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Alumni Report

# OVERCOMING THE ODDS

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Tracking the successes of IkamvaYouth's Alumni 2005-2012  
and facing up to the challenges encountered

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For IkamvaYouth to fulfill our mission of enabling disadvantaged youth to pull themselves and each other out of poverty, we must be able to demonstrate that Ikamvanites outperform their peers, not only at school, but in tertiary education and the workforce. The independent evaluation of IkamvaYouth conducted by the University of Stellenbosch in 2012 suggested that there was only limited evidence for such outperformance.

In 2013, IkamvaYouth therefore set out to track and survey our approximately 500 alumni who matriculated between 2005 and 2012, and to establish whether their high school success has translated into life success.

We were able to track 70% of the alumni group between May and September 2013. This report reveals our findings and their implications for the future of IkamvaYouth's alumni programme.

## Key Findings

### **Ikamvanites in Tertiary Education**

- Since 2005, the majority of IkamvaYouth's alumni have been enrolled in full-time tertiary education. Currently, 55% are full-time students, and this proportion is likely to grow.
- The national state of tertiary education is deeply worrying, with university first-year drop-outs at 30% and an officially targeted final graduation rate of only around 40%. The picture at FET colleges is even worse.
- The Ikamvanites are outperforming these national averages at tertiary level.
  - Ikamvanites have a first year drop-out rate of 17.5% - in other words they are just over half as likely as their peers to drop out in first year.
  - Each year, more than 60% of the Ikamvanites enrolled at tertiary institutions either graduate, or pass all required courses and progress to the next year of study.
- Nationally, alarmingly few adults hold post-school qualifications – 5.3% of the total population and less than 3% of the black population.
- By contrast, almost 48% of the Ikamvanites who matriculated in 2005, 2006 and 2007 now hold post-matric qualifications – in other words they are over 15 times more likely to hold such qualifications!

- Despite this out-performance, Ikamvanite drop-out rates can and should be improved.
  - The majority of Ikamvanites who drop out do so for financial reasons.
  - Academic reasons (i.e. not being able to pass all required courses to proceed) are a close second.
  - These two issues often occur in conjunction, with many Ikamvanites dropping out because they cannot afford the cost of repeating modules they have not passed.

### **Ikamvanites in the workforce**

- Almost a third of IkamvaYouth's alumni are currently in full-time employment.
- Ikamvanites in the workforce currently earn almost four times the median for black South Africans (admittedly, the sample size is small).
- Despite this, almost two-thirds of Ikamvanites in the workforce report an interest in changing jobs, often citing under-employment as a reason – i.e. the work they are doing is often not closely related to their qualifications.
- Many Ikamvanites in the workforce also express a desire to return to higher education.

### **Ikamvanites Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)**

- Over a third of the national population of 15 to 24 year-olds are not in education, employment or training, and that proportion is growing.
- By contrast, only 10% of Ikamvanites are in this category, and that proportion is declining from year to year.
- Although the great risk faced by NEETs is that they will never access formal employment, most Ikamvanites who find themselves NEET remain that way for no more than 12 months. No Ikamvanite who was NEET in 2009 or earlier remains that way today.
- Level of education is the best guarantor of employment for Ikamvanites, with those holding post-school qualifications much less likely to be NEET, and those holding diplomas and degrees even less likely.
- Despite the out-performance here, there is again room for improvement. Ikamvanite NEETs do not apply for enough opportunities – job-seeking is clearly a skill that needs development.

## **Recommendations**

### **Tertiary**

Access to, and success in, tertiary education is the best way to ensure Ikamvanites access the kind of career opportunities they desire and deserve. IkamvaYouth must leverage existing on-campus infrastructure and Ikamvanites' network of peers to deliver a systematic intervention in three key, interlinked areas: financial support, tertiary academic performance, and the ability for Ikamvanites to persist until they succeed, rather than drop out the first time they fail. IkamvaYouth needs to work with partners such as NSFAS, bursary providers, and tertiary institutions themselves to ensure that Ikamvanites receive the support they need.

### **Job Readiness**

Ikamvanites need to be better prepared for accessing the world of work, as well as for effectively pursuing what they want when they get there. Before they complete matric, Ikamvanites should have a solid grasp of the basics of how to apply for a job: how to identify whether an opportunity is appropriate, how to make your application stand out, and why it is better to apply for 100 jobs in a year than five. Once Ikamvanites enter the post-school world, they could continue to benefit from job-readiness interventions. Again this will need to be accomplished through a network of peers and partners – ensuring Ikamvanites access available resources.

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

IkamvaYouth was established in 2003 by a group of young volunteers who wanted to help learners in township schools to be able to access the same post-school opportunities as their more privileged counterparts. By providing after-school tutoring and mentoring, these volunteers hoped to enable learners from township schools to access tertiary education, learnerships or jobs. 2005 saw the project's first matric cohort, and their results surprised everybody. 98% passed and 63% accessed tertiary education. Nobody saw that coming. Then, many of them became the first group of ex-learners to become tutors, and the IkamvaYouth model was born.

The last eight years have seen these results replicated in other communities in the Western Cape, as well as in Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal. Due to this low-cost model's long track record and replicability, the organisation continues to expand its reach, and currently operates in 10 townships across five provinces.

## The Youth Bulge

The challenges facing young South Africans in education and the economy are widely understood as one of the greatest threats to the country's future stability. Over half the population of the country is currently under the age of 24, and struggling basic and higher education systems have their work cut out to equip this group for entry into the economy. The overwhelming majority (more than 70%) of South Africa's unemployed are below the age of 34, and of almost three million unemployed youths under 24, more than two-thirds do not even hold a matric. According to the National Planning Commission, if a young person does not find employment by the age of 24, odds are that they will never find it – meaning that there is a real risk that a majority of the current young generation will go their whole lives without ever holding stable formal employment.

Interventions like IkamvaYouth's are therefore crucial to South Africa's future, and understanding the long-term impact they have on their participants is crucial.

## Why Alumni?

In 2012, a team of University of Stellenbosch economists led by Servaas van der Berg and sponsored by our donor and partner, the DG Murray Trust, published an independent evaluation of IkamvaYouth's impact on the Ikamvanites. While the evaluation was extremely positive regarding IkamvaYouth's short-term impact, the evaluation team observed that the “evidence on [IkamvaYouth's long term impact] is not extensive yet... What evidence there is does not point to remarkable results at tertiary level thus far. Neither are labour market outcomes particularly strong thus far, but again this is based on limited evidence.”<sup>1</sup>

The evaluation team went on to recommend that IkamvaYouth consider what role we could play in easing the transition from school to work and university, in particular by “helping them to find support structures to reduce the anomaly that they experience when starting at university.”<sup>2</sup>

The need was clear, and so at the end of 2012 IkamvaYouth established an alumni department, aimed at better understanding the challenges faced by Ikamvanites transitioning from school into the wider world of work and tertiary education, and at developing solutions to those challenges.

This report is the first major step in that direction. It aims to expand the available evidence on the post-school performance of Ikamvanites, especially at tertiary level. It will use that evidence to help understand the challenges Ikamvanites face in their “school-life” transition, and recommend how best to address them.

## Methodology

IkamvaYouth has a total of 492 alumni, who matriculated between 2005 and 2012. In May 2013, we published a survey (link to survey – either electronic or full-text version) targeting our alumni – particularly the 398 individuals who matriculated between 2005 and 2011, as the whereabouts and activities of the 94 members of the class of 2012 were already known.

The survey ran from May to September 2013, during which time we were able to capture responses from 63% of the 2005-2011 Ikamvanites. This brings the total proportion of

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<sup>1</sup> <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B8UIMfoMRLdzeWpCQTduVGtabXc/edit> *Against the odds: an evaluation of the IkamvaYouth programme*, Pg 49

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg 49

Ikamvanites tracked, including the class of 2012, to 70% – a high enough number to be confident of the representativeness of the group.

The objective of the survey was to establish in some detail the academic and career trajectories of Ikamvanites after they leave school.

Given the emphasis the 2012 independent evaluation placed on the challenges of adjusting to university life, as well as the worrying national backdrop of high drop-out and low graduation rates at tertiary level, and IkamvaYouth's own focus on university as an aspiration for our matriculants, one of the main aims of the survey was to establish the rates of retention and throughput for Ikamvanites at tertiary institutions– in other words, how many of the Ikamvanites who access tertiary studies drop out, and how many graduate?

Other details captured by the survey include the current unemployment rate for Ikamvanites, as well as the proportion of our alumni not currently in employment, education or training (NEET), a statistic increasingly widely used as a real, useful measure of economic participation.

The survey also captured monthly income for Ikamvanites in the workforce, although this data has significant limitations.

## **Reading the Report**

This report aims to give an overview of the findings of our alumni survey, paying particular attention to three crucial groups of alumni – those who have accessed tertiary education, whether still studying, graduated or dropped out; those who have accessed the workforce; and those who are or have been not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Wherever possible, the survey data on the Ikamvanites will be compared against available national statistics. Again as far as possible, these comparisons will be like-for-like, to give the best possible understanding of how Ikamvanites compare to their 'average' national counterparts. However, such comparisons do have their limitations, which are discussed in the next section, "Challenges and Limitations", along with the inherent limitations of the data gathered by our survey.



The following section of the report will explore the findings in more detail. We start with an “Overview” of what Ikamvanites have been doing since leaving school, paying particular attention to the three main groups of interest: Ikamvanites at tertiary level, Ikamvanites in the workforce, and Ikamvanites not in education, employment or training.

Next, we delve into each of these groups in more detail. We begin with those identified by the independent evaluation as the key focus area for IkamvaYouth's alumni programme – “Ikamvanites at Tertiary Institutions”, before exploring the information we gathered on “Ikamvanites in the Workforce” and “Ikamvanites Not in Education, Employment or Training (the NEETs)”.

We then draw “Conclusions” based on the data reported on, and make “Recommendations” as to how IkamvaYouth can best support each of the three key groups of our alumni going forward.

## **Challenges and Limitations**

### **Challenges – gathering the data**

Ikamvanites are not an easy demographic to track. They are young – almost all below the age of 25 – and, as the 2012 independent evaluation pointed out, only a small number of them have completed their tertiary studies to date. That means that most do not yet have full time jobs, most still live in townships and, crucially, most have only occasional access to computers and the internet. They also largely use un-RICA-ed pay-as-you go SIM cards rather than having the stability of a cellular contract or a fixed phone line.

All of these factors conspire to mean that Ikamvanites' phone numbers change often, those who have email addresses rarely check them. Their availability to complete web browser-based surveys is limited and, like many university students, their day-to-day activities and timetables can be irregular.

Because of these challenges, the best method to get Ikamvanites to complete the alumni survey proved to be one-to-one phone calls. While this was effective where current numbers could be obtained, the high turnover of phone numbers within the group also proved a challenge. The initial tracking target of 80% of the Ikamvanites therefore had to be revised down to 70% – a

target which was achieved in September 2013.

## **Limitations – interpreting the data**

### **Sample size**

There are just under 500 IkamvaYouth alumni – a small group when considered in the context of South Africa's roughly half a million matriculants annually. The number tracked for this survey and report is smaller still – just under 350. The number of tracked Ikamvanites in each sub-group this report looks at in more detail – students, employees, and the unemployed – is smaller again. And some data is harder to get than others – not all respondents were willing to disclose current income information, for example.

So while a large majority of Ikamvanites did respond to the survey, and the data gathered on these respondents was as complete and thorough as possible, the small sample size needs to be borne in mind wherever this report compares their achievements to national averages. It also can account for some major percentage fluctuations from year to year where a sub-group is particularly small – such as Ikamvanite entrepreneurs or those not in education, employment or training (NEET). Where this limitation is especially significant – such as in the case of incomes – it will be specifically noted in the analysis.

### **Time**

The transition from school to a skilled, tertiary educated member of the workforce does not happen overnight. Even when completed in the minimum possible time, a Bachelor's degree takes three-four years, and a diploma two-three. And the proportion of South Africa's students who achieve those qualifications in that minimum time is small, especially among those from difficult socioeconomic backgrounds.

That means that there are only a few Ikamvanites who have yet had the chance to complete university, and so it is difficult to draw any solid conclusions about graduation rates in particular. The survey attempted to address this by looking for alternative measures of tertiary throughput, such as whether students passed all their courses in any given year, thus showing themselves to at least be “on track” to graduate on time. But this limitation should nonetheless be remembered, especially when looking at the tertiary performance data from the matric classes of 2008 and onwards.

**Detail**

Limited resources meant that the ideal method of survey completion – to have a trained fieldworker sit with each respondent and go through each question in detail – was simply not viable. As a result there were a few inevitable gaps in responses and a few cases where respondents misinterpreted what the survey was looking for. Wherever possible, we've cleaned up the data and followed up with our respondents to fill in the gaps, but there may still be some inconsistencies.

**Correlation and Causation**

It is impossible at this stage to conclusively attribute any of the trends noted in this report to the direct causal effects of IkamvaYouth's high school intervention. Crucially, as the independent evaluation pointed out, our selection and retention procedures for Ikamvanites in the past have introduced a bias towards learners who come to us already more motivated – and thus perhaps more likely to succeed, with or without our intervention – than their peers.

## THE FINDINGS

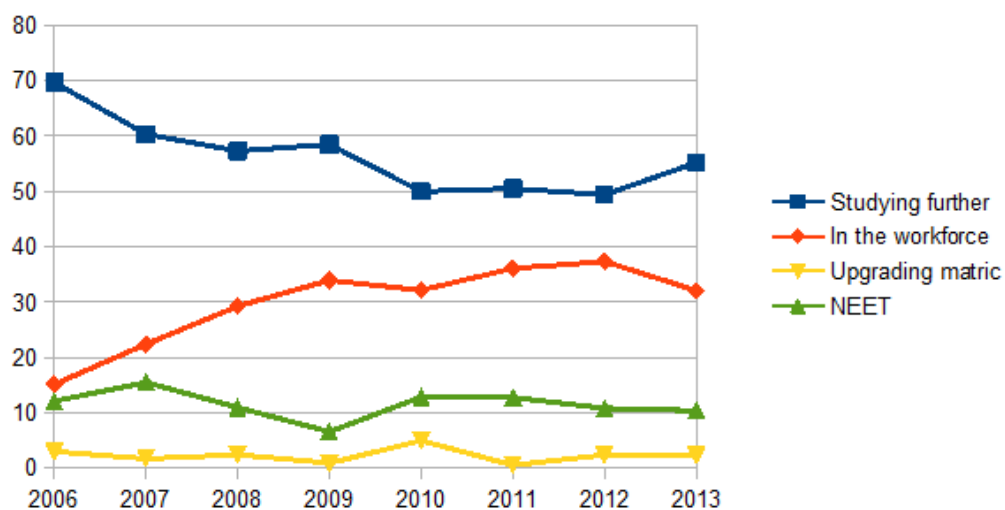
### Overview – where Ikamvanites end up

The core of the alumni survey was a series of questions to establish the main – i.e. full-time – activities of Ikamvanites for each year since they left school. There were no significant surprises here.

**TABLE I: overview of Ikamvanites' activities 2006-2013**

	Studying further	In the workforce	Upgrading matric	NEET
2006	69.7	15.15	3.03	12.12
2007	60.35	22.41	1.72	15.52
2008	57.31	29.27	2.44	10.98
2009	58.49	33.97	0.94	6.6
2010	49.99	32.15	5	12.86
2011	50.55	36.11	0.56	12.78
2012	49.4	37.35	2.41	10.84
2013	55.21	32.08	2.31	10.4

**FIGURE I: Trends in Ikamvanites' activities 2006-2013**



## **Students**

IkamvaYouth has always encouraged Ikamvanites to aspire to as a first choice, and this emphasis is reflected in the activities of our survey respondents. Full-time students, whether at public universities, FET colleges, or private institutions, have consistently made up the largest group of the Ikamvanites since 2005, as shown in Table I above.

This majority was largest in 2006, when no Ikamvanites had yet graduated (or dropped out). It declined over the following years as more Ikamvanites moved out of tertiary education and into the workforce, stabilising at around 50% from 2010-2012, a period of consolidation for IkamvaYouth, and started to grow again for the first time in 2013 (see Figure I).

This new growth in the proportion of Ikamvanites enrolled at tertiary level is likely to continue going forward, as extensive growth and greater success for IkamvaYouth at branch level drives successively larger matric classes year-on-year, with a higher proportion of each class accessing tertiary education straight after school. The success of Ikamvanites at tertiary therefore needs to be a priority for IkamvaYouth. Where to focus those efforts will be indicated in more detail in the “Ikamvanites at Tertiary” and “Recommendations” sections of this report.

## **Employees**

For Ikamvanites unable or unwilling to enter tertiary education immediately after school, IkamvaYouth strives to secure trainee positions, learnerships or other employment. Typically this is a smaller proportion than those accessing tertiary education – as shown in Table I, only 15% of the matric class of 2005 went straight into the workforce in 2006.

However, as time has passed and the first Ikamvanites who accessed tertiary studies have graduated – or, in some cases, dropped out, the proportion of Ikamvanites in the workforce has grown, peaking at just over 37% of all the Ikamvanites in 2012. This number was pushed down this year, to its current total of 32%, by 2012's large matric class, most of whom accessed tertiary institutions rather than employment or self-employment in 2013 (see Figure I).

This downward trend is likely to continue as IkamvaYouth's national matric classes grow larger and more and more Ikamvanites access tertiary each year rather than going straight from school to work.

## **Entrepreneurs**

Only a tiny handful of Ikamvanites have chosen to strike out on their own and run businesses. In fact, the number who reported themselves as self-employed is so small – generally 1 or 2 individuals in any given year – that it was not possible to draw any general conclusions about this group or point to any real trends. Ikamvanites in this group have therefore simply been grouped with those in the workforce as employees for the purposes of this report

While this low rate of entrepreneurship may seem disappointing to those who consider start-ups the chief drivers of economic and employment growth, it needs to be understood in the South African context. According to the most recent (2012) Global Entrepreneurship Monitor report, only 7.3% of South African adults are involved in “early-stage entrepreneurial activity” – a category the young Ikamvanites would fall into by default. The most successful entrepreneurs are also mostly older – between 35 and 44 – and have completed some tertiary education.

Seen from this perspective, it would be premature to expect many of the Ikamvanites, most of whom are still studying and almost all of whom are under the age of 25, to be active entrepreneurs.

## **Not in Education, Employment or Training - the NEETs**

Measures of unemployment and economic participation can be arcane and misleading, often excluding the most marginalised – those who have given up on looking for work, who have social or family pressures preventing them from working, or who are completely disconnected from any opportunities. They also treat full-time students as “not economically active”.

Increasingly, a more holistic and useful measure is now being used globally and here in South Africa – the proportion of young people from the ages of 15 to 24 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This is essentially the sum of all those not working – whether unemployed job seekers or (for whatever reason) simply not looking for work – minus all those who are in education or training.

The NEET rate for Ikamvanites has fluctuated considerably over the eight year period covered by our survey, peaking at almost 16% in 2007, and attaining a low of just under 7% in 2009 (see Table I). These fluctuations can largely be accounted for by the effect of the small sample size addressed under Limitations on (page 9), and it is worth noting that the rate has become more

stable over time, as the total number of respondents increases for each year.

The NEET measure is a relatively recent introduction for Statistics South Africa (StatsSA) and other national research bodies. As such, national data is not readily available as a comparison for all the years for which we asked Ikamvanites about their activities.

However, StatsSA has included the NEET rate for 15-24 year-olds in their last three consecutive Quarterly Labour Force Surveys, so the current and 2012 NEET rate for Ikamvanites can be roughly (and very favourably) compared to those. These comparisons, as well as possible ways to reduce the NEET rate for Ikamvanites, will be covered in the section of this report, which discusses Ikamvanite NEETS in more detail, on page 25.

## **Ikamvanites at Tertiary Level**

From 2006 to the present, between 49% and 70% of Ikamvanites have been enrolled in full-time tertiary education at any given time (see Table I). Currently, that proportion is at 55%, and, as stated above, it is likely to increase every year for the foreseeable future, as IkamvaYouth's impact in high schools around the country continues to grow. It is thus essential to have an understanding of how the Ikamvanites perform at tertiary, what their challenges are, and how best IkamvaYouth can rise up to meet them.

The most crucial areas to understand are retention/attrition (in other words, how many Ikamvanites drop out of their courses before completion), and throughput (in other words, how many Ikamvanites successfully graduate from tertiary institutions with qualifications, or remain on track to do so from one year to the next).

It should be noted that national data on retention and throughput at tertiary level is not easily available, and that where it is available it tends to lag several years behind the present. The national data presented in this section should therefore simply be considered illustrative of the general situation in South African post-school education. It is not at all intended as an exact like-for-like comparison. In particular, the data on Ikamvanite retention and throughput at tertiary includes Ikamvanites enrolled at FET colleges and private institutions, whereas the HSRC data cited is only for public universities.

### **The national backdrop: retention and throughput**

It would not be melodramatic to describe the situation at South African tertiary institutions as dire. According to a brief published by the HSRC in 2008<sup>3</sup>, of the 120 000 students who began their studies towards a Bachelor's (three year) degree in the year 2000, 36,000 (30%) dropped out by the end of their first year. A further 24 000 (20%) dropped out during the following two years, leaving only 60 000 – half of the original intake – in the running for a degree. Of those 60 000, around 13 000 – a dismal 11% of the original intake – graduated on time after three years.

According to the same HSRC brief, the former Department of Education set a target total graduation rate of 40.5% (including 22.5% graduating in the minimum time) in 2004, revising

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3 Reference



downwards the 45% target set in 2001 as “unrealistically high”. Government's expectation is therefore that, even with targeted improvements, more than half of the young people who enroll for degrees will not complete them.

Data is less readily available for other forms of tertiary education, such as the young Further Education and Training (FET) sector, but anecdotes of dysfunction in many FET colleges suggest the picture is even worse there. Responding to questions in parliament in 2011, Minister for Higher Education and Training Blade Nzimande revealed that between 2007 and 2009, the pass-rate for the National Certificate (Vocational) (NCV) courses offered at FETs never exceeded 12.4%, with a shocking low of 7.59%.<sup>4</sup>

These struggling post-school education systems, together with the legacy of apartheid, mean that, according to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) South Africa Survey 2012, only 5.3% of South Africans and less than 3% of the black population have achieved a post-school qualification.<sup>5</sup>

### **Ikamvanites: retention**

As many as 70% or more of learners in each year's matric class at IkamvaYouth move directly from high school into tertiary education. As discussed in the “Limitations” section of this report, it remains too early in IkamvaYouth's story to draw definitive conclusions about the overall drop out rates of most Ikamvanites throughout their academic careers. Many, even from the early matric years, are still studying. And the large classes of 2010, 2011 and 2012 have barely started their time in tertiary studies.

What can be reported, though, is the annual drop-out rate – the proportion of all the Ikamvanite students enrolled in any given year who drop out before completing that year. These numbers, shown in Table II below, show significant room for improvement, but are nonetheless encouraging compared to the alarming national numbers reported by the HSRC and others.

In particular, the proportion of Ikamvanites who drop out in their first year of studies, after moving straight from matric to tertiary studies, has remained below 20% since 2006, with the exception

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4 <http://www.bdlive.co.za/articles/2011/02/11/dismay-as-department-sits-on-fet-results>

5 SAIRR, *South Africa Survey 2012*, p 426

of a spike in 2009<sup>6</sup>. The average of these first-year drop-out rates for Ikamvanites is under 18% - barely more than half the reported national number for the year 2000.

Overall drop-outs each year as a proportion of all Ikamvanite students, not just first years, have been closer to 15%. Also worth noting is that since 2009, when early matric years were reaching the final years of their university education, the number of Ikamvanites graduating each year has consistently exceeded the number of drop-outs.

**TABLE II: Ikamvanite tertiary drop-outs 2006-2012**

	<b>Overall drop-out rate</b>	<b>First-year drop-out rate</b>
<b>2006</b>	17.39%	17.39%
<b>2007</b>	17.14%	13.33%
<b>2008</b>	14.89%	15.38%
<b>2009</b>	16.13%	31.25%
<b>2010</b>	11.43%	15.79%
<b>2011</b>	14.29%	19.05%
<b>2012</b>	9.76%	10.52%

Ikamvanites come from highly disadvantaged backgrounds, and one of their chief challenges in the post-school world is the informational asymmetry between them and their middle-class counterparts. Unlike middle-class learners, poor high school learners generally have very little exposure to career options and information about tertiary studies.

That ostensibly leaves Ikamvanites at a very high risk of making poor choices about which course of study to pursue, and consequently of adding time and cost to their studies by switching courses or institutions mid-stream. The Ikamvanites, however, only quite rarely make such switches, especially after their first year of studies when the cost in terms of time is the lowest (see Table III). This suggests that the career guidance IkamvaYouth offers at high school is having the intended effect.

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<sup>6</sup> See “Limitations” section – because of the small sample size, a few additional individuals dropping out in a given year can produce a big percentage shift.

**TABLE III: proportion of Ikamvanites switching courses/institutions each year**

	<b>Overall rate of course switching</b>	<b>First-year rate of course switching</b>
<b>2006</b>	4.35%	4.35%
<b>2007</b>	2.86%	0
<b>2008</b>	0	0
<b>2009</b>	1.61%	0
<b>2010</b>	7.14%	10.53%
<b>2011</b>	4.40%	4.76%
<b>2012</b>	2.44%	7.89%

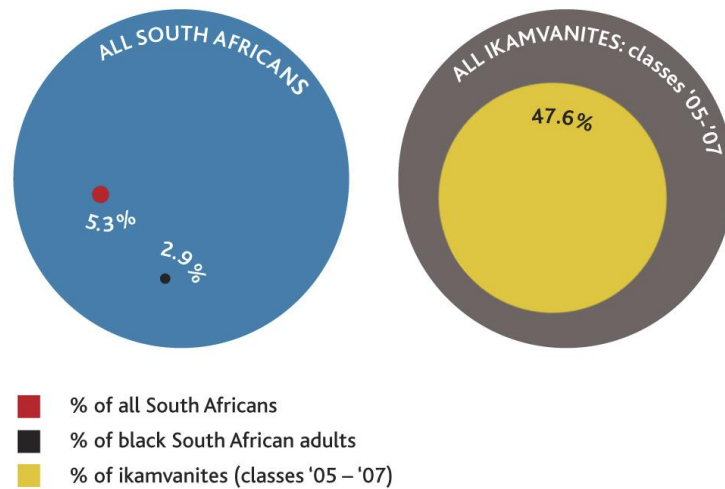
### **Ikamvanites: throughput**

The ultimate measure of throughput at tertiary level is the proportion of students who come out at the other end of the system with a qualification in hand. But, as already discussed, most of the Ikamvanites have not yet had time to achieve that milestone.

The exceptions to this time limitation are the matric classes of 2005, 2006 and 2007, who have been out of school for five years or more – enough time to complete a three year Bachelor's degree course even allowing for foundation years and the possible need to repeat modules. The qualification rate for these three classes has been remarkable (see Table IV).

Over 45% of the whole IkamvaYouth matric class of 2005 (including those who did not enter tertiary education directly after school, or at all) has achieved some form of post-school qualification, whether a certificate, diploma or degree. That rate is 48% for the class of 2006, and an astonishing 50% for the class of 2007. These are truly amazing results compared to SAIRR's reported national number of 2.9% of the black adult population holding such a qualification, as cited above.

**FIGURE II: Post-school qualifications, IkamvaYouth 2005, 2006, 2007,  
SAIRR national numbers**



According to the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR) South Africa Survey 2012 5.3% of South Africans held a post-school qualification. For black South Africans the figure was 2.9%. By contrast Ikamvanites holding post-school qualifications were 45.45% in 2005, 48% in 2006 and 50% in 2007.

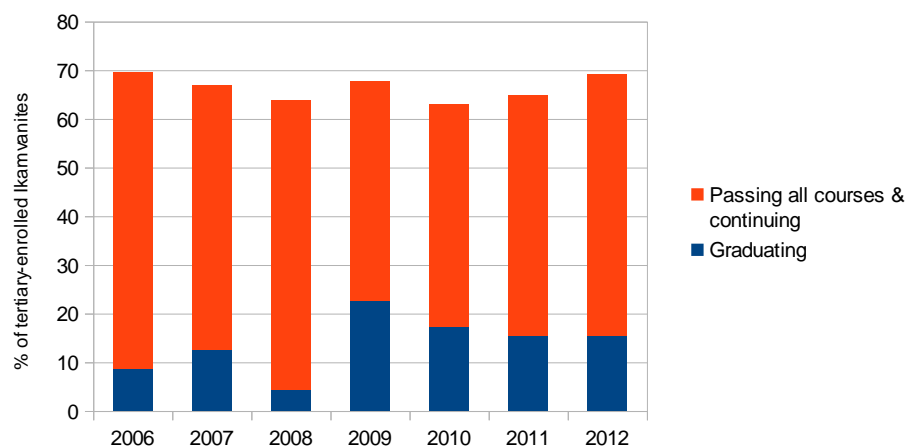
For more recent matric classes, or for those earlier matrices who did not access tertiary directly after school, it is not yet viable to measure throughput in terms of qualifications attained. Instead, these Ikamvanites were asked, for each year of their tertiary studies, whether or not they passed all the required courses to proceed to the next year. Their results, too, are impressive (see Table V), with an average of 53% of Ikamvanite students passing all their courses each year from 2006 - 2012. On average, a further 16% each year did not pass all required course, but continued their studies regardless, repeating courses where necessary.

**TABLE IV: Ikamvanites passing all courses each year; Ikamvanites not passing but continuing, 2006-2012**

	<b>Passed all courses and continued</b>	<b>Did not pass all courses but continued</b>
<b>2006</b>	60.87%	8.7%
<b>2007</b>	54.29%	17.14%
<b>2008</b>	59.57%	21.28%
<b>2009</b>	45.16%	14.52%
<b>2010</b>	45.71%	18.57%
<b>2011</b>	49.45%	16.48%
<b>2012</b>	53.66%	18.70%

Effectively, this means that every year, with the exception of 2009, more than 64% of the Ikamvanites in tertiary studies either graduate or are on track to graduate on time (see Figure II).

**FIGURE III: Ikamvanites either passing all courses or graduating, 2006 – 2012**



### Why Ikamvanites drop out

Although, as stated, it is too early for definitive results, the data suggests that as many as 30% or more of Ikamvanites drop out at some point during their tertiary careers. A number of them return to tertiary studies later, and may go on to successfully graduate. But the number who never achieve a tertiary qualification, despite having originally enrolled for one, remains

uncomfortably high – even if it compares very favourably to national averages.

So why do Ikamvanites drop out? Those who reported themselves as having dropped out were asked to share their reasons for doing so. The findings can be seen in Table VI below.

**TABLE V: reasons why Ikamvanites drop out**

<b>Financial reasons</b>	<b>Academic reasons</b>	<b>Personal / family reasons</b>	<b>Lack of interest in course / institution</b>	<b>Other / no reason given</b>
53.33%*	48.33%	23.33%	11.67%	11.67%

\*Percentages do not sum to 100 as many Ikamvanites cited multiple reasons for dropping out.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the Ikamvanites' backgrounds, financial reasons are most commonly cited as leading to dropping out. In most cases these reasons were the cost of fees themselves, but other Ikamvanites also cited the cost of daily transport to campuses (most universities are situated a long way from townships), or financial pressures related to supporting their families – many Ikamvanites' parents are unemployed, and if they are the first-born child they are expected to become a breadwinner as soon as possible.

More surprising is that academic difficulties actually rank lower than financial ones as a cause for dropping out. In fact, most Ikamvanites who drop out do not report being unable to pass their courses. And many of the cases where Ikamvanites report failing courses and dropping out, they also cite financial factors (such as the difficulty of paying for regular transport to class, or the necessity of working while studying to help support their household) as directly affecting their ability to pass.

A number of Ikamvanites also report being financially unable to continue studying after the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or their bursary providers withdrew support when they did not pass all of their subjects. It is worth noting here that the majority of Ikamvanites who *have* graduated from tertiary institutions also report having failed (and retaken) at least one required subject at some point during their studies. And some Ikamvanites who dropped out did so because their financial support was withdrawn when they failed some subjects for the first time after having already spent one, two or even three years studying – representing a huge sunk cost both in terms of their time and their financial supporters' money.

Close to a quarter of Ikamvanite drop-outs report personal or family problems as having played a role in their decision, again often in conjunction with financial or academic issues, or both.

It is also worth noting here that few Ikamvanites describe themselves as having decided to drop out. Rather, most say they were unable to continue, whether because of outstanding fee payments or academic exclusion. Many Ikamvanites, even years after they first drop out, are still trying to get back into education, and some succeed. And, as stated above, many Ikamvanites who have graduated have done so despite needing to take extra years and repeated attempts at certain modules.

### **Summary of findings – tertiary studies**

The picture for Ikamvanites at tertiary level is considerably brighter than the dark national background. But it is far from perfect. Drop-out rates could and should be reduced, especially where Ikamvanites drop out despite being able to pass and wanting to continue their studies. Ikamvanites who have dropped out and are now trying to return to tertiary level would also benefit from assistance. And, although the number of Ikamvanites with post-school qualifications is impressive, the quality of those qualifications and the time taken to attain them could also be improved.

### **Ikamvanites in the Workforce**

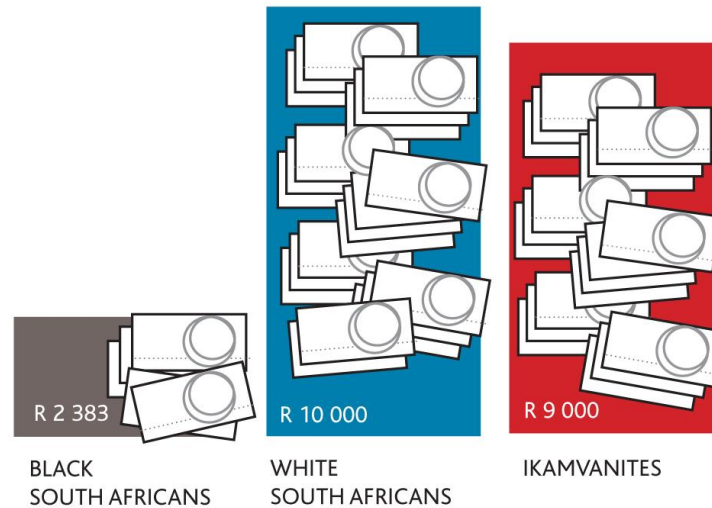
Each year from 2007 to 2013, more than 20% of Ikamvanites have been in full-time jobs. This is a smaller group than those enrolled at tertiary institutions, but it remains significant.

Unfortunately, current and historical career information can be a sensitive topic, and not all Ikamvanites were willing to disclose it in great detail over the phone. The data for this group is therefore less complete than for those at tertiary level, especially when it comes to income levels – which are also (arguably) the most objective measure of career success, given IkamvaYouth's mission of “enabling disadvantaged youth to pull themselves out of poverty”.

With that said, what data was captured shows Ikamvanites in a very favourable light compared to national averages.

## Income

**FIGURE IV: median income of Ikamvanites vs median income for black and white South Africans (SAIRR South Africa Survey 2012)**



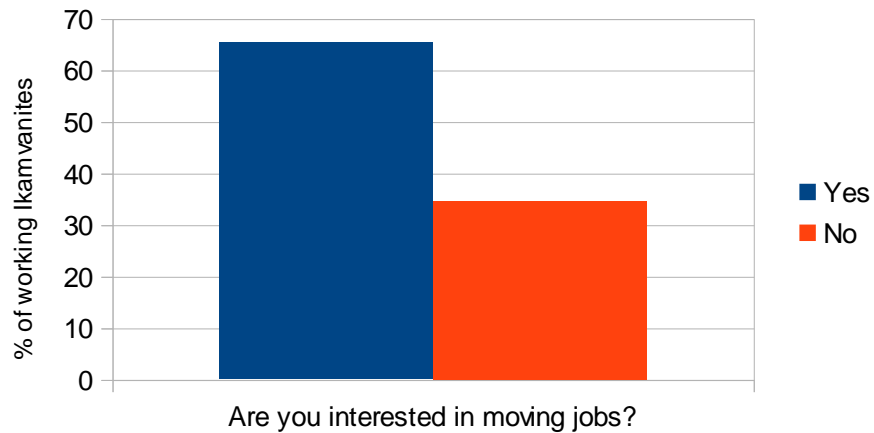
The first thing worth noting about Ikamvanites' income is the upward trend in recent years. Median income was low for 2006 to 2009, when most of the Ikamvanites in the workforce entered directly after matric, with no experience or qualifications to command high salaries. From 2010 onwards, as more highly skilled Ikamvanites with degrees and diplomas have entered the workforce (including some, who went straight to work after matric, returning to study), Ikamvanite salaries have been well above the national median for black South Africans.

## Job satisfaction

Although the survey did not delve into job satisfaction in detail, it did ask Ikamvanites a single question: Are you currently interested in moving jobs?



**FIGURE V: are you interested in moving jobs?**



The results are striking – almost two-thirds of Ikamvanites who are currently working full-time say that they are either actively looking for a different job or at least interested in moving.

In part this can probably be attributed to the simple fact that Ikamvanites are young and at an early stage in their careers, where they are eager to take on more responsibility and earn more money. A number of Ikamvanites are also interested in relocating, and that's why they are interested in moving jobs. But that does not fully account for the number of Ikamvanites who are interested in changing jobs. A lot of Ikamvanites, especially those with post-school qualifications, cite the fact that their jobs have little to do with their aptitudes and education as their reason for wanting to move. Others, who do not have such qualifications, express a desire to return to education and pursue more promising careers.

### **Summary of findings – the workforce**

The Ikamvanites are a young group, and none of them has been out of school for long. It is therefore difficult to conclude much about their career success in general.

Anecdotally, those who have achieved post-school qualifications, especially at degree level, are now earning significantly more and have better career prospects than those who entered the workforce with only a matric certificate, whether directly from school or after dropping out of tertiary studies. But many Ikamvanites, including those with post-school qualifications, nonetheless express a desire to change jobs.

In short, although their earnings are above the national median and far more of them are employed than within their wider national demographic, many Ikamvanites are (or see themselves as) under-employed.

## **Ikamvanites Not in Education, Employment or Training (the NEETs)**

As discussed in the Overview section of this report, policy makers and statisticians in South Africa and worldwide are increasingly looking to the number of 15 to 24 year-olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) as a holistic measure of economic inclusion for young people.

This naturally aligns with IkamvaYouth's goal of securing post-school placements either in tertiary education, employment, or on-the-job training for Ikamvanites. How many Ikamvanites find themselves NEET is a logical measure of success for IkamvaYouth's programmes.

For the purposes of this report, all Ikamvanites who indicated in their survey responses that their main activity for a given year was one of those listed below, were considered to be NEET in that year.

- unemployed (whether or not actively looking for work);
- unable to work due to illness or other causes;
- caring for family members;
- assisting, without pay, in a family business; or
- volunteering, either for IkamvaYouth or another organisation

## **The national background**

The number of young people who are NEET in South Africa is one of the greatest threats to the country's economic future and political stability. The Centre for Higher Education Transformation (CHET) estimated that in 2007 as many as 2.8 million, or 42%, of South Africa's 18 to 24 year-olds fell into this category. More recently, the 2011 census found that 31% of South Africans aged 15 to 24 were NEET, and StatsSA's Quarterly Labour Force Surveys for the last quarter of 2012 and the first quarter of 2013 put the NEET rate for 15 to 24 year-olds at 31.6% and 33.5% respectively – suggesting that this worrying group is not only large but growing.

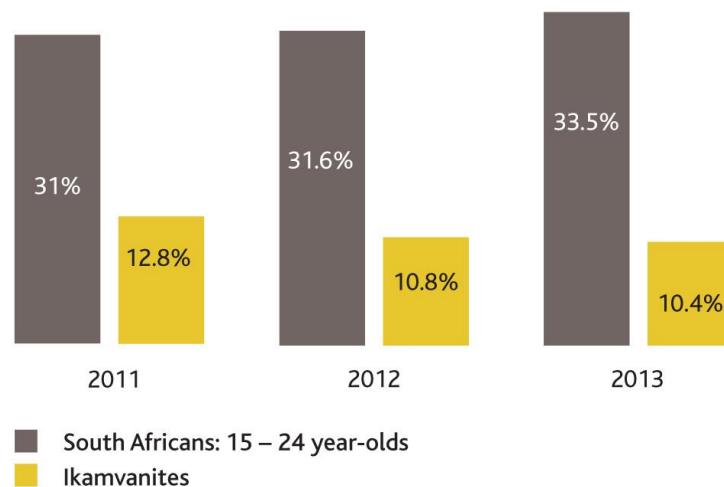
## The Ikamvanites

Happily, this is an area where the Ikamvanites outperform their national peers by a huge margin. The NEET rate for Ikamvanites has never exceeded 16%, from 2006 to the present (see Table VII), and in 2013 it stands at just 10.4%.

**TABLE VI: Ikamvanite NEETs 2006 – 2013**

	<b>Ikamvanites not in education, employment or training (NEET)</b>
<b>2006</b>	12.12%
<b>2007</b>	15.52%
<b>2008</b>	10.98%
<b>2009</b>	6.6%
<b>2010</b>	12.86%
<b>2011</b>	12.78%
<b>2012</b>	10.84%
<b>2013</b>	10.4%

**FIGURE VI: Ikamvanite NEETs 2011, 2012, 2013 compared to national South African figures**



A great risk for young people who are NEET is that they stagnate, remaining NEET for a number of years, and diminishing their chances of ever being able to return to education or access

employment. The Ikamvanite NEETs, however, are a dynamic group. Although 26% of the Ikamvanites have been NEET at some point in their post school careers, almost all have successfully returned to work or education. On average, Ikamvanites who find themselves NEET manage to escape the trap after 17 months, and for most it is even shorter – just a year or less (see Table VIII). Not one of the Ikamvanites who were NEET in 2006, 2007, 2008 or 2009 remains that way today.

**TABLE VII: % of all Ikamvanites who have been NEET at some stage, average cumulative duration of NEET period, median duration, and maximum duration**

Percentage of all Ikamvanites who have been NEET at some stage	26.01%
Average total time NEET for Ikamvanite NEETS (not necessarily consecutive)	17 months
Median time NEET for Ikamvanite NEETS	1 year
Maximum time an Ikamvanite has spent NEET	4 years

As might be expected, there is a strong correlation between achieving post-school qualifications and avoiding ever being NEET. Less than 9% of Ikamvanite NEETs hold post-school qualifications. The number is even lower, just over 4%, when considering only the holders of bachelor degrees or National Diplomas. Education, both for Ikamvanites and for the wider population, is clearly the best guarantor of success in the job market.

There are, however, some concerning trends among Ikamvanite NEETs. Exactly half of all the Ikamvanites in this category report their main activity during their time NEET as having been “actively searching for a job”, but when these job-seekers were asked to report on the number of jobs they applied for over a given one-year period of unemployment, the responses were surprisingly low (see Table IX). 71% of Ikamvanite job seekers applied for between one and 11 jobs in a year – less than one application a month. A further 16% applied for between 12 and 24 jobs a year – one to two applications per month, and only 13% applied for more than two positions per month. Of those 13%, just one single Ikamvanite reports having applied for more than one job a week during a period of unemployment – reporting (a probably exaggerated) 1000 applications in a year!

**TABLE VIII: rate of applications for Ikamvanite job seekers and proportion of Ikamvanite NEETs who spend at least one year not looking for work**

Ikamvanite NEETs who spent at least 1 year without actively looking for work	22.22%
Ikamvanite job-seekers applying for < 1 job / month	71.11%
Ikamvanite job-seekers applying for 1 – 2 jobs / month	15.56%
Ikamvanite job-seekers applying for > 2 jobs / month	13.33%

Also of concern is the frequency with which Ikamvanites take what many describe as a “gap year”. More than 22% of Ikamvanite NEETs report spending at least one year “unemployed but not actively looking for work” (see Table IX above). In many cases this is because the Ikamvanites intend to access tertiary education the following year, and some report spending their gap year “applying to universities”. But the reality is that university applications take days, not months – and having spent a year doing nothing else is unlikely to help your chances of accessing university. The Ikamvanites should avoid falling into this trap.

### **Summary of findings - NEETs**

Relatively few Ikamvanites ever find themselves NEET. Fewer still remain that way, and when compared to national statistics these numbers look remarkably good. But, as with tertiary performance, there is certainly room for improvement.

It is likely that better career guidance at high school level would help resolve the problem of gap years and of under-applying for jobs, both of which might reduce the amount of time individual Ikamvanites spend NEET. And many of the Ikamvanite NEETs become that way after dropping out of tertiary institutions, so an intervention which reduced drop out rates would probably also reduce the NEET rate. It's also clear that higher tertiary graduation rates would mean more employable Ikamvanites, and fewer NEETs.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The limitations of small sample sizes, the messiness of remotely conducted surveys with open-ended questions, and the relative youth of IkamvaYouth's programme notwithstanding, all the available evidence points to the Ikamvanites beating the odds – not just at matric but well into their post-school careers.

Ikamvanites are more likely to access tertiary, more likely to remain in tertiary studies, and more likely to graduate than their peers. They are many times more likely to hold post-school qualifications. They are also substantially – three times! – less likely to be not in education, employment or training than the average for their age group. And when they are employed, they earn double the median income for black South Africans.

As pointed out in the limitations, these trends cannot necessarily be causally linked to IkamvaYouth's high school intervention. But the achievement gaps between the Ikamvanites and their peers are such that it seems a stretch to attribute them solely to a difference in innate motivation. And regardless of whether brought on by nature or nurture, they point clearly to the fact that an investment in an Ikamvanite is a very solid bet for the future.

With that said, this report has also shown clear areas where improvements can and should be made – in the tertiary space, in Ikamvanites' career paths, and in reducing the number of Ikamvanites who find themselves not in education, employment or training.

## **Recommendations**

### **Tertiary: Throughput and Retention**

The majority of Ikamvanites are enrolled at tertiary institutions. As discussed in the Overview above, that is a majority that's only likely to grow for the foreseeable future. National data, as well as that given in this report, also makes it clear that access to and success in tertiary education is the best way to ensure the Ikamvanites can get the kind of career opportunities they desire and deserve. A clear focus for IkamvaYouth, then, should be to promote that access and success.

This can partly be driven at the level of our core high school programme, by striving for the better matric results that will allow more learners to access universities and the funding to pay for them, as well as by continuing the focus on career guidance and exposure to the possibilities of post-school education, to ensure that as many learners as possible keep making smart choices about their futures.

But it also needs to be driven at the tertiary level itself, by a systematic intervention in three key, interlinked areas for Ikamvanites in the post-school space: financial support, tertiary academic performance, and the ability for Ikamvanites to persist until they succeed, rather than drop out the first time they fail – and to allow them to “drop back in” where necessary.

To do this, we must leverage existing on-campus infrastructure and the Ikamvanites' network of peers to facilitate academic success, and work with partners such as NSFAS, bursary providers, and tertiary institutions themselves to ensure that Ikamvanites receive the financial support they need, not just to enroll at tertiary institutions, but to persist there until they succeed.

### **Job readiness: reducing the NEET rate and improving career satisfaction**

A minimum level of academic achievement is a necessary but not a sufficient condition to guarantee a dignified living and a satisfying career. Ikamvanites need to be better prepared for accessing the world of work, as well as for effectively pursuing what they want when they get there.

Again this can be accomplished by intervention both during school years and post-school. Before they complete matric, Ikamvanites should have a solid grasp of the basics of how to apply for a job. This would include how to identify whether an opportunity is appropriate (and likely to be a job you enjoy doing), how to make your application stand out, and to understand why, especially in South Africa's current economic context, it is better to apply for 100 jobs in a year than five.

Once Ikamvanites enter the post-school world, they could continue to benefit from interventions to broaden their exposure to opportunities, and deepen their grasp of the soft skills that will enable them to seize those opportunities. Again this will need to be accomplished through a

network of peers and partners; it's an intervention that is more about ensuring Ikamvanites access the resources that are already there for them than it is about reinventing the wheel.

### **The way forward for the alumni programme**

This report represents a baseline, a “where we are now” understanding of IkamvaYouth's alumni. From here we need to establish a clear set of short-, medium- and long-term targets for the Ikamvanites' performance, specifically in respect of tertiary retention and throughput.

In doing so it will be important not to overreach – that would invite failure for the alumni program and potentially jeopardise the high standards of IkamvaYouth's core high school program by stretching national administrative and management capacity. But given IkamvaYouth's ambitious vision for basic education in 2030 South Africa, it only makes sense to have high aspirations for the Ikamvanites in tertiary education and the workforce as well.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This report, the data behind it, and the survey behind that would have been impossible without the support of a number of groups and individuals. IkamvaYouth would like to thank the following, in no particular order:

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The IkamvaYouth branch staff and tutors, for spreading the word about the survey to their networks and providing the infrastructure to help Ikamvanites complete it;

And last but very far from least, the Ikamvanites themselves, for being the successes behind the story!