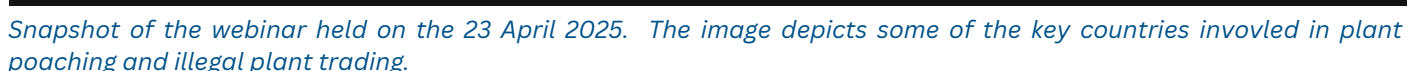


Two passionate professionals led the discussion, Mr. Kalipi, Junior Data Analyst at Blue Rhino, and Mr. Shaanika, Warden in Wildlife Protection Services at the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). Together, they analysed the complex and alarming networks behind plant poaching in Namibia.

At the heart of the problem is a phenomenon called “plant blindness”, a term used to describe how people tend to disregard the significance of plants in our ecosystems. Unlike elephants or rhinos, plants don’t often stir public emotion, yet they play a critical role in sustaining life on Earth. This lack of awareness has created fertile ground for illegal trade to take root and spread.

Namibia, with its wealth of rare and uniquely shaped flora, especially in arid regions, has become a prime target for plant traffickers. The speakers highlighted how collectors, mainly from international markets, are driving demand for unique plants, turning Namibia's natural resources into commodities. Trafficking networks have become increasingly organised, with routes stretching from Namibia through South Africa and into Angola, Zambia, and as far as Tanzania. The involvement of both Namibian and South African nationals further complicates the enforcement landscape.



But amidst the grim realities, the webinar sparked a strong sense of purpose, especially among the youth who were in attendance. Participants explored how young Namibians can take leadership roles in protecting their country's plant biodiversity. Raising awareness about the value of plants, supporting grassroots conservation, and pressing for stronger policies and enforcement are just some of the ways youth can make an impact.

As the session drew to a close, one message was clear: protecting Namibia's flora is not just the work of law enforcement alone; it's a mission that belongs to all of us. And with the passion and energy shown by the youth during this webinar, the country's plants may just have their fiercest allies yet.



The NNF, through the INL5 project of the International Bureau of Narcotics and Law Enforcement, support the Blue Rhino Task Team through the Rooikat Trust and Namibia Revenue Agency (NamRA) at critical border posts to better capacitate and resource these law enforcement agencies. The aim is to get ahead of these criminal entities, ensuring the scales of risk and reward are tipped in favour of the prosecutors with arrests, robust sentencing and ultimately the safeguarding of our country's unique plant species for generations to come.

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