

Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)



Update June 2016

In early 2016 the Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) moved from a year of project planning, development and trial into its first full year of implementation. While we worked hard in 2015, it revolved around developing the programme and all related materials with partners, obtaining the necessary permits and organising the general school and field logistics around the programme – not to mention ongoing direct engagement with schools to start in early 2016.

Since January 2016, the KEEP staff have contacted schools from all 6 School Clusters in Namibia's Khomas Region and had meetings with the relevant staff at over 30 of these schools in order to introduce KEEP to the school community in Windhoek and encourage participation. At the same time, GCF staff has given several radio and newspaper interviews and presentations to promote the programme to the wider audience in the country. In addition to this outreach, numerous Namibian businesses were contacted to introduce KEEP and ask for financial and in-kind support of this important Namibian conservation initiative.

Interest in KEEP is large and growing, with all schools that have been approached very interested to participate. While lead time for some of the schools is relative long, with tight schedules already, KEEP has moved into full implementation phase in the second quarter of 2016. So far over 400 Grade 3 and 4 students have participated in KEEP and the programme is almost fully booked until the end of the year. It is anticipated that by the end of 2016 at least 2,000 Namibian students will have participated in KEEP – an amazing success for the first year of implementation.

The participating schools are a good representation of the demographic and social spread in the Khomas Region. While transport proves to be the biggest constraint for participation of under-resourced schools, KEEP is achieving a good mix of local government and private schools. To facilitate participation of under-resourced schools, GCF offers a contribution to transport costs, however, we are not in the position to fully fund bus rental or purchase at this stage. To alleviate the situation we are developing a database of schools that have their own transport and investigate how better resourced schools can help others.

So far feedback has been persistently positive both from students and teachers. As a good indicator, all participating schools have signed up again for next year and several have signed up to send other grades to participate in KEEP before the end of this year.

KEEP Activities

How does the average day look on KEEP? The students and teachers spend a day in Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, Namibia's smallest National Park, located 20km outside of the capital city Windhoek. Its location makes it the perfect site for KEEP as transport costs are minimised and it allows students to learn about the environment that is part of their immediate city surrounding. A 3.5km hike takes the students on a mini adventure through tall grass and over weathered rock where they learn that everything, big and small, living and non-living, is important and has a place in the ecosystem. Using nature as a teacher, basic environmental and sustainability concepts are brought to life away from the class room.

The students and teachers get to see an amazing variety of wild animals that live in the Reserve , from wildebeest herds running across the path, baboons keeping a watchful eye from tree tops or even giraffe 'necking' at the waterhole. For some of our students this outing is the first time they have ridden on a bus, let alone seen any wild animal.

KEEP's learning objectives are directly linked to the national school curriculum (Maths, English, Life Sciences etc.) making this outing not only fun and informative, but also very relevant for their learning at school. In addition to the topics covered during the field day, the students take home an informative and fun workbook with additional activities and as a reference book for what they learned in the field, and what they are studying at school.

Following the field day the KEEP staff revisit each class for a brief follow-up. During this visit the students play a quiz-based game answering key questions based on the programme's learning outcomes. These visits so far have clearly shown that the students did not only thoroughly enjoyed their time in the field, but also took home a lot of new knowledge and skills. A short feedback report (M&E) to each school details the learning outcomes and curriculum links of KEEP, and encourages schools to continue with their environmental education.

Overall we feel the programme is off to a re-sounding success and we are excited to have your valuable support in educating Namibia's future leaders about their amazing environment.



Thank you to all our donors for supporting KEEP:

