

Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)



Update December 2016

As we wave goodbye to the very last classes of 2016 it is safe to say, the Giraffe Conservation Foundation's Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) has had a fantastic first year. Almost 2,000 primary school students from the Khomas Region have participated in the programme, representing 13 schools and groups from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Feedback from educators and students alike has been overwhelmingly positive with repeat bookings for 2017 already coming in.

This first year in the bushveld with the Khomas students has been pretty special with our environmental education (EE) programme finally coming to life. It is impossible to pick just one highlight, but they ranged from sharing exciting moments tracking, learning about Namibia's indigenous species and getting up close to fascinating creatures, to getting to know our incredible KEEP kids. Spending this time in nature together has been a privilege for the KEEP team and we're looking forward to doing it all over again next year.

Of course, it has not all been plain sailing. With many of the schools in the region being under-resourced in both finances and staffing, finding available and safe transport has been one of the biggest challenges we experienced this year. Thankfully working together with the schools to create a network of reliable and safe transport contacts and with the generosity and support of our donors, GCF is now able to facilitate and financially support transport for a limited number of schools, which means that more students can join KEEP next year.

Taking advantage of the school holidays, the KEEP team continues to work towards improving the programme and capacity development. More time was spent in the field making sure that the format of the programme is updated, relevant to the curriculum and of course fun! A refresher course in First Aid will help to prepare the team for most eventualities.

What can you expect from KEEP in 2017? A brand new revamped workbook is underway bringing more interactive and exiting facts and activities. This updated workbook provides a valuable teaching resource that ensures the learning can continue back at school and also at home.

Creating and maintaining a good relationship with the schools has been imperative to the success of GCF's KEEP and will continue to be one of the highest priorities. During our second year of implementation, we will see a few familiar faces when teachers come again with their new classes, but also a large number of first time participants. KEEP aims to increase the number of students taking part, which will result in more Khomas children reconnecting to their natural environment.

The new year will also see more teacher engagement, working closely with the educators of the region to establish open communication about the environmental and institutional challenges they face and how EE can find a practical and helpful place in the Khomas education system.

Another addition for 2017 will be KEEP on the road. GCF is pleased to be able to share the fun and continue to educate Namibians in other regions about giraffe and conservation with the KEEP team planning to visit schools in other regions of Namibia. Facilitated by a GEF Small Grant this is a great opportunity to see the challenges other students face both in the classroom and in the natural environment.

But it does not stop there, close to our hearts, GCF will open KEEP up to more groups in the region by inviting additional groups from orphanages and care facilities to participate in KEEP during the school holidays. Please get in touch if you would like to suggest a group or have a contact person.

GCF's work with the schools has highlighted the need for a dedicated EE programme in the Region. Of all the schools and groups that have joined less than a third currently have any kind of environmental activities and even fewer have the resources and are able to expose their students to other EE opportunities. With many schools in the region being over prescribed and under resourced, EE might just continue to slide further down the priority list. GCF is committed to making sure this does not happen by keeping EE and conservation firmly in the forefront of education and providing a fun, educational and exciting environmental programme for the children of the region.

- Some of the crazy KEEP numbers for 2016:**
- 224** – The number of kilometres the KEEP team have walked.
 - 256** – The number of hours spent in the bush.
 - 2,000** – Specially designed KEEP workbooks provided to teachers and students.
 - 3,090** – The number of kilometres driven for KEEP.
 - 3,700** – Apples and packs of peanuts & raisins provided by KEEP.

KEEP has had a phenomenal first year and our supporters and donors have been with us every step of the way! Your support and donations to this programme are a vital part of GCF's commitment to Namibia and to the participating schools.

Thank you to the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for allowing us to take students to Daan Viljoen Game Reserve. We would also like to thank all donors for their support and making this programme possible. Last, but certainly not least we would like to thank the students and teachers who have taken part in KEEP so far!

Have you booked your school in for 2017? To support our programme and make sure your logo makes it into the 2017 3rd edition KEEP workbook give us a call! We would love to hear from you.

If you would like to see what the KEEP kids get up to on the programme as well as stay up to date with our adventures in the bush, please visit our website (<https://giraffeconservation.org/programmes/keep/>) or like us on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/KhomasEnvironmentalEducationProgramme/>).



