in collaboration with the Social Security Commission, and other financial sector and information communication technology partners within seven days, who utilise the banking sector’s ATM infrastructure. The total amount for this measure is costed at a maximum of N\$562 million, based on the national poverty line of about N\$250 per person per week,” he said.

Kapana seller from

Okahandja park Alina Mwandingi, whose business came to a sudden halt, told New Era she is excited about the news.

“I am really struggling and if I get assistance, it will be good,” said Mwandingi, who lives with 14 family members. She is the only breadwinner at home, selling cow heads at a nearby bar. Of the 14 people, four are her late sister’s children whom she cares for.

Another informal trader, Fillemon Nghishitali from Havana informal settlement, will lose an income of N\$9 000 over the next 21 days. He had a barbershop, as well as a fruit and vegetable stand in Grysblock.

He had earlier bemoaned the negative impact of Covid-19 on his business, which means he will not be able to provide for his family.

Nghishitali said, “If it is true, it will assist us these coming days and we are happy”. Okahandja Park resident Ishmael Mbekele, who heads a family of 13, was equally jubilant. Before the ban on street vending, he used to sell apples, sweets and soup, amongst others, on the side of the road. Mbekele said it is a good initiative and will help households.

Shiimi added government is conscious of the negative economic and social impacts of the Covid-19 outbreak on the economy, businesses and households. He said the stimulus and relief package amounts to N\$8.1 billion, comprising of N\$5.9 billion as direct support to businesses, households and cash flow acceleration payments for services rendered to government, as well as N\$2.3 billion of additional support guaranteed by government.

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