



'RIGHT NOW, I CANNOT SURVIVE'

The legacy effects of the Fishrot corruption scandal on fisheries workers' lives

A report by Frederico Links & Ester Mbathera





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November 2024

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Since 2021, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) has, in collaboration with Transparency International in Iceland (TI-Iceland), been advocating for compensation and restorative justice for the victims of the Fishrot corruption scandal.

Addressing corruption's effects should not simply be about punishing offenders; it should also involve redress for the losses suffered by the harmed communities.

The IPPR supports the development of frameworks where affected individuals or groups can seek compensation and participate in legal processes to achieve appropriate redress. This involvement can strengthen public trust in justice systems as well as highlighting corruption's impact on society.

The Namibians impacted by the Fishrot scandal are yet to receive adequate redress for the losses they have suffered. As a result, the IPPR calls for:

1. Samherji to issue a formal acknowledgement and apology for its role in Fishrot, directly addressing affected individuals, communities, and Namibian society at large.
2. Samherji to make full redress to directly affected and impacted individuals and communities for the disruption and devastation inflicted on their lives as a result of Fishrot.

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) would first like to thank and acknowledge all fisheries workers who consented to being interviewed and surveyed for this study.

Appreciation and acknowledgement are also expressed for the role played by representatives of fisheries workers and relevant unions in helping the IPPR to formulate the survey questionnaire and in facilitating communication with affected individuals.

We would like to give special thanks to the former fisheries workers, no longer based in Walvis Bay, who met our researchers in several locations across the north of Namibia to record their experiences.

Lastly, the IPPR would like to thank our research associates who worked on this study - Frederico Links and Ester Mbathera for authoring the report and Suzie Shefeni for assisting with the transcription of interviews.

This report is available as PDF download on the IPPR website as from 12 November 2024 at www.ippr.org.na

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November 2024

'Right now, I cannot survive'

The title of this report is taken from a statement made during an interview by a 37-year-old former fisherman - we'll call him Fisherman 36 - who is literally struggling to survive at the coastal town of Walvis Bay since losing his job as a result of the alleged Fishrot fisheries corruption, that was reportedly perpetrated throughout the 2010s.

Fisherman 36's story is a heart-rending one of a life fallen apart.

He is a former Namsof Fishing Enterprises (Pty) Ltd fisherman, having worked for the company for five years as a deckhand on its fishing vessels, from 2012 to 2017.

After the company had its quotas reduced and consequently downsized as a result of the Fishrot corruption, Fisherman 36, along with many others, was let go.

He has lost everything in the years that followed - he is separated from his child and family, he had to sell a plot of land he had bought at his home town of Ongwediva, in the Oshana Region, and he lost many friends.

There is a brokenness to his tone and demeanour as he tells his story.

Fisherman 36's story is the story of many other former fisheries workers who were personally, economically and socially devastated as a consequence of the apparent corruption that surfaced publicly in late 2019.

In fact, 13 November 2024 marks five years since the Fishrot corruption scandal broke.

On the morning of 13 November 2019, Namibians woke up to the news of the country's biggest corruption scandal since independence - what has come to be known as Fishrot. Members of the Namibian cabinet in cahoots with local businessmen stood accused of receiving millions of dollars in bribes from a prominent Icelandic fishing company, called Samherji, in exchange for fishing quotas.

The story broke in Namibia and Iceland via *The Namibian* newspaper and RUV television - the Icelandic public broadcaster. They based much of their reporting on a trove of leaked Samherji documents and emails published online via Wikileaks.

In early December 2019 Al Jazeera screened a documentary, called *Anatomy of a Bribe*, exposing the activities of the Namibian politicians, prominent lawyers and businessmen implicated in the Fishrot affair.

The fact that today we know about so many elements of the alleged corruption that was

perpetrated is due in large part to Jóhannes Stefánsson, who was Samherji's former director of operations in Namibia.

Notably, five years later, while there has been considerable movement on the Namibian front in holding the implicated individuals accountable for their alleged corrupt acts, on the Icelandic side there has been disturbingly little done to bring the implicated Samherji officials to book for the damage wrought on the lives of Namibian fishermen, the Walvis Bay community and the far-flung rural communities that relied on fishermen's salaries.

This is the true tragedy of Fishrot - the many lives destroyed or stalled and dreams of a better life decimated for many.

This report follows on from the [one published in March 2024](#), that put a face to the tragedy of fishermen and fisheries workers by telling individual stories of the lives disrupted by the Fishrot corruption.

This report aims to demonstrate how widespread, long-lasting and ongoing the effects of the fisheries corruption are.

It is hoped that this report, along with the first one, will contribute to efforts to assist the former fishermen, like Fisherman 36, to get restitution for what has happened to them as a result of the Fishrot corruption.

Namibia, nor Iceland, can afford to simply move on from what has happened as a result of Fishrot. For as we noted in the introduction to the first report, the impacts of the alleged corruption continue to reverberate through the lives of individuals, communities and the society at large.

It is for this reason that the plight of those suffering as a result of Fishrot should not be forgotten, for there needs to be open and earnest discussion and reckoning with how something like Fishrot could have happened and what needs to be done to make sure it never happens again.

Shining a light on the suffering being endured by many helps us keep the related issues in sharp focus and begs us to not forget that resolving the Fishrot matter is not simply about prosecuting and penalising the corruption accused, but also about making right by those who have been directly harmed.

The IPPR calls on Icelandic fishing company Samherji to apologise for its role in Fishrot to the Namibians impacted, and urges full redress to affected individuals and communities. ■



In this second phase of the Fishrot human rights impact assessment 90 former fisheries workers were interviewed and / or surveyed. Following are the findings of the interviews and survey.

Personal and biographical information

- The vast majority (**74%**) of former fisheries workers are men between the ages of 30 and 49;
- The vast majority (**over 80%**) of the former fisheries workers originate from the four (4) north-central regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto;
- The vast majority (**about 85%**) of former fisheries workers have only attained an education level of grade 10 or lower;
- Most (**52%**) of the former fisheries workers said they were “single” at the time;
- The vast majority of fisheries workers (over 70%) have three (3) or more children, with most (**52%**) having four (4) or more children;
- The vast majority (**77%**) of former fisheries workers had been a fisheries worker for four or more years by the time they lost their jobs.

Employment and economic conditions

- **Almost 90%** of former fisheries workers have been unsuccessful in securing employment as fisheries workers, or any other employment, since losing their jobs due to Fishrot;
- **Over 80%** of former fisheries workers say they rely on family and friends for assistance;
- **91%** of the fisheries workers questioned say they receive the monthly N\$4,000 payment via the Government Employment Redress Program (GERP) instituted by the Namibian government since 2020;
- **95%** of former fisheries workers say they would like to return to being fisheries workers;
- **79%** of the former fisheries workers say they were on fixed term contracts while they were employed;
- **Over 86%** of former fisheries workers say they have fallen into poverty and debt, and lost many personal assets and property, as a result of having lost their jobs due to Fishrot and not being able to find meaningful employment since then;
- **95%** of former fisheries workers report not having enough food regularly for themselves and their families, with **53%** saying they don’t have enough food on a daily basis.



Social and community relations

- **36%** of former fisheries workers report being separated from their girlfriend / wife / partner and their children, while **55%** report having their extended family relations disrupted due to being long-term unemployed;
- **94%** of former fisheries workers perceive themselves as having lost respect in the eyes of their extended family;
- **92%** of former fisheries workers say they used to financially support or assist their extended families when they were employed;
- **82%** of former fisheries workers say they lost many friends in the wake of losing their jobs due to Fishrot;
- **92%** of former fisheries workers perceive that they have lost respect in their home community or home village due to being long-term unemployed;
- **94%** of the former fisheries workers report having regularly financially assisted in their home community or village while they were employed as fisheries workers;
- **76%** of former fisheries workers say they used to return more than twice a year to their home communities / villages when they were employed as fisheries workers;
- **51%** of former fisheries workers say they can no longer afford to regularly travel to their home communities / villages, with **42%** saying they can still afford to travel back at least once a year;
- **68%** of former fisheries workers say they have indulged in alcohol abuse since losing their jobs due to Fishrot;
- **89%** of former fisheries workers say they know a friend or former colleague who has been abusing alcohol since losing their job as a result of Fishrot.

What can be concluded from these figures?

- The alleged Fishrot corruption has left lasting and deepening damage in its wake, as most of the former fisheries workers – the Namsov Fishing Enterprises and Samherji workers – who were directly impacted by the alleged corruption have fallen deeper into personal, social and economic distress and hardship over the five years since the corruption came to light in November 2019.
- For many of the Namsov fisheries workers this distress and hardship has been endured for more than five years, since many have now been unemployed for six or seven years, or even longer.
- However, the distress and hardship continues to reverberate far beyond just the lives of the former fisheries workers. For as this study indicates, the lives of many children, families and communities that were dependent on the former fisheries workers have been significantly and / or severely economically up-ended by the alleged corruption. ■

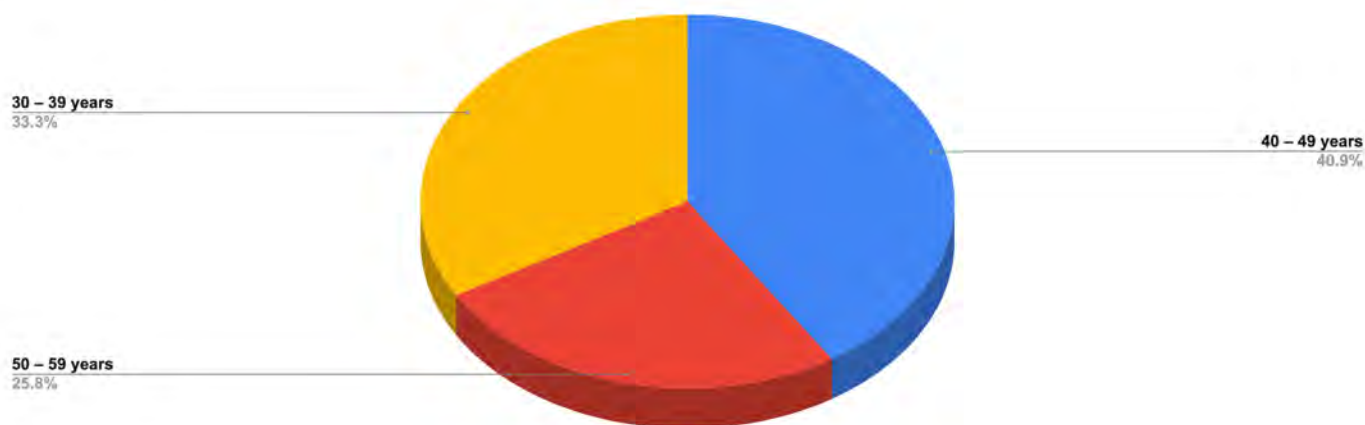


Research Findings

Personal and biographic information

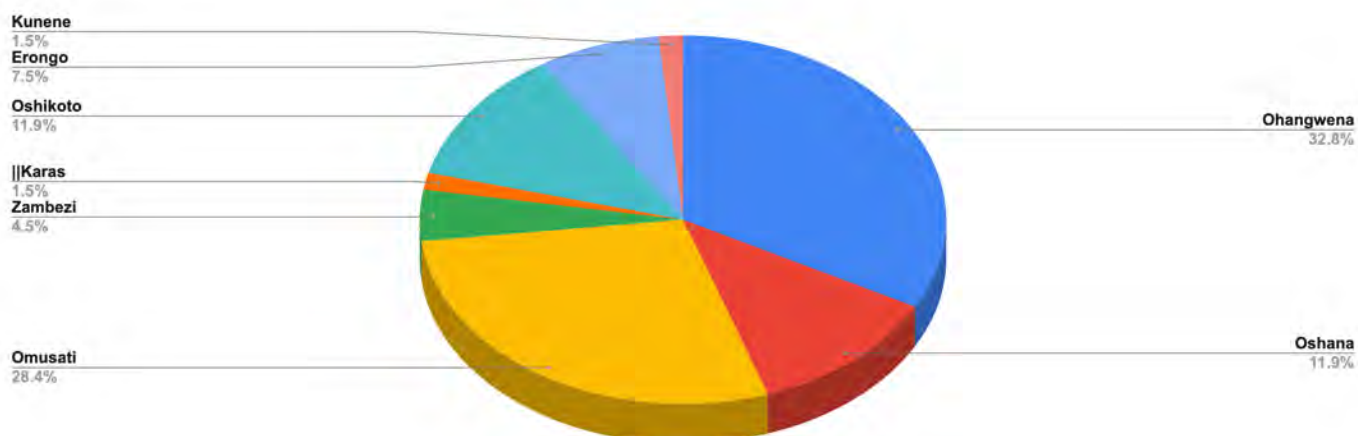
Most of the fisheries workers interviewed or surveyed are in their late 30s to late 40s. About 41% are in their 40s.

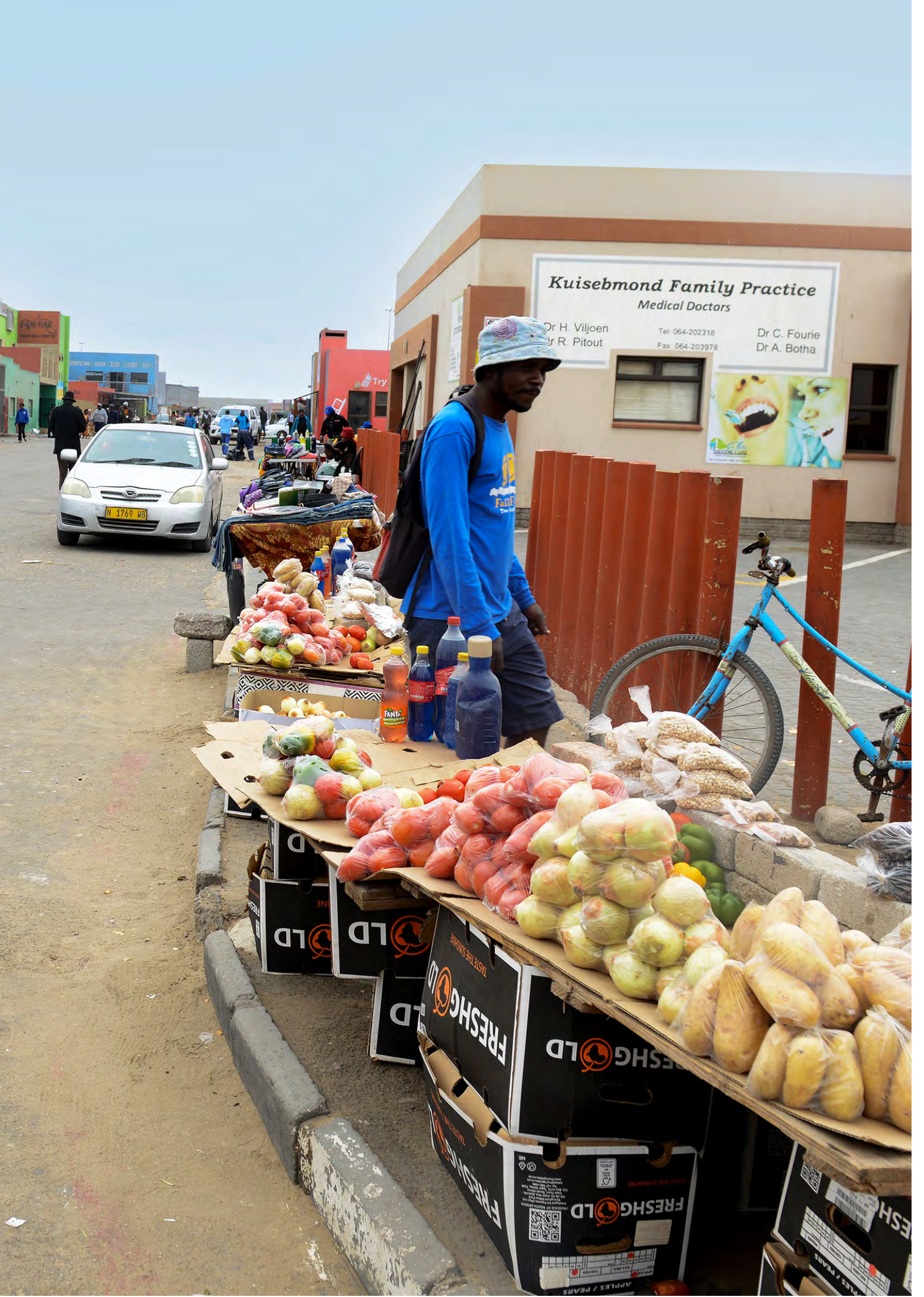
How old are you?



The north-central regions of Ohangwena and Omusati are the home regions of the majority of the former fisheries workers, accounting for over 60% of fisheries workers. The other two north-central regions, Oshana and Oshikoto, are also major source regions for fisheries workers.

Where are you from in Namibia?





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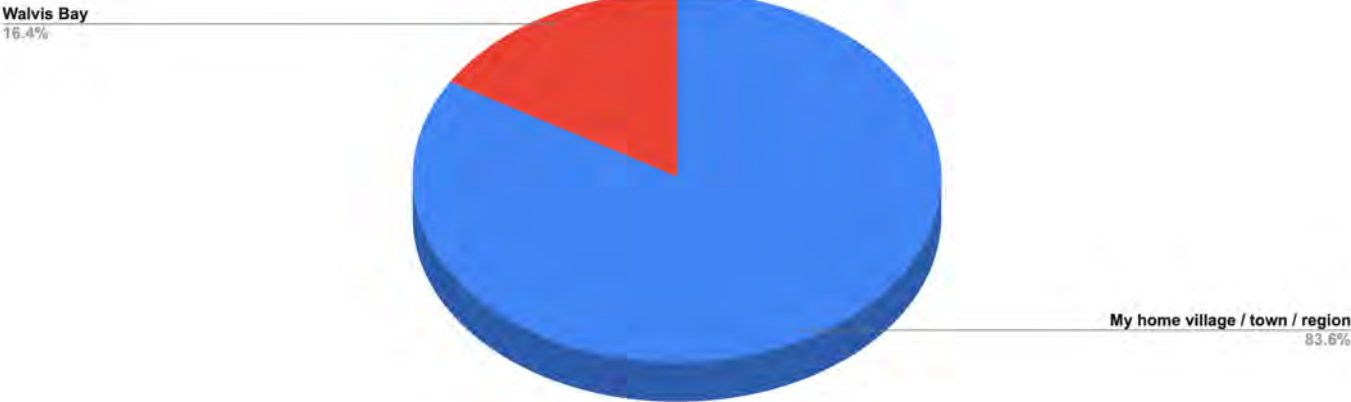
FRESHGOLD

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APPLES & PEARS

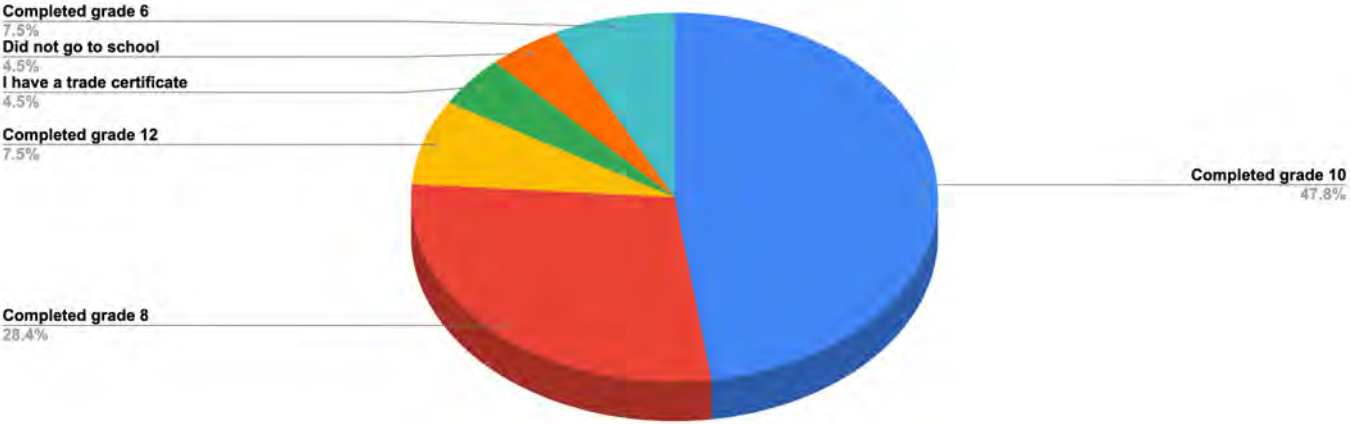
Most former fisheries workers interviewed or surveyed at Walvis Bay made it clear that they do not consider the town their home or place of permanent residence, but rather that it was just where they came to work. Over 83% said their primary home was their homestead back in their region of origin.

Where is your primary home?



The vast majority of former fisheries workers never completed school, with only 7.5% of them saying they completed grade 12, while most say they only made it as far as grade 10 (48%) followed by those who completed grade 8 (28%).

What is your level of education?



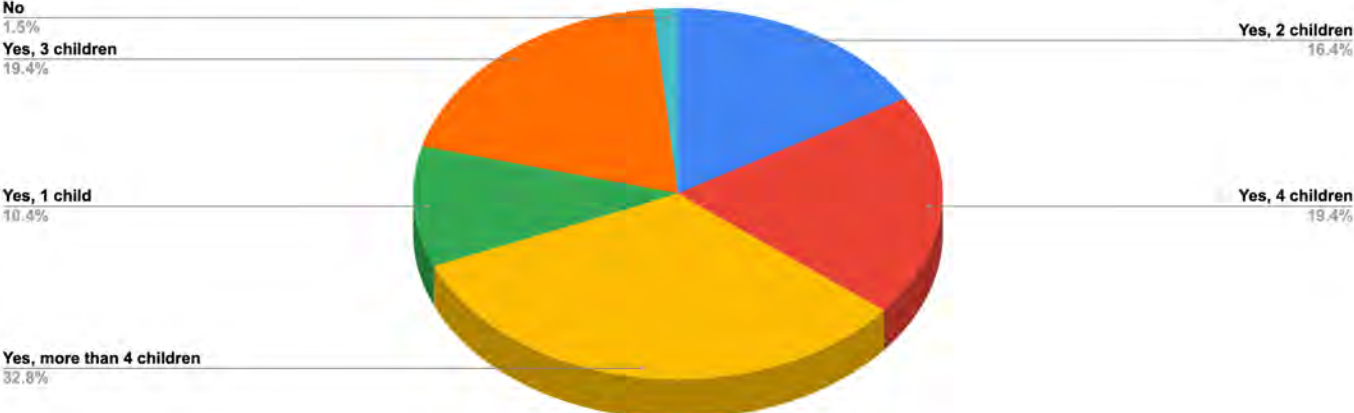
The majority of former fisheries workers referred to themselves as being single (52%) at the time, with all of them saying they had been in long term relationships while they were employed. Almost 33% say they are married and 15% indicated that they are in some sort of relationship, mostly of a casual nature, based on their descriptions.

Which one best describes your current relationship status?



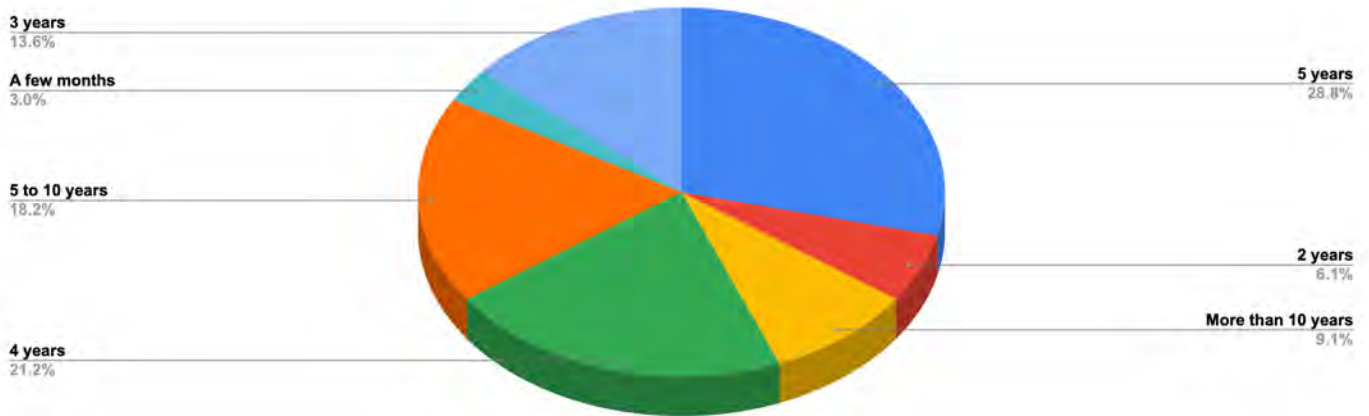
While the majority of former fisheries workers say they are single, almost all of them (98%) indicated that they have children, with about 52% saying they have four (4) or more children.

Do you have children? How many?



About 50% of former fisheries workers had been in the fisheries sector for 4 - 5 years when they lost their jobs due to the Fishrot corruption. Only about 27% of the workers surveyed indicated that they had been in the sector for 5 - 10 years, or longer, by the time they lost their jobs.

By the time you lost your job due to Fishrot, how long had you been a fisherman / fisheries worker?





Employment and economic conditions

Almost 90% of the former fisheries workers report not being able to find steady work, whether in the fisheries sector or any other sector, since losing their jobs as a result of the Fishrot corruption. Some say they tried finding work in other towns or even in Windhoek, but even then they have not managed to secure meaningful employment.

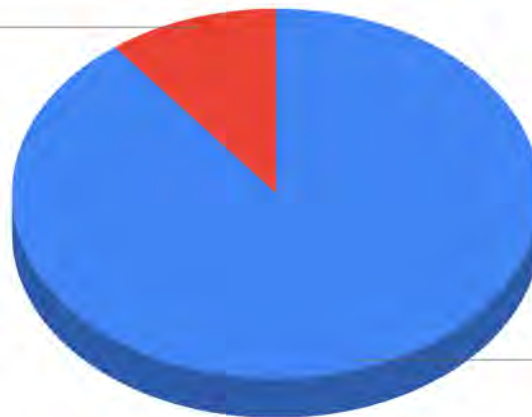


- Fisherman 37

I left Walvis Bay because I was evicted from the place where I was living, because I could no longer afford to pay rent. The landlords have replaced us with people who can afford to pay rent. We are unemployed."

Since losing your job due to Fishrot have you been able to find work as a fisherman / fisheries worker?

Yes
10.4%



No
89.6%

Over 80% say they primarily rely on financial assistance from relatives and friends to get by. Many of those who reported being reliant on family and friends for assistance indicate that they try doing odd jobs, or even micro-business ventures from time to time to generate some small income. About 12% indicated that their primary source of income was a micro or small business, usually street hawking, a tuck-shop or cutting hair.



- Fisherman 41

Now I am just depending on my friends and family. Sometimes they are sending me money to pay for where I am staying.

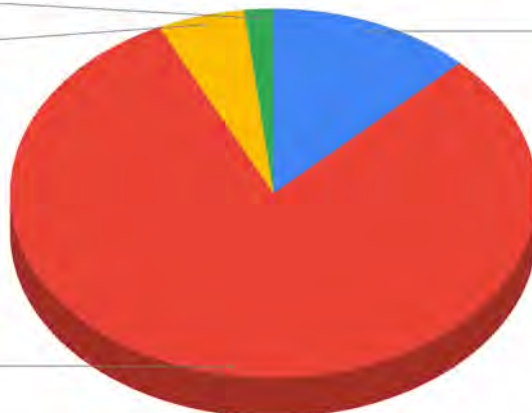
If no, how do you earn an income / make a living?

I do odd jobs

1.8%

I have found steady work in another sector

5.4%



I have a small business
12.5%

I rely on assistance from friends and family
80.4%

About 91% of those surveyed or interviewed indicated that they are recipients of the N\$ 4,000 stipend under the Government Employment Redress Program (GERP) that was instituted in 2020 by the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Recipients say that while they are grateful for the money, it is not enough to live on and not sustainable, and that they would much rather that government find a way to enable job-creation or assist them to move on by funding small business ventures or income generating projects that would assist them in getting back on their feet.

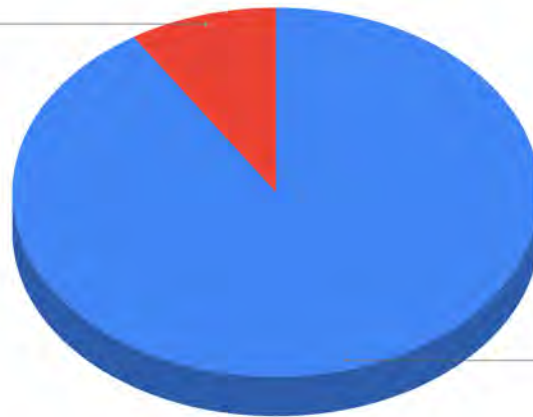


- Fisherman 38

Imagine now I am supposed to pay rent from N\$4,000 and buy food. I have four children and must try to support them from N\$4,000. I just support my children and my wife. Even though it is not enough.

Are you part of the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP)?

No
9.1%



Yes
90.9%

Over 95% of former fisheries workers say that they had liked the work they had been doing and that they would go back to fisheries work if the opportunity arose.

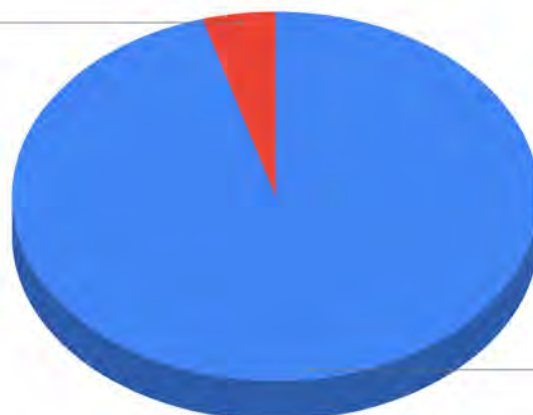


- Fisherman 30

Life was good. At least I was able to help my immediate family, my extended family. I had a house, a wife and kids, I had a car, but now I lost all those things. I lost everything.

Would you like to go back to being a fisherman / fisheries worker?

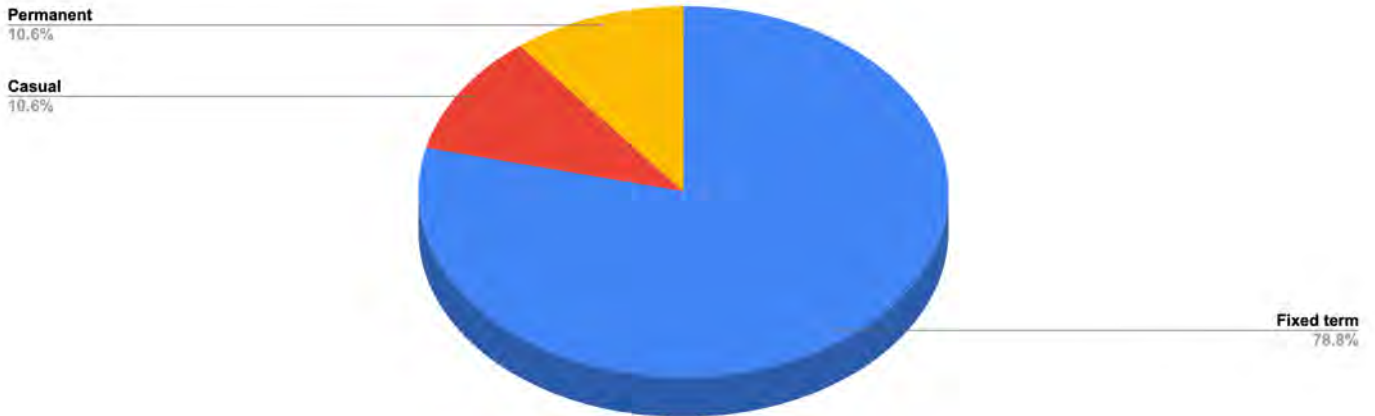
Maybe, if there's nothing else
4.5%



Yes, I liked the work and the pay
95.5%

Almost 79% of the former fisheries workers indicated that at the time they lost their jobs they had been on fixed-term contracts. Some say that they were in line for permanent employment at the point they were let go.

At the time you lost your job due to Fishrot, what was your employment status?



About 40% of former fisheries workers say they have amassed debts since losing their work and have had to sell off property and assets to pay these debts. About 46% say they have lost most of their property and assets since losing their jobs, while about 13% say they have lost all property and assets they had accumulated when they had been employed.



- Fisherman 36

I was using the money to support my children and my mother and my siblings, and right now I cannot survive. I even sold my plot because I needed money to survive.



- Fisherman 40

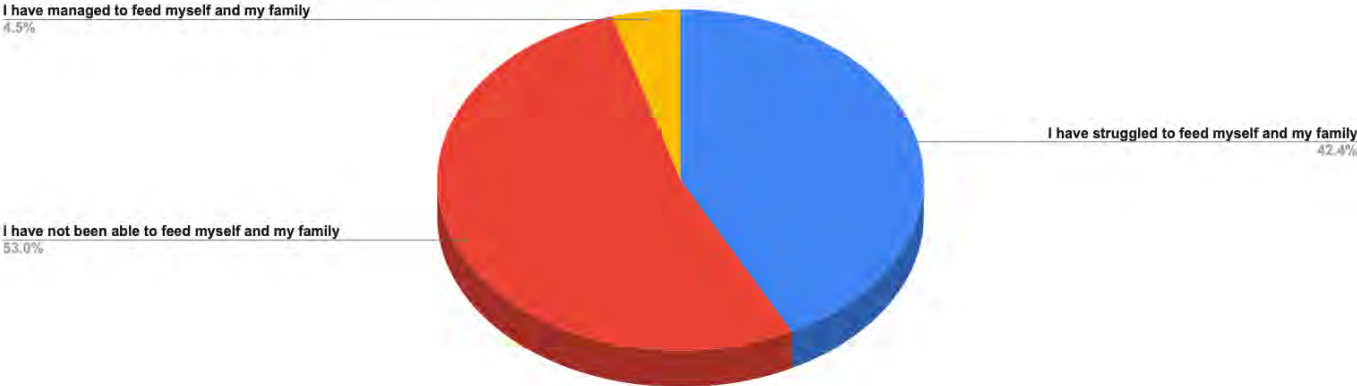
My wife works. My kids don't work. My first daughter is at UNAM. My second one starts now at UNAM and the other one goes to primary school. I sold my car because I don't have money to pay school fees. I sold it to pay them. Until now I don't have any money to buy another car.

Since losing my job due to Fishrot ... (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)



The majority of former fisheries workers (53%) say they, and their families or dependents, do not have enough food to eat every day. About 42% say that while they have food daily it is a continuous struggle to put food on the table every day.

Since losing my job due to Fishrot ... (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)



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Social and community relations

About 54% of former fisheries workers say they have become separated from or lost contact with members of their extended family since losing their work. About 36% say they have become separated from a partner or spouse and children since losing their work. Many tell of relationships or marriages having ended and children having had to be sent away to live with relatives back in their home regions or elsewhere because of their unemployment.



- Fisherman 35

I was even forced to divide my children and give them to my family members. Right now I stay in a very small place with a very dim light and you have to cook outside so it is prone to fires. It is not safe to put your child in that situation and that is why I sent them away.



- Fisherman 43

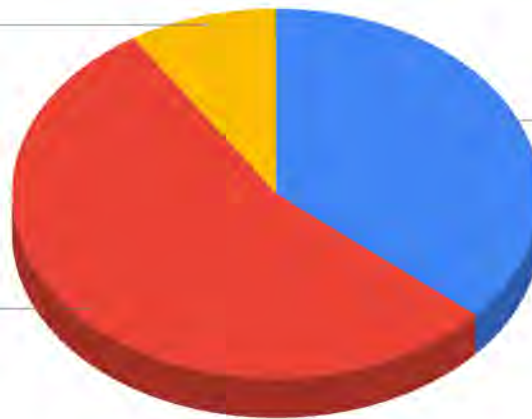
I have seven children and one woman. But now we are not together anymore.

How did the loss of your job due to Fishrot impact your family relationships? (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

Lost my spouse / wife / girlfriend
9.1%

Separated from spouse / wife / girlfriend & children
36.4%

Separated from extended family
54.5%

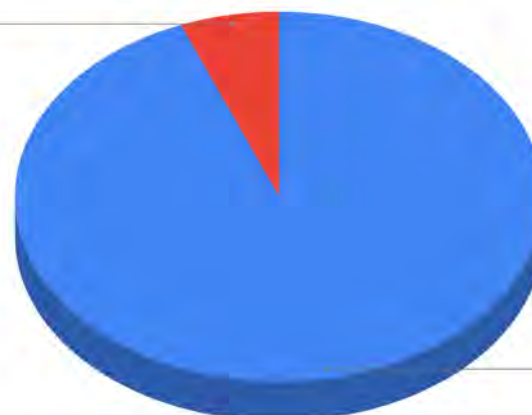


About 94% of former fisheries workers perceive themselves as having lost respect in the eyes of their relatives because of their long-term unemployment.

Do you feel you have lost respect in the eyes of your extended family?

No
6.1%

Yes
93.9%



- Fisherman 43

Now my family and brother don't communicate with me anymore. Because now they don't like me anymore because I got nothing. There's no communication.

About 92% of former fisheries workers say they regularly provided financial support to relatives and extended family. Some tell of having been a primary breadwinner for multiple households when they had been employed.



- Fisherman 44

When you are raised in a village, you are raised to look after your parents and family members. I am talking of siblings and the extended family, as well as your own kids. Now, the fact that you don't have anything to take home, there is no way that you can go back. You will be ashamed of yourself.

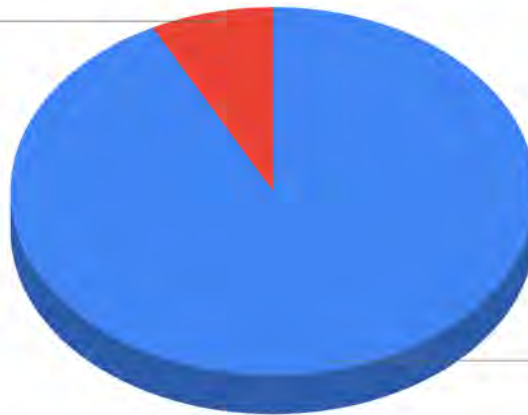


- Fisherman 46

It was a good time because I did not go a long period without having money. I would support my family even when they approach me and say that they have a problem. Unlike now, the money is getting less. It is not even enough to support myself. Back then, it used to be better.

Before losing your job due to Fishrot, did you regularly financially support your extended family?

No
7.6%



Yes
92.4%



Almost 82% of former fisheries workers say they have lost contact with friends or lost friends since losing their work and becoming long-term unemployed.



- Fisherman 42

I would not really say I am comparing myself because I would not like to compare myself to my friends because they are more ahead of me. Most of them are not even in Walvis Bay anymore, they are in Windhoek studying. They are just continuing their journey. It seems it's going well for them.

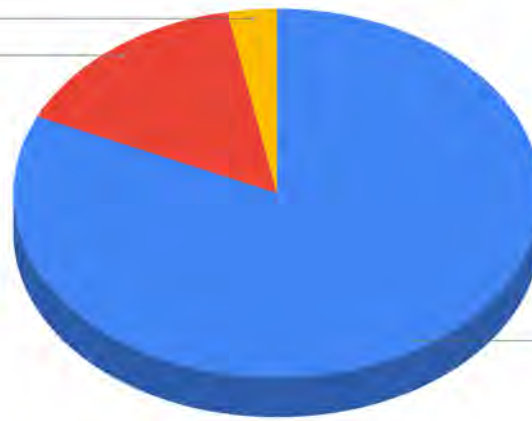


- Fisherman 40

When you don't work you don't have friends.

How did the loss of your job due to Fishrot impact your social relationships? (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

All my friends have stood by me
3.0%
Lost some friends
15.2%

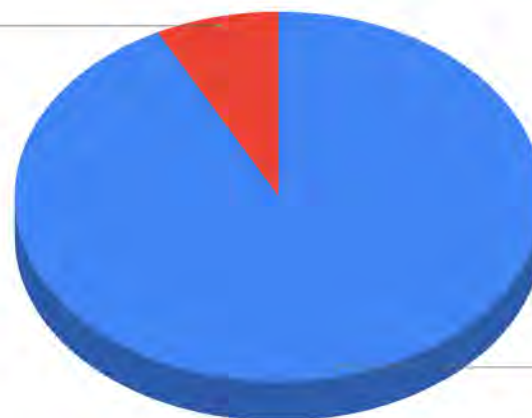


Lost many friends
81.8%

About 92% of former fisheries workers say they perceive themselves as having lost respect in the eyes of their community in their home village or region since becoming long-term unemployed.

Do you feel you have lost respect in the eyes of your village / home community?

No
7.6%



Yes
92.4%

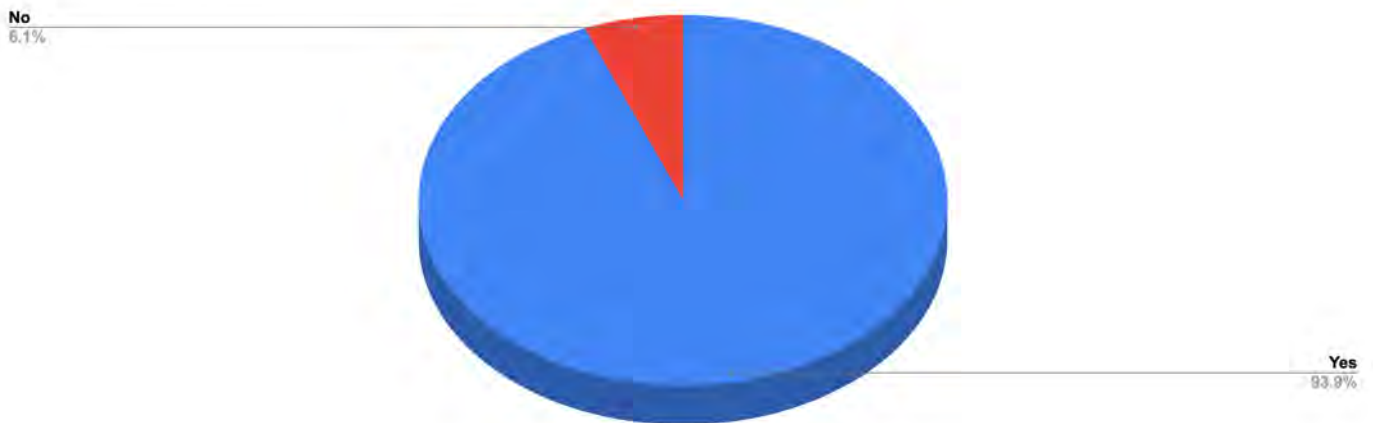
About 94% of former fisheries workers say they regularly contributed financially to community initiatives or activities, such as feast and funerals or assisting with securing transport for village children who had to travel far to schools, when they had been employed.



- Fisherman 26

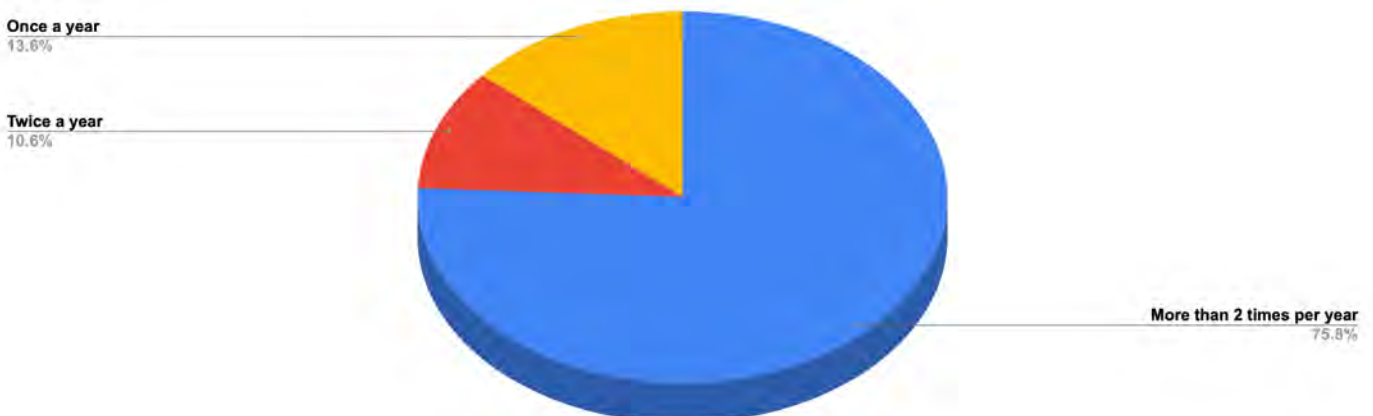
If someone asked you, you could help. That's why I say life was good. It's important. Because we used to ask help from others. They will help us because we helped them before.

Before losing your job due to Fishrot, did you regularly financially support your village / home community?



About 76% of former fisheries workers report travelling 'home' more than twice per year during the time they had been employed. Many say they had set up small businesses or were starting farming back in their home villages, or were building a homestead, and would take every opportunity to go back home to their home villages to check up on family and their personal ventures and initiatives or to be part of community events and activities, such as attending funerals or weddings.

Before losing your job due to Fishrot, how often did you go back home to the village?



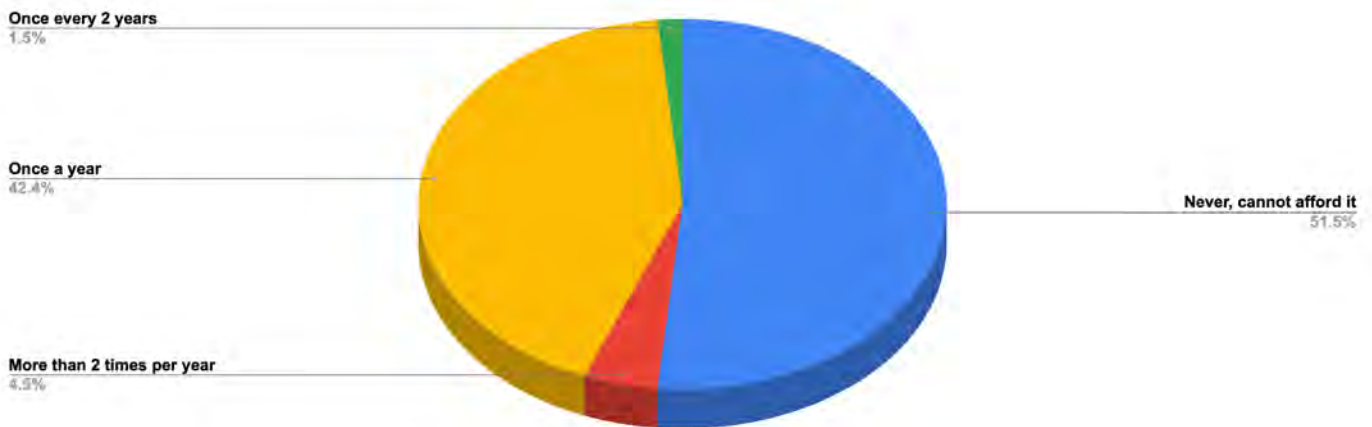
About 51% of former fisheries workers say they can no longer travel back to their home villages or communities because they cannot afford to do so. Some say the cost of public transport has become too much for them and that all their money has to go towards surviving at Walvis Bay as they wait or attempt for their employment situation to change. Many say most of the little money they have or receive, such as the GERP stipend, is sent home to provide for children or immediate family.



- Fisherman 25

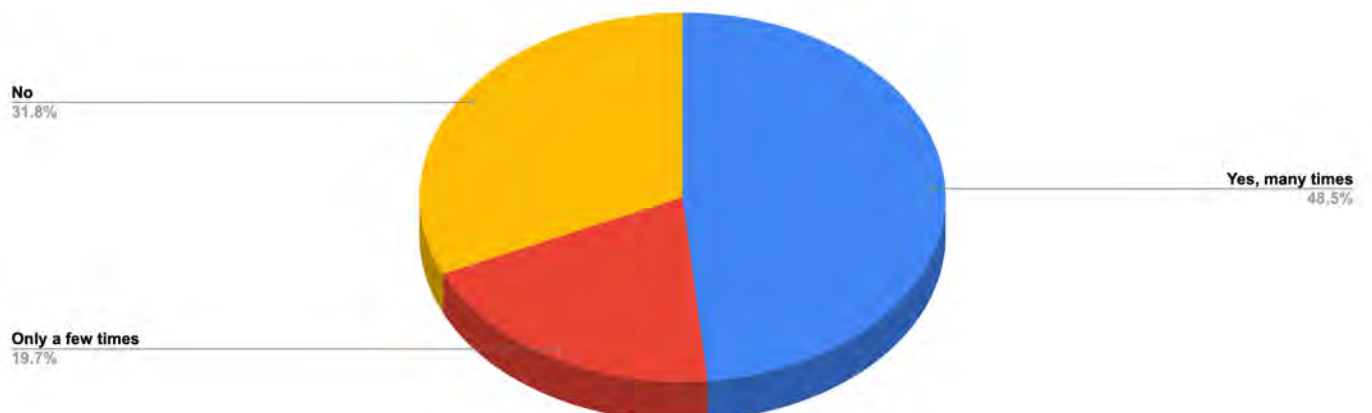
Even now, we want to go back there, but we don't have the money for transport. The money we have now is small. Even the petrol cost now is too high.

Since losing your job due to Fishrot, how often do you go back home to the village?



About 68% of former fisheries workers say they have sometimes or many times abused alcohol since losing their jobs. They say getting drunk sometimes helps them escape their harsh realities.

Have you abused alcohol after losing your job due to Fishrot?



About 89% of former fisheries workers say they know someone, a former colleague, who is regularly abusing alcohol since becoming unemployed.

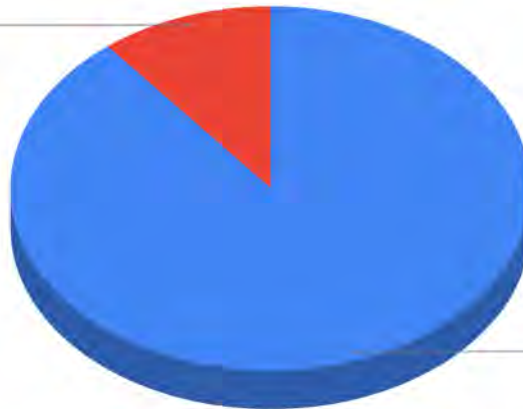


- Fisherman 32

This whole Fishrot thing is horrible to think about. These people killed us, they killed our livelihoods, they killed our families and they killed our children. We used to help many people, starting from our children to our extended family, who all depended on us to survive. But now they have destroyed so much of our lives. This is not a good thing to think about at all

Count of 27. Do you know of a friend who has abused alcohol after losing their job due to Fishrot?

No
10.8%



Yes
89.2%









Petrus Shikongo (striped sweater) was an employee on Samherji’s Heinaste fishing vessel from 2012 to 2019. He now lives at Omutele village with his family because living at Walvis Bay while searching for fisheries work is unaffordable. He has attempted fresh produce and pig farming, but failed because he could not afford water and electricity. He has also tried being a small businessman in the community, but that too hasn’t worked out.

Voices from the North

After losing their work, many fisheries workers relocated back to their home communities, mostly spread across the northern regions of Ohangwena, Omusati, Oshana and Oshikoto. The research team visited and interviewed some of the former fisheries workers at various locations in some of these regions.

Job losses and aftermath effects

Most of the fisheries workers were not on the vessels at the time when they lost their jobs. While the matter was communicated to some, many were on leave in the villages when they received the news that the vessels were going to Mauritania.

The job cuts were often abrupt, with little explanation or warning. Many of the fishermen were employed on a fixed-term contract or on a no-work-no-pay basis, which left them with no severance or financial security when their employment ended.

They described severe economic hardship following the loss of their jobs. They were all unable to find new employment or sustain their livelihoods. Many lost assets, such as homes, cars, and savings.

The majority have up to ten or more dependents and are unable to continue supporting their families. This they said has led to an erosion of their social standing and respect in the community.

Several fisheries workers admitted to abusing alcohol as a coping mechanism for the psychological stress of unemployment and financial strain. >

Megameno Shikongo is the daughter of Petrus Shikongo. She was in her second year at UNAM studying accounting and finance when she dropped out in 2020 when her father lost his job. She lives at Omutele village with her parents. Megameno wanted to complete her studies to help her father out who is the breadwinner at home and for the extended family. “The situation at home is terrible. We survive on the government feeding scheme. My father even sold his livestock to keep the family going,” she said.





Severen Nahole (in yellow) worked on Samherji's Saga fishing vessel as a deckhand from 2014 to 2020. He is the provider of three households since his parents and siblings all passed away. Most of the children are those of his late siblings.

The majority have up to ten or more dependents and are unable to continue supporting their families. This they said has led to an erosion of their social standing and respect in the community.

They also mentioned that many of their former colleagues had similarly turned to alcohol to escape the pressures of their circumstances.

A few of the fisheries workers mention having had suicidal thoughts and a general feeling of hopelessness about the future. They attribute this to the stress of unemployment which has also led to family breakdowns, including divorces and strained relationships with children and relatives.

They say that the job loss has had significant psychological impacts, with many feeling that they have lost their sense of self-worth and the respect of their communities. Some expressed feelings of shame or failure due to their current circumstances, and they believe that restoring their financial independence will help them reclaim their dignity and social status. Some have also revealed that the situation has led to them developing hypertension.

Family Situation

Most of the fisheries workers migrated alone to Walvis Bay to seek employment. The

majority of them did not have permanent homes at Walvis Bay as they were not permanently employed in the fishing industry and had been renting rooms or living in rented backyard shacks. Their main dwellings have always been in the home villages.

The majority of the fisheries workers also indicated that they are still the main providers of households and in some instances up to three different households. Those who were living with relatives at Walvis Bay, were mainly there for the purpose of giving the children a chance at a better education. Most of the children were sent back to villages after the Fishrot scandal broke and the job losses followed.

Some of the children are still living with other relatives because some of the fisheries workers cannot provide for them.>

Life before job losses

Many of the fisheries workers said they were seen as leaders in their villages, providing financial support for local schools, healthcare, and community events.

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Paulus Nakale, Nekwaya Shiyukifeni, Johannes Nambahu worked on Samherji's Saga fishing vessel, while Petrus Shikongo, Jeremia Shiwana and Simon Haufiku worked on Heinaste.

Those with cars used to assist with transport in the community. Many have contributed towards infrastructure development in their villages, including the provision of potable water, construction of shaded areas for pension payouts. Others contributed towards sports development by funding community soccer teams.

Government Employment Redress Programme

The government of the Republic of Namibia in 2020 through the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources, in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, and Employment Creation launched the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP), aimed at addressing unemployment among fisheries workers, especially those affected by Fishrot.

However, concerns have arisen regarding the program's effectiveness and fairness. On 5 April 2024, the fisheries minister, Derek Klazen, also acknowledged that the program had challenges, such as the limited employment opportunities within the

fishing industry resulting in many former fisheries workers not being able to find gainful employment in the sector.

Klazen also accused the former fisheries workers of harbouring an entitlement mentality and disrespectful attitude towards employers, resulting in some employees dictating the type of work they wanted to do and continuously threatening employers with mass action, as well as stating that the quotas belonged to them. That said, most fisheries workers interviewed confirmed that they were receiving the GERP N\$4,000 stipend, but they consistently said that the amount was insufficient to meet their basic needs, including food, childrens' education, and housing.

Many expressed frustration with the inadequacy of the N\$4,000 and called for higher compensation or employment opportunities.

Many of the fisheries workers expressed a desire to move away from reliance on government aid programmes. They see this payment as a temporary solution that does not provide a path to self-sufficiency.

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Klazen accused the former fisheries workers of harbouring an entitlement mentality and disrespectful attitude towards employers, resulting in some employees dictating the type of work they wanted to do and continuously threatening employers with mass action, as well as stating that the quotas belonged to them.



Instead, they hope to regain financial independence through compensation or employment, which would allow them to become self-reliant again.

Expectations for life going forward

Looking forward, the former fisheries workers expect the Namibian government to take concrete action to address the injustice they have suffered.

They want the government to facilitate dialogue with Samherji and the Icelandic government to negotiate compensation that would enable them to regain the assets they lost - such as homes, cars, and savings. Some fishermen gave specific amounts (ranging from N\$80,000 to N\$600,000) as what they would need to regain control over their lives. Some of them accumulated debt due to their inability to maintain payments on homes, vehicles, and other necessities after losing their jobs. They believe that financial compensation would help them clear these debts, recover repossessed assets, and reduce financial stress. The fishermen expect Samherji to admit its wrongdoing in the Namibian fishing industry and take steps to rectify the damage caused. ■



Former MV Saga fishermen Werner Nakangombe, David Kaluwa, Jackson Shoopala and Shikongo Fillemon moved back to their villages in Omusati and Oshana regions, because they couldn't find work at Walvis Bay. They all rely on the monthly N\$4,000 they get through the Government Employment Redress Program (GERP).

Photos: Ester Mbathera

This study surfaces the following issues

- Most of the affected former fisheries workers are unskilled or low skilled migrant labourers from rural and mostly poor communities across the northern stretches of Namibia;
- Most of the former fisheries workers are now middle-aged men (in their late 30 to late 40s);
- For many the brief period of employment they enjoyed as fisheries workers was the best incomes they had ever earned;
- Most are now struggling to find work, whether in the fisheries sector or other sectors, with their low and / or unskilled profile contributing to their struggles to secure any sort of employment, whether at Walvis Bay or elsewhere;
- One of the more harshly lived impacts of the Fishrot corruption has been the break up of many family units and the loss of friends and disconnection and dislocation from extended family for many former fisheries workers;
- This disintegration of family has happened concurrently with an often quick loss of what little property and assets, as a result of debts and running household or living costs, many of the former fisheries workers had managed to accumulate during the brief period that they were earning relatively and comparatively good incomes in the fisheries sector;
- The former fisheries workers talk of a loss of respect within their immediate and extended family and in their wider home communities since losing their jobs;
- Many of the former fisheries workers are struggling to even survive day-to-day and many are unable to feed themselves and their immediate families daily;
- Many more people than just the former fisheries workers are directly impact by Fishrot, as scores of children, extended families across far-flung parts of the country have also and continue to be directly negatively affected by the loss of employment of the fisheries workers, many of whom remain the primary breadwinners of many people, despite not being employed themselves;
- Most of the former fisheries workers have ast their only source of steady income the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP) stipend of N\$4,000, which they have been receiving since 2020;
- Most say the GERP money is not enough to live on, either for themselves at Walvis Bay or to maintain drought-stricken households back in their home villages;
- Homelessness is a threat to many of the former fisheries workers and their dependents at Walvis Bay, as they are unable to pay rent, even for a shack;
- Alcohol abuse among former fisheries workers is an issue that needs attention, that suggests that gender-based violence (GBV) could be an associated ill affecting the households and relationships of some former fisheries workers, based on what the researchers gathered from some interviews;
- Many of the former fisheries workers talk of constantly feeling shame and hopelessness at their condition;
- Even so, most former fisheries workers state that they still harbour dreams of becoming self-sufficient and self-reliant again, but that they need some sort of assistance to get back up again. ■

While the first phase study of the Fishrot Human Rights Impact Assessment took a more qualitative approach to gathering information about the lived realities and experiences of former fisheries workers at the coastal town of Walvis Bay, this second phase study adopted a mixed methods approach, combining a survey questionnaire with interviews to generate data and anecdotal evidence.

The aim of this second phase study was to establish whether the experiences narrated by former fisheries workers during the first phase study play out across a wider segment of former fisheries workers.

For this study 90 former fisheries workers, and a handful current fisheries workers, directly affected by the alleged Fishrot corruption were surveyed and interviewed between April and September 2024.

The numbers of respondents and interviewees were the following:

- 67 former and current fisheries workers completed the survey questionnaire;
- 23 former fisheries workers were interviewed.

For this study the researchers also endeavoured to travel to the regions where most fisheries workers originate from and conduct interviews there, which is why the 23 interviews with former fisheries workers were conducted at locations in the north-central regions.



Photo: Oncology Resource Group





INDEPENDENCE RD





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Fishrot human rights impact study – Questionnaire

Introduction

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is conducting research on the impact of the Fishrot fisheries corruption on the lives of fisheries workers that have been directly affected or impacted. This questionnaire forms part of the research.

This Fishrot human rights impact study seeks to record and detail the human rights impacts of the Fishrot corruption scandal on ordinary Namibians – primarily workers in the fishing industry, their families, and the broader community at Walvis Bay. The aim is to inform and energise calls for full public accountability as well as enabling analysis by legal experts of potential avenues for asset recovery and victim redress arising from the corruption scandal.

The aim of this questionnaire is to gather evidence and information demonstrating the human costs of corruption. A detailed report based on the responses / data will be produced. The report will be used to advocate for restitution for affected people and communities.

Privacy & Confidentiality

We only collect information / data / material that we need for the research project. We will de-identify your personal information / data from the research data through pseudonymisation or anonymisation.

All the personal information / data you submit will be processed by the interviewer / researcher and by the principal researcher.

All the personal information / data / material collected during this project / study will be retained and securely stored by the researchers and / or the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) for as long as the information / data / material is necessary for legitimate research purposes.

BIOGRAPHICAL & PERSONAL INFORMATION

1. Please write your name?

2. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Other

3. How old are you?

- 20 – 29 years
- 30 – 39 years
- 40 – 49 years
- 50 – 59 years
- Over 60 years

4. Where are you from in Namibia?

- Erongo
- Hardap
- ||Karas
- Kavango East
- Kanvango West
- Khomas
- Kunene

- Ohangwena
- Omaheke
- Omusati
- Oshana
- Oshikoto
- Otjozondjupa
- Zambezi

5. Where is your primary home?

- Walvis Bay
- My home village / town / region
- Other

6. What is your level of education?

- Did not go to school
- Completed primary school
- Completed grade 6
- Completed grade 8
- Completed grade 10
- Completed grade 12
- I have a trade certificate
- I have a university diploma / degree

7. Which one best describes your current relationship status?

- Single
- Married

- Divorced
- In a relationship
- Prefer not to say

8. Do you have children? How many?

- No
- Yes, 1 child
- Yes, 2 children
- Yes, 3 children
- Yes, 4 children
- Yes, more than 4 children

9. By the time you lost your job due to Fishrot, how long had you been a fisherman / fisheries worker?

- A few months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- More than 10 years

EMPLOYMENT & ECONOMIC SITUATION

10. Since losing your job due to Fishrot have you been able to find work as a fisherman / fisheries worker?

- Yes
- No

11. If yes, what is your employment status?

- Casual
- Fixed term
- Permanent

12. If no, how do you earn an income / make a living?

- I have found steady work in another sector
- I do odd jobs
- I have a small business
- I rely on assistance from friends and family
- I do farming
- Other

13. Are you part of the Government Employment Redressing Programme (GERP)?

- Yes
- No

14. Would you like to go back to being a fisherman / fisheries worker?

- Yes, I liked the work and the pay
- No, I liked the pay, but it was just a job
- Maybe, if there's nothing else

15. At the time you lost your job due to Fishrot, what was your employment status?

- Casual
- Fixed term
- Permanent
- Other

16. Since losing my job due to Fishrot ... (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

- I have managed to maintain my standard of living and keep my personal assets (house, car, furniture, business, etc.)
- I have fallen into debt and lost some personal assets (house, car, furniture, business, etc.)
- I have become poorer and lost most of my personal assets (house, car, furniture, business, etc.)
- I have lost everything (house, car, furniture, business, etc.)

17. Since losing my job due to Fishrot ... (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

- I have managed to feed myself and my immediate family (wife /

- girlfriend, children) daily
- I have struggled to feed myself and my immediate family (wife / girlfriend, children) daily
- I have not been able to feed myself and my immediate family (wife / girlfriend, children) daily
- Prefer not to say

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY SITUATION

18. How did the loss of your job due to Fishrot impact your family relationships? (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

- Lost my spouse / wife / girlfriend
- Separated from spouse / wife / girlfriend & children
- Separated from extended family

19. Do you feel you have lost respect in the eyes of your extended family?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

20. Before losing your job due to Fishrot, did you regularly financially support your extended family?

- Yes
- No

21. How did the loss of your job due to Fishrot impact your social relationships? (Please pick the response that best describes your situation?)

- All my friends have stood by me
- Lost some friends
- Lost many friends

22. Do you feel you have lost respect in the eyes of your village / home community?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

23. Before losing your job due to Fishrot, did you regularly financially support your village / home community?

- Yes
- No

24. Before losing your job due to Fishrot, how often did you go back home to the village?

- Once a year
- Twice a year
- More than 2 times per year
- Other

25. Since losing your job due to Fishrot, how often do you go back home to the village?

- Once a year
- Twice a year
- More than 2 times per year
- Once every 2 years
- Never, cannot afford it
- Other

26. Have you abused alcohol after losing your job due to Fishrot?

- Yes, many times
- No
- Only a few times

27. Do you know of a friend who has abused alcohol after losing their job due to Fishrot?

- Yes
- No

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY!





About the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR)

The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) was founded in 2001 as a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver, independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research on social, political and economic issues that affect development Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research.

The IPPR is independent of government, political parties, business, trade unions and other interest groups.

Anyone can receive the IPPR's research free of charge by contacting the IPPR at the contact details below. Publications can also be downloaded from the IPPR website.

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