



PRESS RELEASE

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UN Statement on COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfers

Lusaka, 1 September 2020: The United Nations (UN) in Zambia has noted with concern recent media reports on the COVID-19 Emergency Cash Transfer programme (ECT). This is a Government programme which the UN is supporting through the Ministry of Community Development and Social Services (MCDSS), in keeping with the UN's core values and principles of neutrality and impartiality with utmost respect for national sovereignty and ownership with a clear focus of leaving no one behind. The UN wishes to clarify as follows:

Within the framework the Government's Social Protection Agenda, the UN has been supporting the Social Cash Transfer (SCT) programme, targeting the most poor and vulnerable in the communities, through technical assistance and mobilisation of resources. The SCT programme has been running in Zambia since 2003. The UN Joint Programme on Social Protection involves a number of UN agencies – UNICEF, WFP, ILO and UNDP.

In the recent past, the SCT programme has been expanded to address the impact of natural disasters and COVID-19 on lives and livelihoods through separate Emergency Cash Transfer initiatives. In response to the drought conditions in many parts of the country in 2019, the UN supported the MCDSS with short term Emergency Cash Transfers to 92,202 households based on those already registered in the SCT programme, selected in 23 drought-affected districts.

As part of the Government of Zambia's COVID-19 response plan, and in line with the UN Zambia's COVID-19 Emergency Appeal (food security and social protection pillars), the UN is now supporting the Government on a supplementary short-term Emergency Cash Transfer programme for vulnerable households affected by COVID-19. This programme will make monthly payments per household of 400 Kwacha over six months.

As stated above, the beneficiaries in this programme will be made up in part by those already registered in the SCT scheme, and additional households identified as either vulnerable or food insecure. To ensure careful targeting of the beneficiaries, it was agreed with the Government, among others, that this would be done in phases, preceded by a validated database of beneficiaries and a tight payment system. In total, the COVID-19 ECT programme will cover 18 districts and reach an estimated 249,200 households (approximately 1.2 million people).

The public has also been alerted to alleged activities being carried out by fraudsters who solicit money from the public in return for the promise of a future payment.

The UN wishes to condemn any attempt at derailing this very important social assistance programme. No potential ECT beneficiary is charged any registration fee. The UN will continue to support the Government to ensure that the right beneficiaries receive the necessary financial support they so deserve under the current difficult situation.

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For more information, please contact:

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