

JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

SOCIAL PROTECTION AND COVID-19: IMPACTS ON INFORMAL ECONOMY WORKERS IN RURAL AND URBAN ZAMBIA

Dr. Isaac Kabelenga (PhD) (Principal Investigator), isaackabelenga@gmail.com; Phone: +260-971 58 54 32;

James Chola (Co-Investigator), jchola@cavendish.co.zm; Phone: +260 978 53 17 31,

Associations of Informal Economy Workers in Zambia and the

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Zambia Office, info@fes-zambia.org; Phone: +260 211 295579

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Introduction

Zambia first recorded two cases of Covid-19 on 18 March, 2020. However, little was known about how Covid-19 had impacted on different categories of informal economy workers in rural and urban Zambia. In order to address this gap and inform policy and practice on how to mitigate the negative impacts of Covid-19 on informal economy workers, a qualitative study was undertaken by Kabelenga and Chola between September and October, 2020 in six (6) districts of Zambia which included both rural and urban districts. Respondents were associations of informal economy workers and some government officers. Findings of the study were validated by informal economy workers who participated in the study and government officers on 18th February, 2021. In this press release statement, we would like to invite the Government of the Republic of Zambia to seriously engage with the findings of the study in order to reduce the damage of the pandemic and also future shocks on the informal economy workers.

Roles of Academics/Researchers and FES in this study

In this study the roles of academics/ researchers were to design the study, collect and analyze scientific data and provide evidence-based knowledge to inform policies and practices on how to mitigate the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on informal economy workers in rural and urban Zambia.

The roles of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) as a non-state actor supports and strengthens social democracy, in this study was to: provide platforms for dialogue, and offering expertise and political consultation and actively supporting international cooperation.

Findings of the study

At the time of this study (16th September to 23rd October, 2020), and validation meeting on 18th February, 2021, all respondents in rural and urban districts reported that Covid-19 pandemic had negatively affected all categories of informal economy workers in similar ways. It had weakened and/or destroyed the economic, social, cultural, nutritional, psychological, and agricultural and environment well-being of all informal economy workers. Sadly enough,

despite all the negative impacts, the overwhelming majority of the associations of informal economy workers reported that they had not received any emergency Covid-19 social protection support from the Government of Zambia. Only Alliance for Zambia Informal Economy Associations (AZIEA), Association of Vendors and Marketeers (AVEMA), Older Persons Associations and Associations for the Blind and Disabled reported that some of their members received some assistance in form of cash, facemasks, and foodstuffs from the government. Similarly, at the time of this study (16th September to 23rd October, 2020), all the associations of the informal economy workers and government officers who participated in the study reported that none of their members had accessed any of Covid-19 emergency response economic stimulus packages. That was mainly attributable to hard conditions attached to stimulus packages which most of the informal economy workers were not able to meet. However, at the time of validating findings of the study on 18th February, 2021, some respondents reported that that few artists in North-Western Province had received stimulus packages. Findings of this study have established that to mitigate the negative effects of Covid-19 on informal economy workers, multiple forms of social protection are simultaneously needed by each category of the association of the informal economy workers. However, the major ones should be provision of: (1) 'economic' social protection, (2) 'health' social protection, and (3) 'old age' social protection.

For full details, please read the report. It is available on [our website](#).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, which have been generated in a methodologic and transparent manner, we advise a detailed examination of the effective distribution of the Zambian emergency funds and stimulus packages in relation to the pandemic. The programmes should, where necessary, be readjusted in such a manner that they work according to their intentions and the needs of those they were designed for.

In addition to that, this pandemic should be treated as only one of various challenges to the economy. Especially, the informal economy must be assisted to become more resilient to such shocks.

The study introduces numerous detailed recommendations that aim at reducing harms of current and future shocks on the informal economy workers of Zambia. These recommendations have been generated through interviews and workshops with the respondents of the study: associations of informal economy workers and some government officers.

We invite the Government of Zambia and other development partners to hold constructive consultations in order to effectively support the informal economy workers during such times of crisis.

The full report is available on [our website](#)