



Press Statement for Immediate Release

VISET Namibia calls on the City Police and the University of Namibia to implement an expedient solution to the plight of informal traders operating outside the University of Namibia's Main Campus in Windhoek for the sustainability of livelihoods

4 December 2024, Windhoek - The recent destruction of goods belonging to informal traders operating outside the University of Namibia's (UNAM) main campus in Windhoek is vehemently condemned by the Vendors Initiative for Social and Economic Transformation (VISET) Namibia. The Windhoek Observer Newspaper reported the incident on December 4, 2024, which sparked a public outcry and underscores the critical issue that negatively impacts the livelihoods of Namibians who depend on informal trading as their primary source of income.

We acknowledge and respect the fact that the City of Windhoek (CoW) has established by-laws to regulate informal trading operations in Windhoek, which confirms that street trading has become a permanent and significant feature of our developing economy. Although the affected traders may have violated these by-laws, we cannot ignore the reality that **PEOPLE MUST SURVIVE.**

Therefore, VISET Namibia urges the City Police and UNAM to work in conjunction with the CoW, whose strategic plan (2022 – 2027) aims to establish a **"Sustainable and Caring City by 2027"**. UNAM must consider measures to accommodate these traders, as they equally play a critical role in providing essential goods and services to the fragmented economic student population.

The actions taken by City Police raise serious concerns regarding the economic viability of traders, it is important to clarify that the police do not possess the authority to vandalise or destroy trader's goods; their role is limited to confiscation. Such actions undermine the fundamental right of individuals to earn a living. The informal sector (street trading) issues are primarily peripheral due to disorganisation and non-registration, despite the fact that they constitute a substantial urban population and workforce. This has significantly impeded meaningful engagement with solution holders, as evidenced by today's events.

In response to the unfortunate incident, VISET Namibia calls upon all stakeholders involved to initiate a constructive dialogue with the informal traders, while noting their importance in contributing to the socio-economic fabric of our society. As a key institution for research, UNAM is well-positioned to propose viable solutions that can facilitate the coexistence of both informal and formal traders on its premises. Protecting their alternative livelihoods is essential, especially considering that Namibia currently lacks the capacity to integrate these traders into formal labour structures.

While we await the results of the 2024 census on employment, it is important to highlight findings from the Namibia Statistics Agency's 2018 Labor Force Survey (LFS), which indicates that 57.7% of employed individuals in Namibia are part of the informal sector. This statistic underscores the undeniable fact that the informal sector still plays a critical role in job creation and poverty alleviation in Namibia.

VISET encourages all parties to take a proactive approach to solutions that recognise and promote these traders' contributions, ensuring their continued presence as critical components of our economy.

END OF RELEASE

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