



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

Ministry of Finance

LAUNCH STATEMENT

Emergency Income Grant

of the

Economic Stimulus and Relief Package

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Minister of Finance

Check against delivery

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*Fellow Namibians,
Members of the media,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

1. Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for your kind response to our invitation today. Let me also thank all the media houses for transmitting this message to the public and to all Namibians countrywide.
2. On the 1 April 2020, the Government announced the First Phase of the Economic Stimulus and Relief Package, worth N\$8.1 billion in total. The objective of the package is to address urgent funding needs in the health sector, mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on the economy and jobs and support livelihoods at household level.
3. An integral part of the package is the Emergency Income Grant (EIG), amounting to N\$562.0 million. The grant is a once-off payment of N\$750.00 in cash grant per qualifying person, on the basis of a set of eligibility criteria. This is estimated to benefit up to 739,000 Namibians.
4. Today marks the launch of the Emergency Income Grant. Over the next days and hours, information on the details of the grant and the processes to be followed will continue to be rolled out. Applications for the grant will commence tomorrow, Good Friday, 10th April 2020 until the 30th April 2020. The payments will start on Tuesday 14 April, 2020 going forward.

Who are the beneficiaries of this grant?

5. The grant is targeted at adult Namibian individuals, 18 to 59 years of age who:-
 - (i) have lost jobs or income, in part or full, in the informal sector of the economy as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak,
 - (ii) are unemployed, taking into consideration that the effects of COVID-19 and related public health protective measures have weakened the means of support and subsistence income across the country.
6. Exclusions are for persons who are:-
 - (i) below the age of 18 (who are neither employed or unemployed because they are supposed to be in school),
 - (ii) employed and have not experienced reduction in wages,

- (iii) persons receiving any form of state social grants and Government support such as Namibia Students Financial Assistance, and
 - (iv) had jobs or experienced reduced wages in the formal sector.
7. Persons who have lost jobs or reduced wages in the formal sector of the economy will be supported through grants by the Social Security Commission. The support for companies and businesses in severely affected sectors will be rendered through conditional wage subsidies and Government guarantee-backed preferential loans. This will be done in collaboration with the Social Security Commission.
8. There is, however, a caution for persons to benefit from this grant. Applicants must submit correct and truthful information. Each applicant is expected to affirm that the information provided is correct and truthful. Such information could be verified with the National Police and other means as well as for tax law enforcement purposes.
9. I must emphasize that criminal charges will be pressed against those who are found to have falsely claimed benefits under this scheme and recovery procedures for false claims will be instituted.

Modalities for application, assessment and disbursement

10. To ensure speedy application, assessment and disbursement of the grants, the following modalities will be followed:-
- (i) applicants will nominate themselves and make application via cell phone short message services (sms) to MTC number **141222**, free of charge,
 - (ii) MTC will send out a trigger sms to all MTC Sim card holders to prompt the application process.
 - (iii) applicants will answer a set of predetermined questions with details such as the person name and surname, national identity number, preferred cell phone number (through which the benefits will be paid) and the region of residence.
 - (iv) noting that not all people own cell phones, up to ten persons can make use of one cell phone number which they commonly use at household level and make their own cash withdrawal arrangements.

- (v) For ease of administration, the payments will only be made via digital wallets of participating commercial banks(FNB Namibia, Bank Windhoek and Standard Bank). Applicants will be requested to indicate a commercial bank of their choice where their digital wallets will be distributed.
11. The database of applicants so generated by MTC will be subjected to rigorous validation checks against the eligibility criteria. This activity will be conducted by MobiPay Namibia, free of charge.
 12. For all the successful applications, the payments will be done by the participating commercial banks within 72 hours of the approval of the application.
 13. For the purpose of authenticity, transparency and accountability, Deloitte Namibia, an accounting and audit firm, will audit both the MobiPay information systems for data integrity as well as the payments to be made by commercial banks.
 14. An information outreach will be extended to Regional Councillors through Regional Governors to facilitate the identification of persons who may not have access to cell phones or those of their trusted acquaintances. The Offices of the Constituency Councillors may be called upon to facilitate access to cell phones for this category of citizens so as to facilitate payments.

Conclusion

15. To conclude, this Emergency Income Grant will make a once-off cash payment to about 749,000 Namibians.
16. Consideration for similar arrangements in the future will only depend on the availability of resources, which are increasingly limited due to the adverse effects of COVID-19 on the economy and public revenue.
17. The Government, therefore, urges the beneficiaries to use the grant funds prudently. This benefit should necessarily be earmarked to secure the most basic needs for sustenance and improving quality of life such as securing basic health and nutritional needs during this time of unprecedented national experience.

18. All the logistical arrangements for the application, processing, validation and disbursements of this intervention measure are now in place. Applications will start tomorrow, Good Friday, 10 April 2020.
19. During the ensuing period, details of the grant and processes will be shared with the public through various media to encourage full participation of the intended beneficiaries. There will be translation into local vernacular languages, thanks to pro bono funding by Bank Windhoek in collaboration with the Namibia Broadcasting Corporation.
20. MTC Call centre will assist applicants with the necessary clarifications during the application process. A set of Frequently Asked Questions and responses is prepared and it is herewith made publicly available.
21. Let me use this opportunity to thank the collaborating institutions; MTC Namibia, MobiPay, Deloitte and Commercial banks for having partnered the Government and volunteered the use of their infrastructure and resources free of charge in the spirit of patriotism and whole-of-society approach to fighting and defeating COVID-19 in our country.
22. I encourage the qualifying Namibian citizens to apply for the grant and ensure the prudent use of the proceeds.
23. This being said, it is now my pleasure to declare that the Emergency Income Grant of the First Phase of the Economic Stimulus and Relief Package officially launched.

Thank you