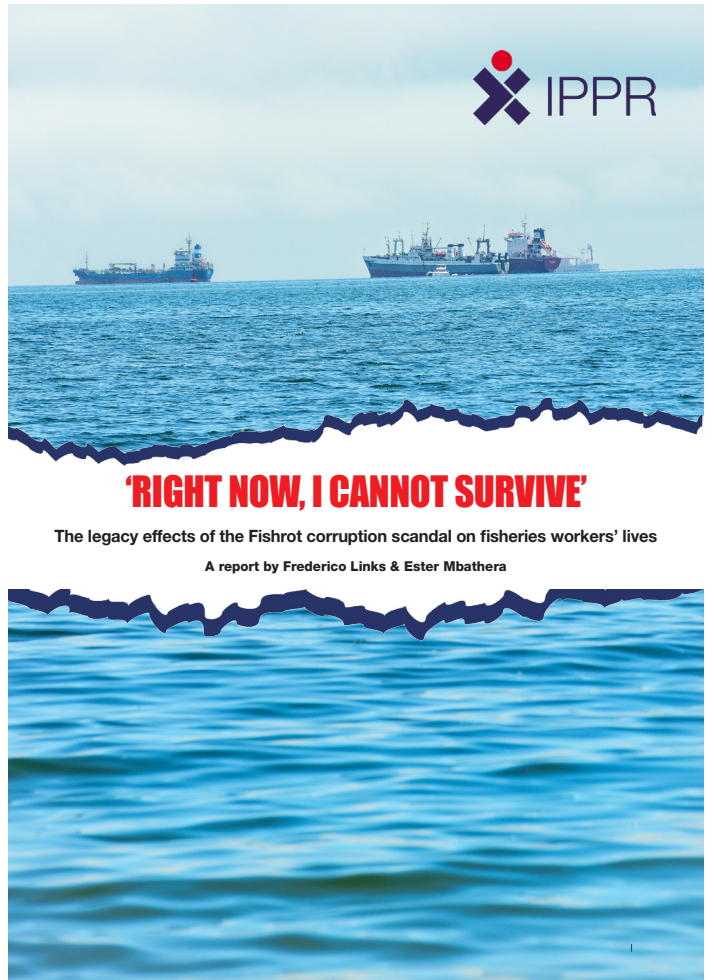
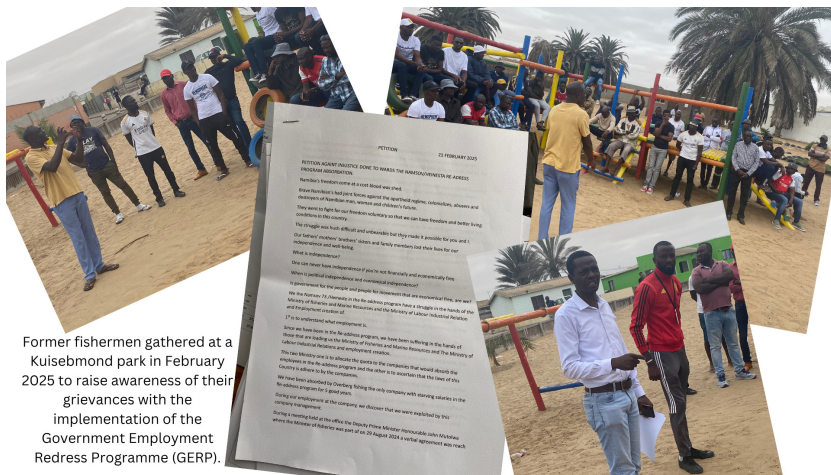


**THE GERP - A CRITICAL  
OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT**

A report by Frederico Links



The IPPR's previous reports on the human rights impact of the Fishrot corruption scandal can be downloaded from [www.ippr.org.na](http://www.ippr.org.na)



Former fishermen gathered at a Kuisebmond park in February 2025 to raise awareness of their grievances with the implementation of the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP).

P6



## THE GERP - A CRITICAL OVERVIEW AND ASSESSMENT

July 2026

Frederico Links

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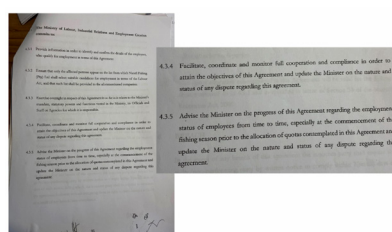
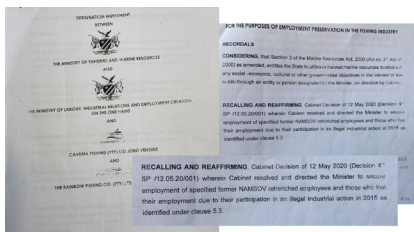
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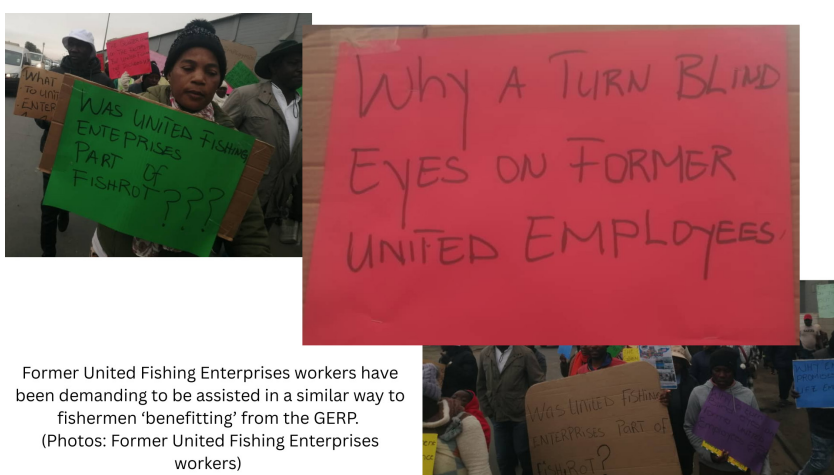
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Former United Fishing Enterprises workers have been demanding to be assisted in a similar way to fishermen 'benefitting' from the GERP. (Photos: Former United Fishing Enterprises workers)

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## What happened?

Consternation and anger followed the announcement by Namibian president Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, at an impromptu 'Fishing Industry Engagement' at Walvis Bay, from 22-24 April 2026, that "[come April 2027, the redress program will have to come to an end](#)".

To many of those in attendance this was not what they had come to hear or even remotely expected or anticipated. Representatives of various groups of former fishermen and fisheries workers who had been invited to the hastily organised event had thought the 'Fishing Industry Engagement' was an attempt and opportunity to reset the troubled Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP), and they had gone there to contribute to discussing fixes. Instead they left angry and confused.

Angry because they had not expected to be informed so bluntly that the scheme that had for many become their only or main income lifeline was ending. Confused because they could not see what would replace the GERP after April 2027, and nothing tangible had been presented to them.

To be fair, the administration of president Nandi-Ndaitwah had been hinting for a while that it wanted to rid itself of the GERP-sized headache it had inherited from the Geingob Cabinet.

The announcement came in the wake of an audit, in September and October 2025, by the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) into the GERP. The audit followed or coincided with correspondence between labour minister Wise Immanuel and fisheries minister Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi, in which [Immanuel called on Zaamwani-Kamwi to investigate](#) the GERP, stating: "There continues to be allegations regarding employers in the Government Redress Programme that are paying workers who are neither attending work nor legally absent from work. Further, the perpetuity of this practice while the employers report to the government that the employees are attending work, does not only border on misrepresentation but may as well constitute potential corrupt elements if not fraud." (See Annex 1)

According to [the audit activity plan](#), the OAG audit team sought to gather documents and reports

from the relevant government departments and participating fishing companies in the GERP. The audit team was also tasked with conducting interviews and group discussions with various stakeholders, including the affected fishermen, company executives and government officials from the ministries of fisheries and labour.

An audit report should have been completed by the [end of December 2025](#). However, by the time of writing this no such report had made an appearance in public.

## Why this happened?

From the start, in early 2020 when the Hage Geingob Cabinet approved the creation of a fisheries sector job creation and preservation scheme, in the immediate wake of the Fishrot fisheries corruption scandal surfacing, the implementation of the GERP has been accompanied and plagued by controversy, confrontation and accusations. This is arguably significantly due to the GERP having been characterised by secrecy and questionable dealing from inception, with over nearly six years of its implementation even the beneficiaries of the GERP repeatedly accusing the ministries of fisheries and labour of not being open and honest about what was happening around the scheme. Over the years the public and media too have had to solely rely on and accept at face-value statements made by the respective ministers responsible for the GERP, if and when they decided to share information.

Throughout the almost six-year period that the GERP has now been in existence, former fishermen and fisheries workers have been demanding information, answers and meaningful opportunities. At the same time, politicians and government officials have been blaming the former fishermen and other stakeholders for stoking unnecessary tensions and confrontations.

During this period, from mid-2020 to early 2026, no GERP monitoring and evaluation reports, or even independently verified data, had been released publicly or even to parliament, it appears. This is evidenced by the fact that a parliamentary committee had to be constituted to investigate the status of the GERP in the wake of the first mass resignation of fishermen 'employed' by

designated companies in August 2022. The parliamentary committee [issued a report in November 2022](#), which stated that designated “companies failed to create permanent employment” and that “agreements were not complied with” by both the responsible government ministries and companies.

These were the exact same issues that minister Immanuel had called on minister Zaamwani-Kamwi to investigate in September 2025, nearly three years after the parliamentary report was issued. The OAG audit team was tasked with gathering the following documentation (see [here](#) and [here](#)), among others, from the relevant ministries, designated companies, and regional officials, as well as

the Erongo Region governor’s office:

- Verified lists of fishermen participating in the GERP;
- Minutes of the GERP programme meetings;
- Implementation status reports;
- Annual assessment reports;
- Internal audit reports;
- Labour compliance reports;
- Employment contracts and payslips of fishermen;
- Quota allocation letters to designated companies;
- Etc.

**Ministry of Justice and Labour Relations**

1. Master List
2. List of Fisherman participating in GERP
3. Employment Contracts
4. Implementation status reports (quarterly)
5. Minutes from programme meetings or working groups
6. Annual Assessment Reports
7. M&E framework
8. Internal audit reports
9. Feedback from programme beneficiaries (interviews, complaint logs)
10. Grievance redress mechanism logs and resolution reports
11. Labour compliance reports

**Designated Companies**

1. Designated agreements with the Ministry
2. List of Fisherman participating in GERP
3. Employment Contracts
4. Implementation status reports (monthly, quarterly, annually)
5. Minutes from programme meetings or working groups
6. Quota allocation letters
7. Payslips of Fisherman participating in GERP

**These documents are for the following financial years 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 where possible.**

The lists of documents the audit team from the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) sought to gather from various stakeholders in late 2025.

**What does this mean?**

While the status and findings of the OAG audit of the GERP remain a mystery, it can be plausibly suggested that those findings informed the decision and announcement of president Nandi-Ndaitwah to bring the scheme to an end come April 2027.

The GERP was purportedly aimed at creating and securing meaningful fisheries jobs, but the evidence from two IPPR human rights impact assessments ([here](#) and [here](#)), media reports and interviews and discussions with union and fishing company representatives, has revealed that the programme has fallen significantly short in this objective. This has consequently undermined trust in government along with fuelling tensions and disputes in the fisheries sector. Many among the ostensible primary stakeholders and beneficiaries of the GERP, the affected former fishermen

and fisheries workers, viewed the Namibian government and president with distinct distrust and animosity at the time of writing.

Given this, and based on what is known and reported, the GERP risks going down in the history books as an expensive Namibian government programmatic and governance failure. Available information suggests that the way the GERP has been implemented and managed has doomed it from the start, as this report illustrates and implicitly argues.

In the final analysis, the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) proposes that the GERP-experience be seen as an opportunity for meaningful, open reflection and governance reform that takes a multistakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach, so as to be truly inclusive and to break from how this scheme has been handled to date.



# The GERP Timeline: Key Moments & Events (2020–2026)

## November 2019

- The Fishrot fisheries corruption scandal comes to light in media exposés locally and internationally.
- Icelandic fishing company Samherji starts pulling out of Namibia.

## Mid-2020

- Consultations and stakeholder engagements are held with various fishing companies, fisheries associations and labour unions to try and find a way to create employment for unemployed fishermen let go by Namsoy in waves over the preceding decade due to Fishrot, and long-term unemployed fishermen due to a mass strike in 2015.

## July 2020

- Various companies (initially 7) become designated entities and an agreement for the re-employment of fishermen is entered into and gazetted.

## 2021

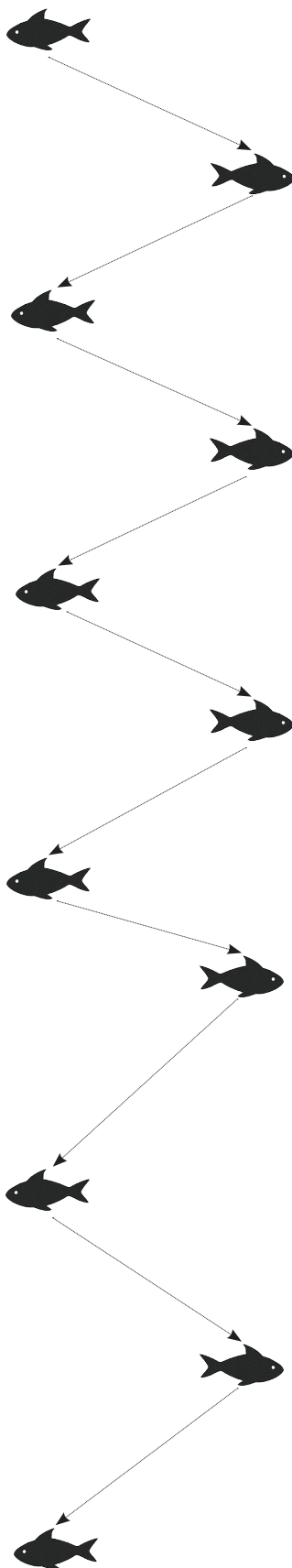
- Worker grievances escalate, and unions and civil society raise concerns over exploitation, lack of benefits, and poor oversight.

## November 2022

- A report is tabled in the National Assembly by the Select Committee of the National Assembly on the Mass Resignation of Fishermen Employed Under the Government Employment Redress Programme in Walvis Bay.
- In late November 2022, then fisheries minister Derek Klazen, in a response in parliament, cast the select committee report as misinformed and misleading.

## August 2023

- The ministries of fisheries and labour signed agreements with fishing companies to re-employ unemployed fishermen. Renewed quota allocations are reportedly made with stricter designation agreements.



FISHERMEN SAY GRN INACTION CAUSING MENTAL DISTRESS

## Early 2020

- Fishermen lose their jobs as Icelandic company Samherji withdraws swiftly from Namibia as the fallout from the Fishrot scandal grows.

## June 2020

- Cabinet approves GERP framework to reintegrate former Namsoy fishermen and fishermen retrenched during the 2015 strike.
- The ministries of fisheries and labour begin identifying affected workers and potential quota allocations.

## Late 2020

- Fishermen begin placements, but reports of inconsistent contracts and idle employment emerge.

## August 2022

- Mass resignation of over 600 fishermen from two of the GERP beneficiary companies over lack of active employment and allegations of exploitation.
- The fishermen later withdraw their resignations and are re-employed by the companies.
- In the wake of the mass resignation a parliamentary select committee was appointed to investigate the matter.

## 2023

- GERP-related labour disputes between fishermen, companies and the ministries of fisheries and labour continue to simmer and make headlines throughout the year.

Klazen moves to address clashes with ex-fishermen absorbed under GERP

GERP CHALLENGES ADDRESSED

### FISHERMEN RESIGN AGAIN

Fishermen's struggles persist

VENAANE: SECOND FISHROT IN FISHING INDUSTRY EMERGES

**No work at sea for unemployed fishermen in Namibia**

'Mass resignation of fishermen an issue of national interest'

## FISHERMEN SAY GRN INACTION CAUSING MENTAL DISTRESS

### February 2024

- Another mass resignation of fishermen at Walvis Bay rocks the GERP. More than 250 fishermen resigned from a company over alleged broken employment promises and claims of exploitation.

### Late 2024

- It is announced that GERP has reached a milestone: over 2,000 fishermen employed across hake and horse mackerel sub-sectors.
- Public discourse shifts toward sustainability and equity in resource governance.
- However, disputes continue over the nature of employment as former fishermen point out that they are not actively employed.

### June 2025

- New designation agreements are signed: 18,370 MT of hake and 16,500 MT of horse mackerel allocated.
- The government announces that 2,483 fishermen are employed, with 550 in horse mackerel and 1,933 in hake.
- Ministers reaffirm commitment to redress and announce plans to expand GERP's reach.

'Mass resignation of fishermen an issue of national interest'

VENAANI: SECOND FISHROT IN FISHING INDUSTRY EMERGES

No work at sea for unemployed fishermen in Namibia

OVER 2400 FORMER FISHERMEN RE-EMPLOYED UNDER GERP AFTER CABINET GIVES GREEN LIGHT

LACK OF COORDINATION CAUSED THE MASS RESIGNATION OF FISHERMEN

KLAZEN CAUTIONS FISHERMEN NOT TO TAKE GERP FISHING QUOTA OPPORTUNITY FOR GRANTED

Industry unable to absorb 645 fishermen

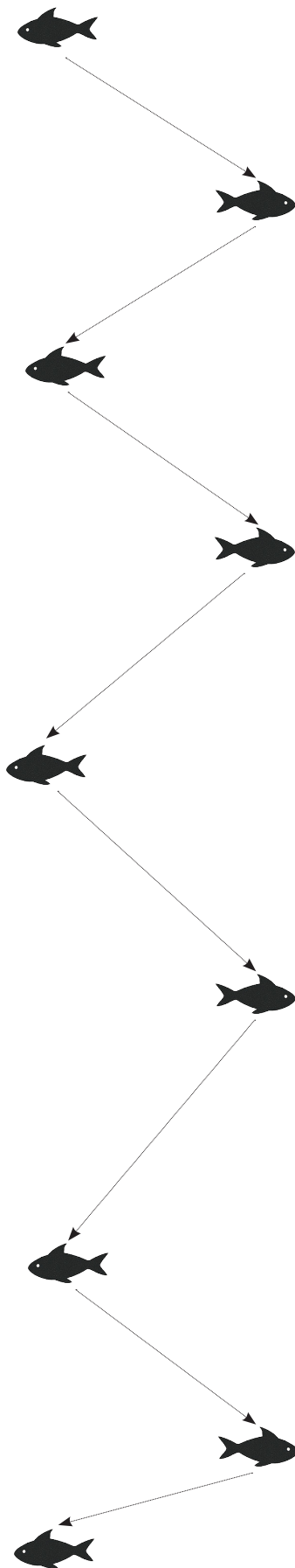
### Early 2026

- Demonstrations, petitioning and the raising of demands by various groups of fishermen and fisheries workers continue at Walvis Bay and Windhoek.

Industry unable to absorb 645 fishermen

### June 2026

- Some affected GERP beneficiaries called for lump-sum payouts when the scheme ends in April 2027.



Fishermen urged to take care of their jobs

Fisheries Minister Blames Companies Without Quotas For Fishermen's Resignation

GOVERNMENT FACES SCRUTINY OVER FISHERIES EMPLOYMENT

Fishermen's struggles persist

GOVERNMENT MUST ADDRESS GERP LOOPHOLES OR MORE FISHERMEN WILL STRIKE - HANGO

FISHERMEN SAY GRN INACTION CAUSING MENTAL DISTRESS

FISHERMEN RESIGN AGAIN

### April 2024

- A mass demonstration of fishermen takes place at Walvis Bay, during which their concerns and disappointment with how the GERP was being implemented are raised. Petitions are handed to the ministries of fisheries and labour.

### Early 2025

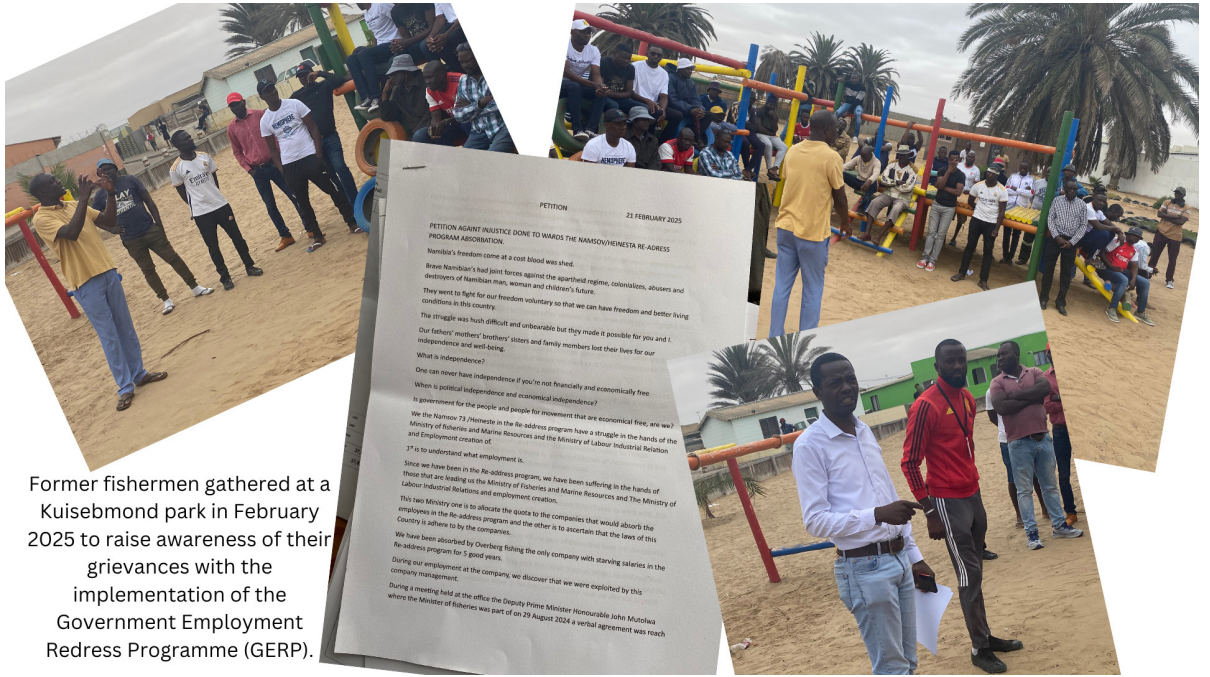
- In February 2025, a group of fishermen called on the incoming Nandi-Ndaitwah administration to investigate the GERP and accuse the outgoing administration of having corruptly implemented the scheme.
- A new Cabinet is sworn in, in March 2025, and in May 2025, Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi is sworn in as new fisheries minister.
- Meetings are held with fishing companies, fishermen's representatives and unions throughout the year.

### September 2025

- On 15 September, labour minister Wise Immanuel in a letter to fisheries minister Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi called on her to initiate an investigation into the labour practices of designated companies.
- The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) launches an audit of the GERP. According to reports, an OAG audit report of the GERP is expected at the end of December 2025.

### April 2026

- From 22 - 24 April 2026, an impromptu high-level 'Fishing Industry Engagement' was held at Walvis Bay, with the Namibian president Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah in attendance.
- In her closing remarks at the 'Fishing Industry Engagement', president Nandi-Ndaitwah announced that the GERP would come to an end in April 2027.



Former fishermen gathered at a Kuisebmond park in February 2025 to raise awareness of their grievances with the implementation of the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP).

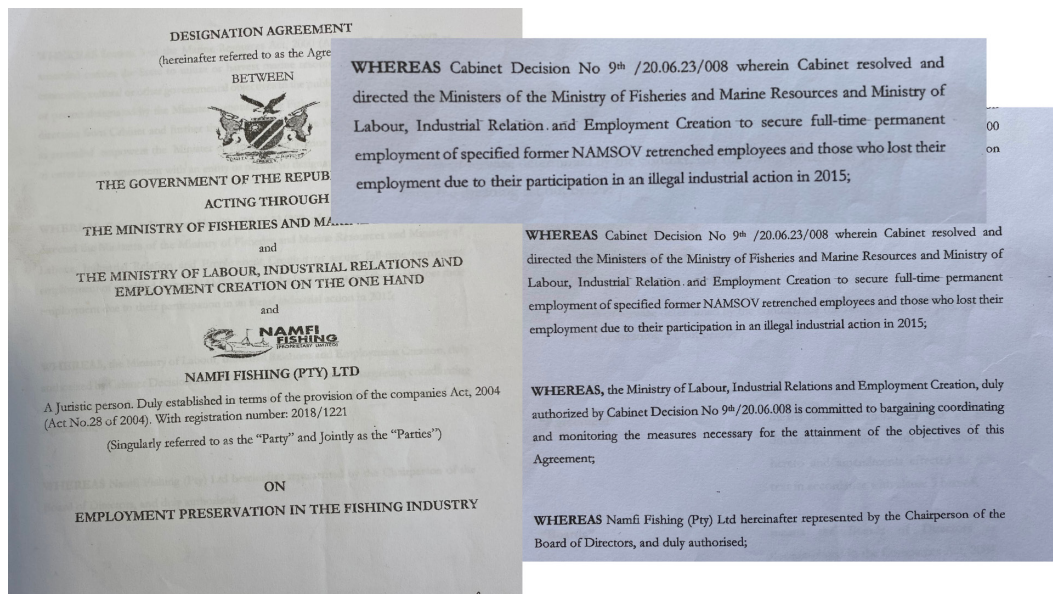
**On 21 February 2025 a group of former fishermen staged a protest at a park in Kuisebmond, Walvis Bay, in order to publicise their petition and raise awareness of their grievances with a fishing company that they accused of exploiting them.**

Most of the former fishermen gathered there that day were beneficiaries of or participants in the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP). Launched in mid to late 2020, the GERP was ostensibly conceived as a targeted redress mechanism to reintegrate over 2,000 former fishermen into the fisheries workforce. According to designation agreements signed between the Namibian government and participating fishing companies, the

targeted former fishermen were “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees and those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015” (see Defining Participants / Beneficiaries).

It should be noted that the GERP was conceived by the Hage Geingob Cabinet in the immediate wake of the public surfacing and political fallout of the alleged Fishrot corruption scandal shortly before the late-November 2019 parliamentary and presidential elections. Although the official GERP-related documents do not mention the link to Fishrot, the timing of the intervention plausibly suggests that it was a direct response to the fisheries labour crisis that has unfolded with and has been ascribed to the alleged Fishrot corruption. >

**Defining Participants / Beneficiaries**



In designation agreements, such as the one above, GERP participants / beneficiaries are clearly defined as “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees and those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015”.



Photo: New Era

The alleged Fishrot corruption not only destroyed jobs and disrupted livelihoods, directly and indirectly, but has also (once again) exposed systemic vulnerabilities in fishing quota and state-owned enterprise (SOE) governance, political oversight and labour protection and regulatory frameworks.

For many affected fisheries workers, the period from early 2020 to early 2026 has been marked by deepening poverty and socio-economic exclusion, and some have even tragically died before meaningful redress could be realised.

For the “specified” affected fisheries workers, such as those who had gathered at the Kuisebmond park in February 2025, and on many occasions since, the GERP had initially held much promise and hope. The GERP’s core innovation was its use of fishing quotas as a policy lever for employment restoration, preservation or creation. Under the programme, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform (simply referred to as the fisheries ministry in this report), as it is called now, has allocated fishing quotas to designated companies on the condition that they employ the “specified” fishermen. This quota-employment linkage was further reinforced through designation agreements, which outline employment obligations, compliance expectations, and reporting requirements. The GERP is [jointly overseen and coordinated](#) by the fisheries ministry and the Ministry of Justice and Labour Relations (simply referred to as the labour ministry in this report).

The [implementation challenges](#) that have plagued the GERP almost from the start have become the source of significant disaffection and distrust among those for whom it was meant. Reports of idle employment, contract breaches, and lack of benefits have persisted, raising concerns about exploitation, accountability and transparency, and [even corrupt dealings](#). Many of the “specified” fishermen have been shuffled between companies without clear terms of engagement, while many others have received minimal pay or been left without work despite technically being in “full-time permanent employment”, and even others have been completely left out of the scheme.

To be clear, the government has repeatedly claimed (see [here](#) and [here](#)) that over 2,000 of the “specified” fishermen have been “employed” through the programme, yet many

of those counted as “employed” [say they are not in active “full-time permanent employment”](#). For many of the affected fisheries workers this is the core contentious issue undermining the GERP.

At the same time, designated fishing companies [have been complaining](#) that they have not been given enough quota to actively employ the “specified” former fishermen and fisheries workers. These issues have prompted calls from trade unions, civil society organisations, and [affected fisheries workers for reforms](#), including stronger oversight, legal guarantees, and alternative models of quota governance, including direct allocations to fisheries worker cooperatives. Developments, such as the [instituted audit of the GERP](#) by the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG), suggested a push to assess and understand the performance of the programme and possibly to reflect on the challenges and shortcomings that have surfaced over the years. Since taking office in 2025, the new fisheries and labour ministers have repeatedly reaffirmed the government’s commitment to redress and emphasised the need for full-time placements and improved compliance. However, questions remain about the equity and long-term impact of the programme, particularly in light of Namibia’s broader goals under the Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6), which emphasises inclusive growth, empowerment, and participatory governance. These concerns have become pressing since the announcement that the GERP would come to an end in April 2027.

This briefing paper provides an overview of the salient issues that have plagued the GERP from 2020 to date to try and understand why the scheme has been so troubled from the start. The aim is to surface key points for possible reform. The paper aims to support evidence-based advocacy, policy dialogue, and civil society engagement around the GERP and what might evolve from it, beyond April 2027.

Ultimately, the GERP is more than a fisheries-focused programme. It has become a test for how Namibia can reconcile resource exploitation with social justice, and how resource governance can be harnessed to restore dignity, trust, and opportunity for those harmed by natural resource-linked corruption. Unfortunately, it is a test that increasingly looks like a missed opportunity and even failure to a large degree. ■



Photo: Informante

Fishermen that used to work on the three super trawlers controlled by Saga Seafood at the office of the company in Walvis Bay.

# Disputes and Disagreements of the GERP

**Over the years the Namibian government has created the narrative and stoked the perception that the GERP has been successful in enabling the re-employment of reportedly over 2,400 former fishermen and fisheries workers. However, even as the success of the scheme was variously proclaimed over the years since 2020, it has at the same time been robustly disputed by various groups and stakeholders, including those that the government has claimed have been benefitting from the scheme.**

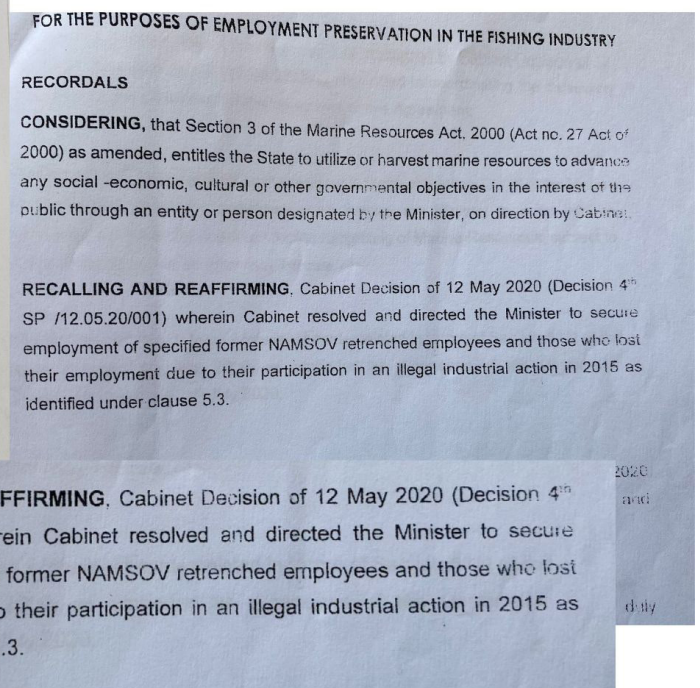
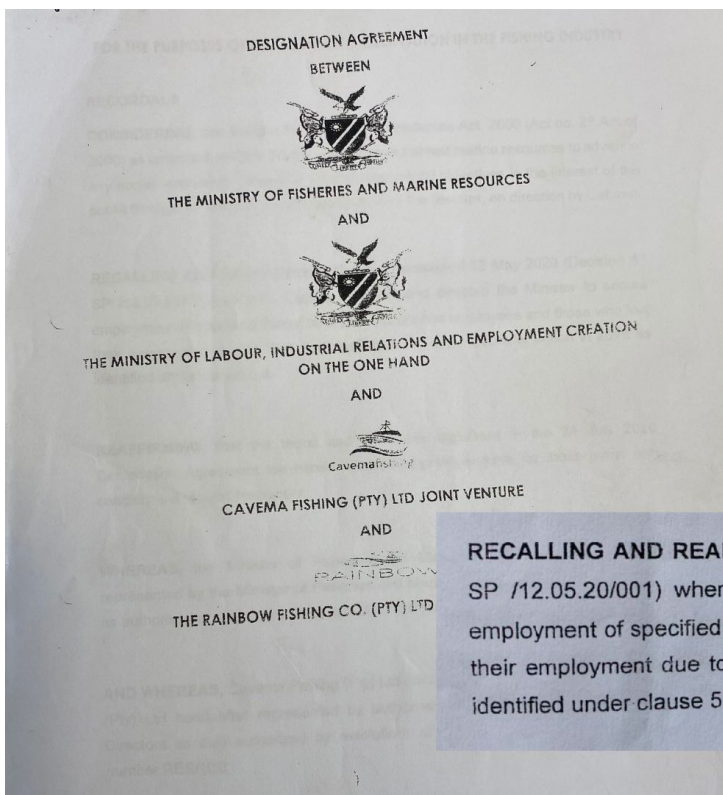
The long-running GERP-related grievances, disputes and disagreements ultimately boil down to two fundamental questions: First, who has been benefitting?; And, second,

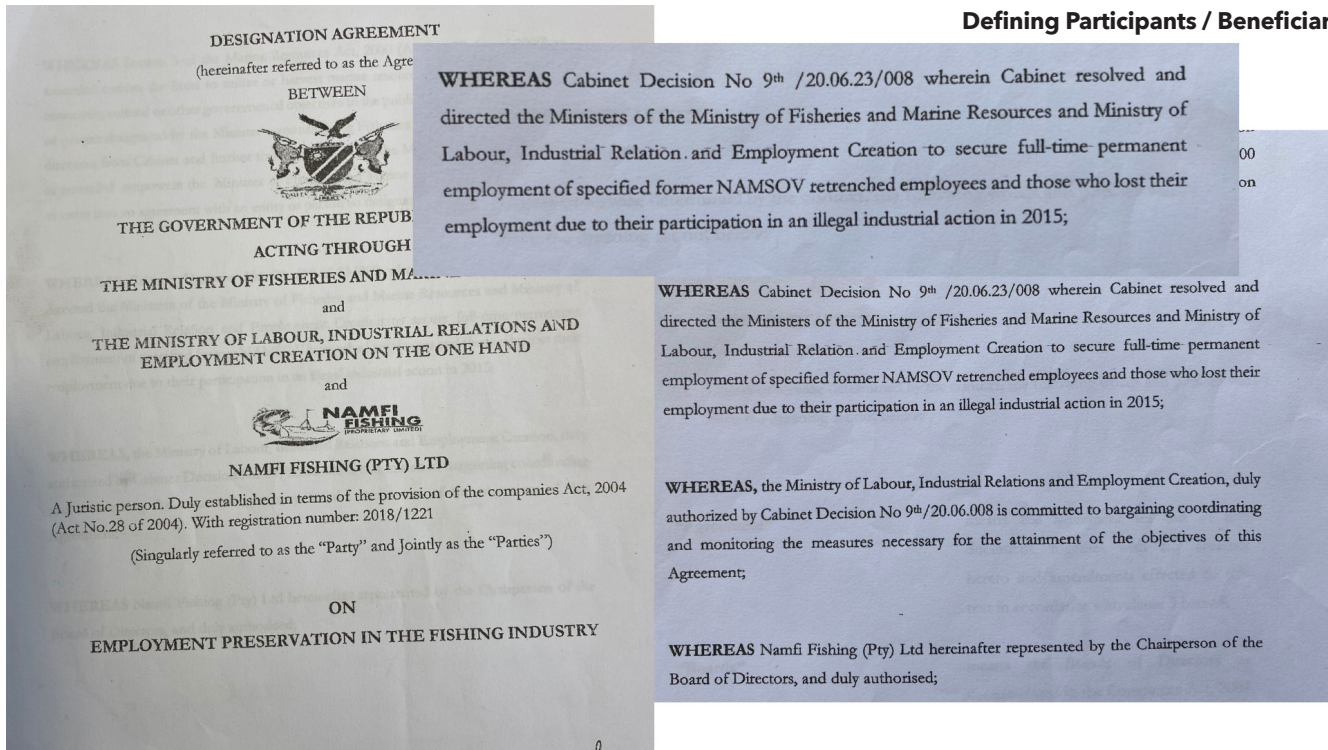
how have they been benefitting?

The directly affected former fishermen and fisheries workers have been asking these questions almost from the beginning of the programme, and to date, over five years later, the responsible government departments have not been able to resolve the disputes that these questions speak to and the answers remained far from straightforward by the end of June 2026.

## Who has been benefitting?

According to GERP-related documents, such as designation agreements and contracts, reviewed for this report, the beneficiaries or participants are relatively clearly defined. >





This 2021 designation agreement between the Namibian government and Cavema Fishing Joint Venture and The Rainbow Fishing Co (below left) clearly states that the benefitting or participating fisheries workers are “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees and those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015”.

Similar to the 2021 designation agreements, the 2023 agreements, such as the one above between the Namibian government and Namfi Fishing, also clearly defines the benefitting or participating fisheries workers as “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees and those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015”.

Note that the agreements do not refer to fishermen, but just state “retrenched employees and those who lost their employment”.

In a November 2022 [statement in the Namibian parliament](#), then fisheries minister Derek Klazen, in response to [the report](#) of the Select Committee of the National Assembly on the Mass Resignation of Fishermen Employed Under the Governmental Employment Redressing Programme in Walvis Bay, referred to fishermen, stating that the programme was about getting designated companies to “re-employ fishermen who lost their jobs as a result of the NamSov retrenchments and those who took part in an ill-fated industrial strike”.

Once again, as is illustrated, the beneficiaries or participants in the GERP fall into two broad and relatively clearly defined groups, namely “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees” and “those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015”. Klazen’s statement suggests that the “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees” only comprised former Namsov fishermen, and not former Namsov factory workers or those of its subsidiary companies.

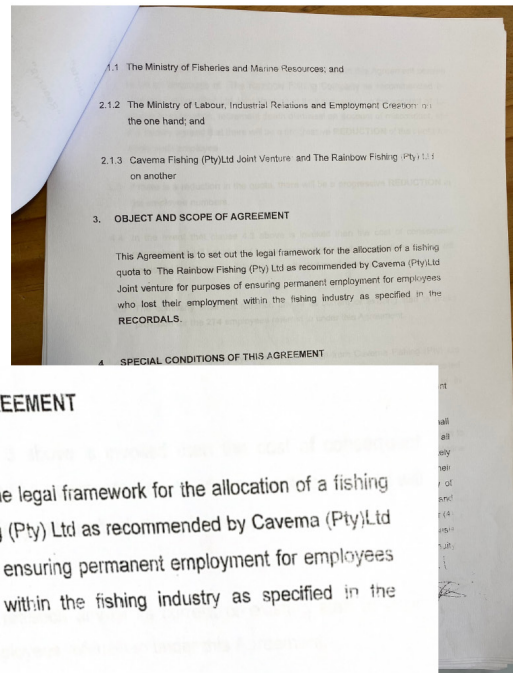
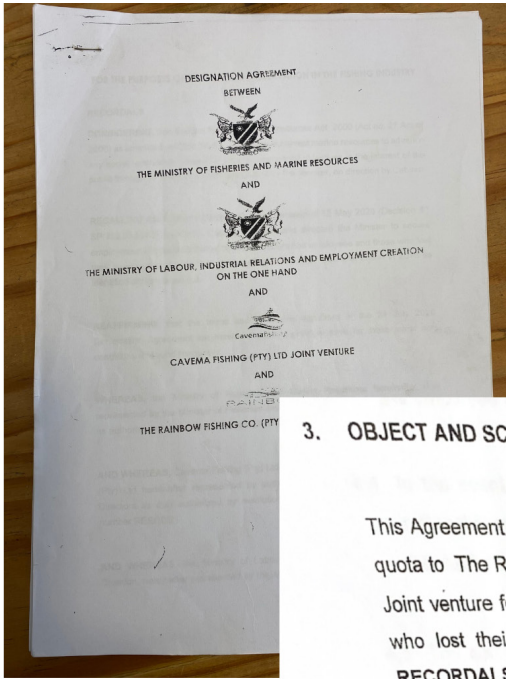
Why only “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees”, in other words Namsov fishermen, have been included as beneficiaries of the GERP and not all former Namsov fisheries workers is unclear.

Here it is material to point out that, almost from the start, retrenched fishermen of the defunct Namibian subsidiaries (ArcticNam and Saga Seafood) of Fishrot corruption-implicated Icelandic fishing company Samherji, have also been participating in the GERP. Similarly, most of the former workers (numbering in the hundreds) of Seaflower Pelagic Processing (SPP), which was owned by the National Fishing Corporation of Namibia (Fishcor), through which the alleged Fishrot corruption was perpetrated, have also been absorbed into the GERP.

Meanwhile, groups such as the former fisheries workers (numbering between 600 - 700) of United Fishing Enterprises (UFE), which was a former Namsov Fishing Enterprises subsidiary, have questioned why they have been excluded from the GERP, arguing that they too lost their jobs due to the Namsov group of companies folding as a result of losing quotas because of the alleged Fishrot corruption. Worth emphasising is the fact that when [a master list of potential beneficiaries](#) was drawn up in early 2020 for what would become the GERP, it listed many former UFE workers, indicating that the fisheries ministry was aware of this group of directly-affected-by-Fishrot fisheries workers. The listing of former UFE workers possibly suggests that the intention at the time had been to include them in the GERP.

This state of affairs raises important additional questions, specifically: What criteria was used and why by the Geingob Cabinet to limit participating former Namsov employees to “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees”, with the operative word being “specified”, when clearly many more former Namsov-affiliated fisheries workers, such as the former United Fishing Enterprises workers, could and should have been included in the scheme?

Similarly, the government needs to clearly and adequately explain how and why former Samherji-affiliated fishermen and former Fishcor workers have been included in the GERP when they do not form part of either “specified former NAMSOV retrenched employees” and / or “those who lost their employment due to their participation in an illegal industrial action in 2015”?>



**3. OBJECT AND SCOPE OF AGREEMENT**

This Agreement is to set out the legal framework for the allocation of a fishing quota to The Rainbow Fishing (Pty) Ltd as recommended by Cavema (Pty)Ltd Joint venture for purposes of ensuring permanent employment for employees who lost their employment within the fishing industry as specified in the RECORDALS.

**Active vs idle employment**

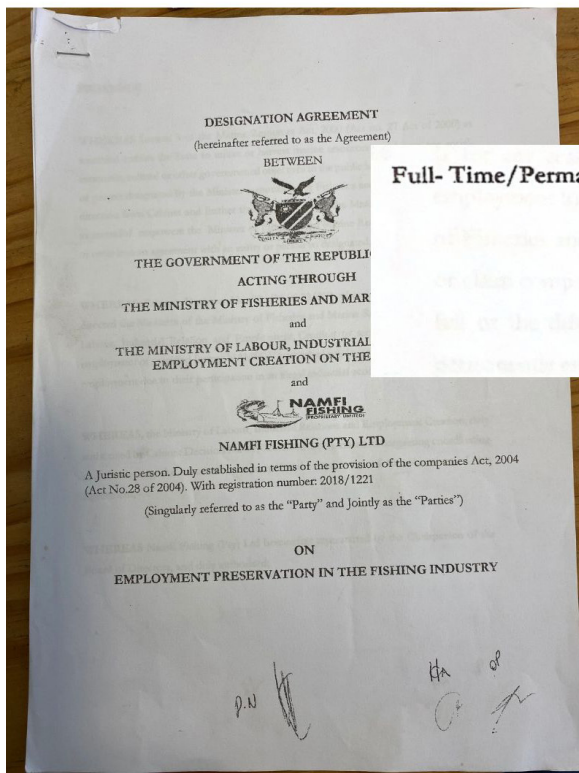
Almost from the start many of the GERP beneficiaries / participants have complained that they have not been provided with active permanent employment, with all the benefits that come with it, under the programme, but have been paid a stipend of roughly N\$4,000 to sit at home idle. This is why the targeted fishermen have over the years accused the government of misleading them and the companies of exploiting them.

According to the documents, such as designation agreements and contracts, reviewed for this report, the aim of the GERP was / is clearly to enable active permanent employment for the targeted fishermen.

For example, the 2021 designation agreements, such as the one between the government and Cavema Fishing Joint Venture and The Rainbow Fishing Co (see Image: Cavema Joint Venture agreement), clearly stated that the purpose of the programme was / is “ensuring permanent employment” for the affected and identified former fishermen.

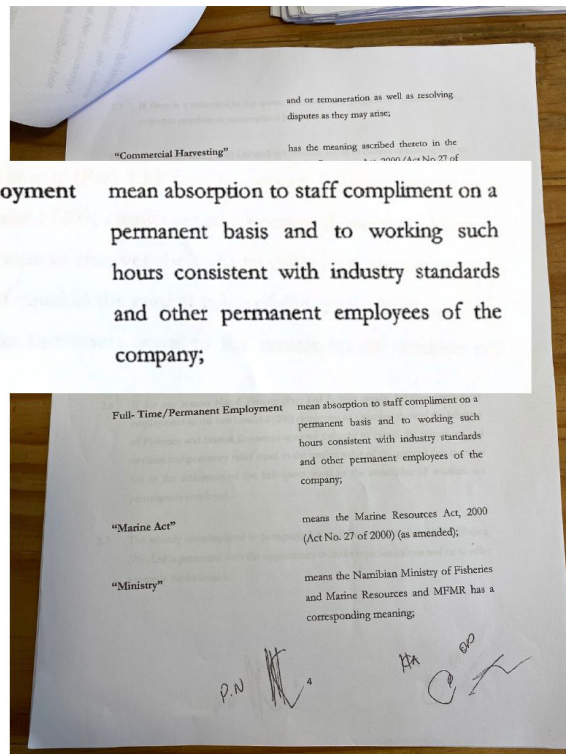
Similar to the 2021 designation agreements, the 2023 agreements (below) also speak of permanent employment, and go even further by stating that the aim of the GERP was / is about “securing full-time permanent employment” for the affected fishermen. As the image below illustrates, “full-time permanent employment” was even relatively clearly defined in the 2023 designation agreements.

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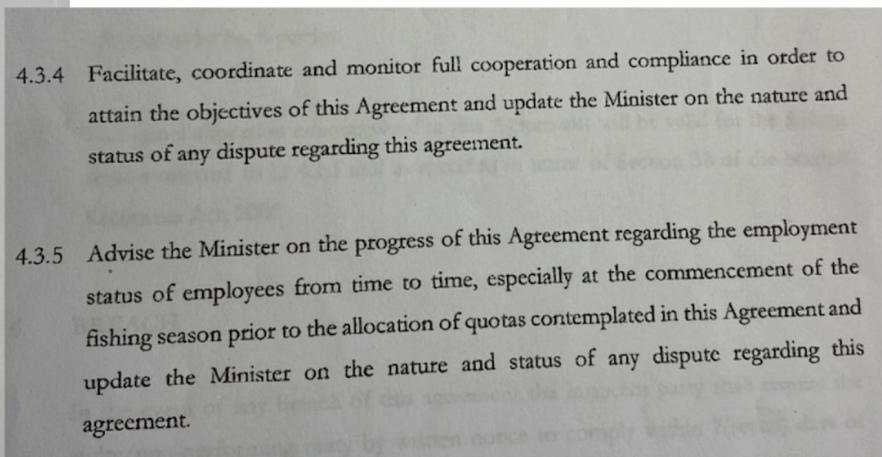
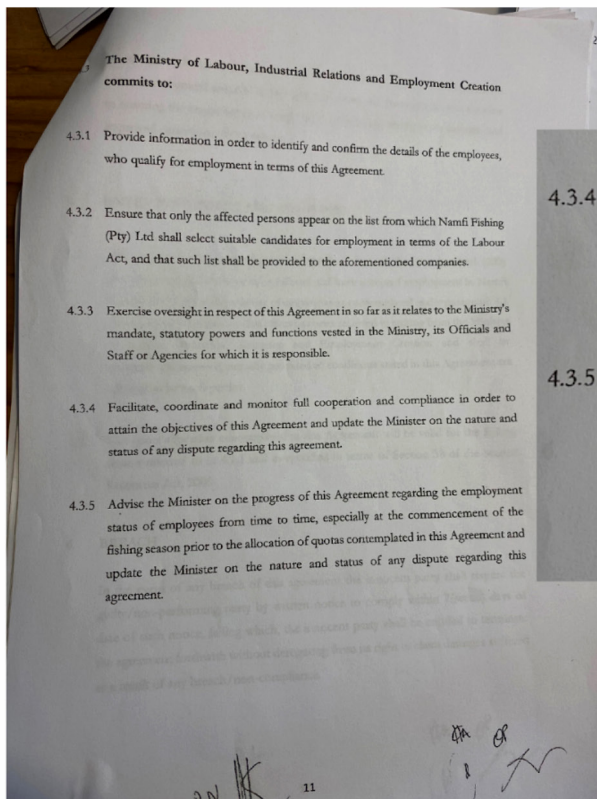


**Full- Time/Permanent Employment**

mean absorption to staff compliment on a permanent basis and to working such hours consistent with industry standards and other permanent employees of the company;



Namfi agreement



Despite this, the reality for many former fishermen 'employed' through the programme is that they are 'employed' under fixed-term contracts, which effectively means that they are not full-time permanent employees of the designated companies. Also, many of those on fixed-term contracts are not even actively employed, but are in effect contracted into perpetual idle employment for a monthly stipend for as long as there is quota. Over the last two years the IPPR has interviewed and surveyed over 120 former fishermen who are participating in the GERP, and almost all of them are stuck in cycles of idle employment, without opportunities to increase their earnings through active employment, which is what they would have had if they had actually been active "full-time permanent employees", as the designation agreements state and mandate.

To be clear, the IPPR has viewed employment contracts in which the designated company clearly states that it cannot guarantee that there will be work for the contracted employee, but will nevertheless pay the employee a monthly basic salary / stipend for as long as there is GERP quota.

Against this backdrop, various groups of affected former fishermen have over the years alleged that the scheme has been mismanaged and accused the authorities of turning a blind eye to their complaints. They argue that the government has long been aware that designated companies are not complying with the designation agreements, yet has failed to take meaningful corrective action.

The designation agreements clearly state that both the fisheries and labour ministries, within their respective mandates, are jointly responsible for exercising oversight and enforcing compliance with the designation agreements. The apparent non-compliance of designated companies with the core provisions of the agreements lends credence to the accusations of collusion between government and companies.

To be precise, the designation agreements state that companies are supposed to submit quarterly reports to the fisheries

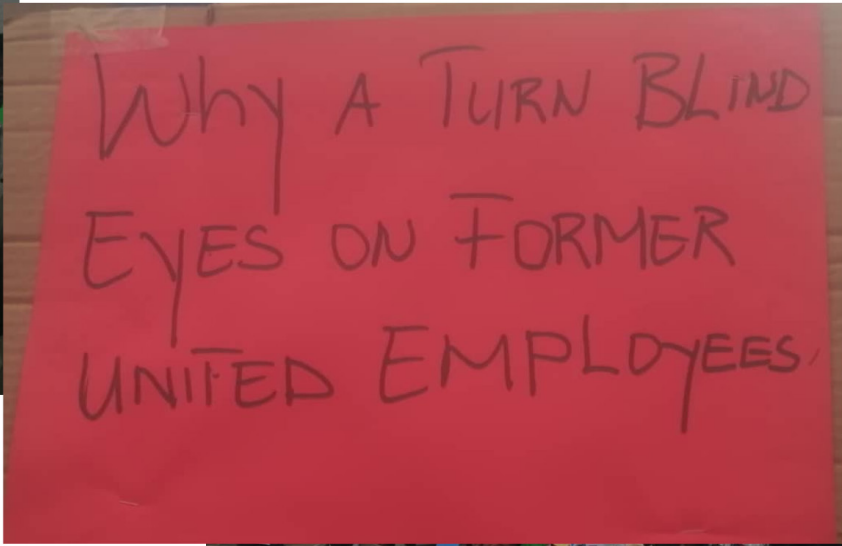
and labour ministries "providing information regarding the status and conduct of the employees". Given this, it seems highly unlikely that the government was not or is not aware that designated companies have been flouting the core conditions of these agreements.

At the same time, as this image above of relevant sections of a 2023 designation agreement shows, the labour ministry has to "facilitate, coordinate and monitor full cooperation and compliance" with the agreement and to advise and inform the line minister of the "progress of this agreement regarding the employment status of employees".

In light of this, the following questions logically swing into focus:

- To what extent were / are designated companies accurately reporting, if at all, "regarding the status and conduct of the employees" as designation agreements require?;
- To what extent were / are the fisheries and labour ministries coordinating and monitoring "full cooperation and compliance" with the designation agreements?
- And, what was the nature and quality of inter-ministerial progress reporting and advising "regarding the employment status of employees"?

Considering all of the foregoing it appears that the answers to the fundamental questions of who has been benefiting and how they have been benefitting remain to be clearly answered and are wrapped in layers of dysfunctional implementation and misgovernance stretching over half-a-decade. ■



Former United Fishing Enterprises workers have been demanding to be assisted in a similar way to fishermen 'benefitting' from the GERP.  
 (Photos: Former United Fishing Enterprises workers)

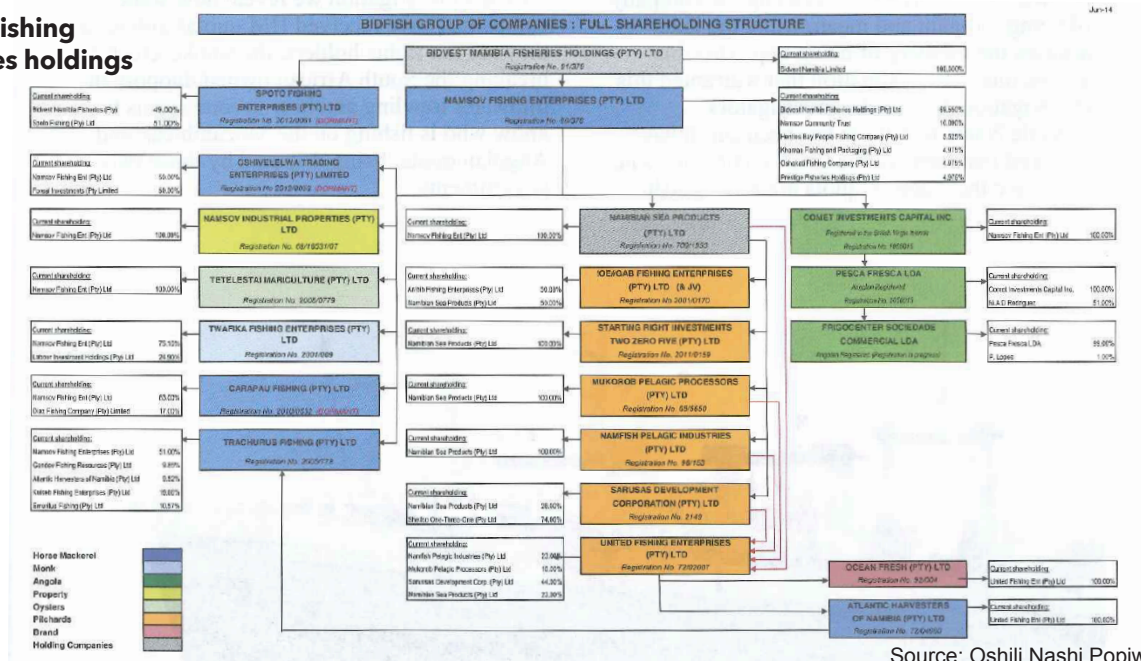
# Why were some groups left out?

**This is the question that former United Fishing Enterprises (UFE) employees have been asking since the inception of the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP) in 2020.**

The question is pertinent because UFE was retrenching workers at the same time as other Namsoy-owned companies, using the excuse of low catches and "non-availability of raw product" to let go of hundreds of workers. According to representatives of the former UFE workers, by

their estimation more than 2,000 workers were retrenched by UFE from 2016-2017 onwards. Namsoy Fishing Enterprises was majority owned by Bidvest Namibia Fisheries Holdings (see Image: Namsoy Fishing Enterprises holdings). In turn, Namsoy was the majority owner of UFE through various companies. [UFE was a dominant operator](#) in both the pilchard and horse mackerel fisheries, owning and operating canning facilities at Walvis Bay that employed hundreds of workers.

## Namsoy Fishing Enterprises holdings



Source: Oshili Nashi Popiwe (2014)

In November 2016, UFE started retrenching workers, most in its horse mackerel operations, due to “non-availability of raw product” (see Image: UFE retrenchment letter), which

effectively meant that the company did not have access to horse mackerel quotas.

## UFE retrenchment letter

**United Fishing Enterprises (Pty) Ltd**  
 Registration No: 7202857  
 P O Box 43, Walvis Bay, Namibia  
 2nd Street East, Walvis Bay, Namibia  
 Tel: +264-0944-217500  
 Fax: +264-0944-205273  
 E-mail: ufe@ufern.com



14 November 2016

**TO: ALL CASUAL EMPLOYEES**

### NOTICE OF TERMINATION OF FIXED TERM EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

This notice serves to inform you that UFE decided to stop production on Friday, 18 November 2016. The reason for this decision is because of the non-availability of raw product to continue with our operations for the rest of 2016. As a result of this unfortunate circumstances, we have to give notice of the termination of your fixed term contracts on 18 November 2016.

The following fixed term employees are affected by this decision:

DISVISION	EE NO	NAME
1	FISHSHOP 412	HAFEN SHEKUNYEMBE
2	GARAGE 2274	N. SAKESI
3	GENE 665	SEBEN SEBELUS
4	GENE 1112	SEBEN SEBELUS
5	GENE 1902	FRIEDRICH MELINA
6	GENE 2088	ANON KAMBO
7	HMAACK 309	PETERUS JAPHET
8	HMAACK 394	P. TITUS
9	HMAACK 418	A. NOKALIFA
10	HMAACK 502	J. SHEFA
11	HMAACK 605	P. KAMBO
12	HMAACK 706	A. NOKALIFA
13	HMAACK 1000	S. ALKOUJUS
14	HMAACK 1296	EB. JAHARI
15	HMAACK 1299	EB. SETULU RABA
16	HMAACK 1417	H. SIBESON
17	HMAACK 1479	DANIEL TOHUS
18	HMAACK 1501	MN. HAMBUNYELA
19	HMAACK 1800	I. NANGOLO
20	HMAACK 1801	P. HAMBUNYELA
21	HMAACK 1730	P. HAMBUNYELA
22	HMAACK 1801	F. J. J. J. J.
23	HMAACK 1844	N. SIBOLONGO
24	HMAACK 1884	E. SUSE
25	HMAACK 1827	H. KASHONGA

check - to remain OK

26	HMAACK 1893	A. A. A. A.
27	HMAACK 1987	A. HAMBUNYELA
28	HMAACK 1995	N. JAMES
29	HMAACK 1999	J. ANGULA
30	HMAACK 2017	S. MUKWANGENI
31	HMAACK 2125	A. SHANANA
32	HMAACK 2138	T. S. H. OMBIENI
33	HMAACK 2224	M. M. M. M.
34	HMAACK 2225	S. SHIPANDANI
35	HMAACK 2237	T. HELONZWA
36	HMAACK 2239	THOMAS THOMAS
37	HMAACK 2278	P. HAMBUNYELA
38	HMAACK 2288	A. O. O. O. O.
39	HMAACK 2300	F. P. P. P.
40	HMAACK 2345	S. HAMBUNYELA
41	HMAACK 2377	S. SHIPALA
42	HMAACK 2382	M. M. M. M.
43	HMAACK 2384	S. HAMBUNYELA
44	HMAACK 2442	S. NOKALIFA
45	HMAACK 2450	M. S. M. M. M.
46	HMAACK 2451	S. HAMBUNYELA
47	HMAACK 3004	F. S. S. S.
48	HMAACK 3008	F. S. S. S.
49	HMAACK 3029	T. N. N. N.
50	HMAACK 3037	S. HAMBUNYELA
51	HMAACK 3038	E. T. T. T.
52	HMAACK 3038	A. S. S. S.
53	HMAACK 3047	F. J. J. J.
54	HMAACK 3050	A. T. T. T.
55	HMAACK 3051	A. P. P. P.
56	HMAACK 3055	I. N. N. N.
57	HMAACK 3067	L. B. B. B.
58	HMAACK 3069	M. M. M. M.
59	HMAACK 3071	E. P. P. P.
60	HMAACK 3075	S. M. M. M.
61	HMAACK 3080	V. K. K. K.
62	HMAACK 3081	F. J. J. J.
63	HMAACK 3083	L. P. P. P.
64	HMAACK 3088	A. M. M. M.
65	HMAACK 3090	E. N. N. N.
66	HMAACK 3094	V. K. K. K.
67	HMAACK 3094	V. K. K. K.

The final payment following the termination of your fixed term employment will be effected on **25 November 2016**, as follows:

- (i) Salary for the week ending 20 November 2016
- (ii) Overtime remuneration (if any)
- (iii) Leave pay for accumulated vacation leave

Director: P. Ahrens, G 3 Hough



United Fishing Enterprises issued this retrenchment letter to horse mackerel workers in November 2016.

The employees affected by the above notice of termination is herewith kindly requested to please hand in their access cards to Mr Ester Aupokoto or Mr Jostin Koffraj on the last day of service for safekeeping.

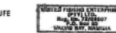
UFE will notify all casual workers via media and through NASAWU what the plans are for the 2017 production year, and when employees will be expected to report for duty. You are therefore advised to not report for duty in 2017 unless you are called upon by the employer to do so. We expect to be able to share this information with the workers not later than Tuesday, 31 January 2017.

We wish to take this opportunity to extend our sincere appreciation for the services you have rendered to the company during your tenure. We wish you well with all your future endeavours. May you all enjoy a blessed and joyful festive season with your loved ones, and for those who would be travelling to different destinations throughout Namibia, may you travel and arrive safe.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. P. Ahrens  
 General Manager: UFE

cc: NASAWU



Source: Former UFE workers

This fits into the timeline of when UFE's majority shareholder, Namsov, was also downsizing its workforce as it lost quotas following its quota allocation stand-offs with then fisheries minister Bernhardt Esau and then justice minister Sakeus Shanghala, both of whom have been implicated as central figures in the alleged Fishrot corruption.

UFE appears to have retrenched the majority of its workforce, many of them female factory workers who were the sole or main breadwinners in their households, between end-2016 and late 2018, according to information provided by representatives of former UFE fisheries workers.

## Government cold shoulder

Over the years the former UFE workers have repeatedly petitioned various government leaders and offices for inclusion in GERP or for a similar scheme to be created for them in order to create employment opportunities.

As far back as September 2020, as the GERP was being formulated, representatives of the former UFE workers wrote to then fisheries minister Albert Kawana to state that the workers were also victims of the alleged Fishrot corruption and should be considered for inclusion in any government scheme that would generate jobs in the fisheries sector.

In August 2023, and again in February and July 2024, according to correspondence viewed for this report, the former UFE workers petitioned various senior government leaders, including the then Namibian prime minister Sara Kungongelwa-Amadhila, then fisheries minister Derek Kla-

zen, the Erongo Region governor Neville Andre Itope, to be considered for inclusion in employment creation initiatives.

Again in August 2024, through a local Walvis Bay-based human rights entity, the former UFE workers again petitioned the Erongo governor, the fisheries minister, and the then Namibian vice-president, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, stating that they lost their jobs and livelihoods as a direct result of the alleged Fishrot corruption and once again called for their inclusion in state-run employment creation and preservation programmes.

Despite these efforts, to date the efforts and pleas of the former UFE workers to be included in schemes such as or similar to the GERP have fallen on deaf ears in government at all levels, according to available evidence and the accounts of representatives of the former UFE workers spoken to for this report.

Against this backdrop, the case of the former UFE workers, and others who have been excluded from the GERP, raises an important question, specifically: When the then Geingob Cabinet decided to create the GERP in early 2020, what was the rationale for limiting the reach of the scheme to including just specific former employees of certain Namsoy Fishing Enterprises owned entities and not others, such as the fisheries workers of United Fishing Enterprises, who also can lay claim to having been directly harmed, through loss of jobs and livelihoods, by the alleged Fishrot corruption?



Produced with Microsoft Copilot

The Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP) was introduced in mid-2020 by the Namibian government as a remedial measure following large-scale job losses in the fisheries sector from 2015 to early 2020, largely due to an illegal strike in 2015 and the Fishrot corruption scandal, which had a devastating impact on a significant number of jobs and livelihoods in Namibia's fisheries sector. While the stated aim of the GERP was to provide employment relief, evidence from the two IPPR human rights impact assessment reports, media coverage and interviews and discussions with fishermen and former fisheries workers, as well as some union and fishing company representatives, revealed that the programme has fallen significantly short in the eyes of many stakeholders, especially the affected former fishermen and fisheries workers.

### Key Findings

- **Limited reach and impact:** The GERP appears to have failed to reach a significant portion of affected fisheries workers. Many former fishermen report being excluded from opportunities or receiving only short-term placements that did not restore economic stability. Furthermore, hundreds of former fisheries workers from the once-dominant United Fishing Enterprises (UFE), a former Namsof subsidiary that also folded due to the alleged Fishrot corruption, have not been included as beneficiaries of the scheme.
- **Perceived inequity and poor transparency:** Over the years the former fishermen, and others, such as the former UFE workers, have questioned how the GERP participants or beneficiaries were identified and opportunities allocated, citing favouritism in employment, alleging corruption in recruitment, a lack of clear criteria for job placements, and inadequate and incoherent communication from government. This has undermined trust in both the programme and the institutions implementing it.
- **Loss of dignity and identity:** The collapse of fisheries employment has caused deep socio-economic and psychological harm for many former fishermen and fisheries workers. Workers described feelings of shame, isolation, and a loss of purpose, none of which GERP meaningfully addressed, but in many instances appears to have exacerbated.
- **Fractured families and mental health struggles:** Over half of fishermen interviewed or surveyed reported losing contact with family members, and many turned to alcohol to cope. The GERP did not include psycho-social support or community reintegration efforts.
- **Calls for broader redress:** Both IPPR human rights impact reports emphasise that the GERP alone could not repair the damage caused by Fishrot and misgovernance of the sector. Affected communities demanded asset recovery, international accountability, and long-term employment re-integration and / or focused economic empowerment strategies.>



Photo: Informante

Namibian Food and Allied Workers Union (NAFAU) regional organiser Johannes Shayuka addressing disgruntled seagoing workers after the vessels they were supposed to work on sailed away from Namibian waters under a cloud of controversy.

### Policy Implications

The GERP once again raises or surfaces important and long-standing questions and concerns about and around the nature and quality of the Namibian government's conception, design and implementation of interventions meant to assist, uplift and / or empower vulnerable Namibians.

The governance challenges and problems experienced with the GERP must surely once again loudly call for an earnest re-evaluation of how the Namibian government operates, implements and performs on such public interest interventions. This was acknowledged by the president in her closing remarks at the impromptu 'Fishing Industry Engagement' in mid-April 2026, when she stated: "It was indeed a sobering engagement, calling on us to reflect deeper, as the fishing sector is not just another sector, but it sustains livelihoods, supports communities and for many of us in the room it carries personal meaning." In this regard, it is once again appropriate to clearly spotlight what by now are widely considered the characteristic, persistent and stubborn shortcomings of Namibian government designed and implemented interventions such as the GERP:

- Weak governance and oversight systems and mechanisms;
- Weak monitoring and evaluation, and reporting, systems and mechanisms;
- Poor management and inter-departmental coordination;
- Weak and / or under-developed integrity and accountability systems and mechanisms;
- Poor communication and transparency systems and practices;
- And, importantly, weak political interest, will and follow-through.

To underscore and be specific, what the experience of the GERP clearly calls for is broad and

deep reform of the governance systems pertinent to the fisheries portfolio under the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform. Meaningful fisheries sector governance reform can no longer be delayed or avoided. The president seemed to hint at this in her April 2026 remarks.

With regard to the way forward, with the question of sustainability looming large in the context of a finite and strained natural resource, it is proposed that the GERP intervention be transitioned to include:

- Creating long-term employment and skills development pathways;
- Introducing psycho-social support and family re-integration measures;
- Strengthening public accountability, transparency and corruption-related harm mitigation measures and mechanisms.

Without these reforms, the GERP risks going down in history as a politically misjudged symbolic gesture, an unserious intervention that got mishandled and hijacked and ultimately failed to meet the needs of those most affected.

Perhaps appropriately then, the way forward should be guided by a question president Nandi-Ndaitwah posed during her closing remarks at the April 2026 'Fishing Industry Engagement', when she said "as we conclude this engagement, the question is what will we do with what we have learned"?

■

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform has not responded to a request for comment or information (see Annex 2) related to the GERP, despite repeated follow-ups since the request was made in June 2025.



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

## MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND LABOUR RELATIONS

OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

Tel : +264(61) 280 5262/5128

Private Bag 13302

Fax : +264(61) 254 595

Windhoek

Email: [pa@moj.gov.na](mailto:pa@moj.gov.na)

15 September 2025



Hon. Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi, MP  
Minister  
Ministry Agriculture, Fisheries, Water, and Land Reform  
**WINDHOEK**

Dear Honourable Minister,

**RE: ALLEGATIONS REGARDING FISHERMEN WHO ARE STATIONED AT OKAPARE AND RECEIVING WAGES WITHOUT RENDERING SERVICES**

1. The above subject refers.
2. Namibian Labour law is premised on the principle that remuneration is due in exchange for work performed or for legally recognised absence e.g. leave of a prescribed kind.
3. There continues to be allegations regarding employers in the Government Redress Programme that are paying workers who are neither attending work nor legally absent from work.
4. The practice as per paragraph 3, clearly and squarely violates the principle under paragraph 2 above.
5. Further, the perpetuity of this practice while the employers report to government that employees are attending work, does not only border on misrepresentation but may as well constitute potential corrupt elements if not fraud.
6. Attached hereto, are names of the workers who are allegedly still stationed at Okapare while they continue receiving wages without rendering services.
7. May your good office kindly facilitate the verification of the allegations of payment in exchange of no-work.
8. Also please advise all designated entities, that paying wages where no service is rendered is both irregular and corrupt, hence they must desist from it or else face the legal consequences.
9. Please accept, Hon. Minister, the assurances of my highest esteem and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

  
  
**FILLEMÓN WISER IMMANGEL, MP**  
**MINISTER**

CC: Dr. Audrin Mathe  
Executive Director: Ministry of Justice and Labour Relations



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25 June 2025

**TO:**

Ms. Ndiyakupi Nghituwamata  
Executive Director  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water & Land Reform

Dear Ms Nghituwamata

**RE: Request for information / data relating to the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP)**

My name is Frederico Links and I'm a research associate at the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR).

I am currently working on a brief looking critically at the Government Employment Redress Programme (GERP) that will be digitally published in July 2025.

Herewith, I wish to request the following information related to the GERP:

- How many companies have received quotas under the GERP since 2020 and how many tonnes (MT), of hake or horse mackerel, were awarded to each company over the five years (2020 - 2025)? Kindly provide a list of the companies and a breakdown of the size of quotas designated to each?
- What is the total commercial value of the quotas awarded under the GERP since 2020?
- What were the major challenges experienced by the coordinating ministries over the five years (2020 - 2025) of the GERP?
- What are the reasons why the hundreds of former fisheries workers of former Namsovs subsidiary United Fishing Enterprises have not been included in the GERP?
- How do new designation agreements differ from the ones signed with companies since 2020 under the GERP?
- Is there a report capturing the findings of the recently concluded consultations around the GERP and, if there is a report, will it be made public?
- Finally, the GERP is not meant to be a permanent intervention, so how does the Namibian government intend to wind it down or phase it out and what are the timelines for this?

If you could respond to these questions / provide the information by / on Thursday, 3 July 2025, I would greatly appreciate it.

I hope for your favourable response to this request and look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience or by / on the date indicated.

Sincere regards,

**Frederico Links**  
**Research Associate**

Incorporated Association Not for Gain Registration Number 21/2000/468

Board: M M C Koep (Chairperson), D Motinga, J Ellis, G Hopwood, A Du Pisani, E Tjirera, N Shejavali,



### **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. IPPR was established in the belief that development is best promoted through free and critical debate informed by quality research.

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

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