

Portrait

Tapiwa Museve



I'm Tapiwa. I am now 37. I'm married, I have a family, Christina my wife, my first son Tania, and the last descendent, Tako. I have two boys.

I come from a very big family, I'm the last one in that family, I was born as no 11 in that family, I am the youngest.

My being here in Namibia is because of the situation in Zimbabwe. The situation is economically terrible. My wife is still in Zimbabwe. That's why I told you I'm going this week back. I was four months here in Namibia. That's a sign that the situation is not good.

It's only God and the love from God that helps me. I have to thank the government of Namibia. Sure they are very supporting. They keep us for so long in their country. It is no problem for me to work here, to stay in the country. As long as the passport is valid, there's no problem.

As you can hear I speak a nice English, I'm well educated, our schools are very good. We speak better than the British themselves. But we have so many problems. You cannot say, the economy is collapsing, it has already collapsed. We have to leave our country, to find a better living.

My own family? The most worried thing is my first son's poor health. Since from 3 years on - now he's 10 years - he's always in and out of the hospital. I tried to bring him to any doctor. They cannot find out what kind of disease he has. Last year for example: Since July last year, he could not go to school. He's very intelligent, but he can seldom go to school.

So that is my worry and I'm never settled cause every time I phone home he's in hospital – he's out of the hospital – he's in hospital again. I always worry. He's ten years but if you look at him now, he doesn't look like a ten year old boy.

My business? Well, I could have tried a lot of things, but I cannot leave my family. So, yes, I am struggling but I'm getting a little bit out of it. At the moment, I sell handbags, gloves, caps, socks, various things. I got the staff from South Africa.

I grew up in Small Ville. My father was a peasant farmer. I grew up in a poor family. Yes, unfortunately I have to say that. From the rural areas I got an education there.

I started working at the age of 20. I worked for 10 years in a mine. Asbestos mining. My health is still fine. I did a solid 10 years of mining. I left when the economy was starting to collapse in 1979.

From there I ventured into personal business... just doing what people needed. Started farming like sort of a plots. Grew some fruits, had fruit trees. The situation was ok in Smallville. We had a very good orchard, some animals. I had a lot of animals, kettle, goats, and turkeys.

But what makes the situation worse: If you want to sell, nobody can buy it. People don't have money and the money after some days is nothing worth. So you have to trade with real goods. But not with money. That's the problem.

From there, I started to have my passport and went to Botswana, then Namibia. Trying to make a living.

Why Rehoboth? Last year, I was in Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. Rehoboth is not very bad, but compared to Swakop, Swakop is better – there are a lot of tourists. Unlike here there are only the Rehoboth residents. If you come with new staff, tomorrow everybody has it. Then you cannot buy it again. In Swakop, there are always new people coming.

I'll go back to Zimbabwe by bus. It's going to take me 3 - 4 days. I'm going to stay a maximum of 3 weeks. Because, if I stay too long, I will finish the whole money and then I cannot come back.

How can my family make a living? I sometimes send some money. If I travel back like now, I go and leave some money which will help them to survive for the next two months. We change it to Rand, because the Namibian Dollar is not traded outside Namibia. The exchange rate is 1:1.

My extended family? (= relatives, incl. father/mother/sisters/brothers)

Yes, I was supposed to care for my extended family, too. This time, the business was very bad.

Like my father, he is in a difficult condition. He had a stroke when I was doing Grade 5 in 1982. Now he is 85 years old. Because he's old, his health has worsened. He cannot help himself anymore. He cannot talk nicely, the right side of his body is unable to move. My mother is also old, she cannot lift him. He's always on the wheelchair. I have to get him something, also. I would like to buy him something, a pen or something – to show him love. Last month, my brother phoned me and said: "Dad is in hospital". He has been there for 3 weeks but he's out now. He cannot help himself anymore.

Otherwise, that's all about me. Of course, you should not blame the Zimbabwean Government too much. If you could help us. Staying with the family nicely. We enjoy being together with our families, but it's not possible to make a living unless you leave the country.

I'm in a terrible condition. A friend of mine who also works here in Rehoboth lately said that I look terrible. It's so cold in the night, when you sleep on the floor with nothing but your clothes on and maybe a blanket. He got me a thin mattress, at least. But you know, this is only a small problem. If you run away from that problem, the next problem behind it is even bigger.