



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

QUARTERLY UPDATE
October – December 2018



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@Save_Giraffe



2018 has been a remarkable year for the Giraffe Conservation Foundation's Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP). As we reach the end of the year, we want to take the time to review our achievements and see what we can learn from our recent experiences. Furthermore, we at GCF would like to express our gratitude to both new and repeat schools that took time to participate in KEEP and kept us busy during the year.

When we started developing KEEP in 2015, it was somewhat a 'fringe' programme as it didn't have the same giraffe focus as the rest of GCF's work. However, it is safe to say that KEEP has become one of our key programmes and one of our great successes. In 2018, KEEP has provided an excellent learning opportunity for a total of 2,576 participants (as it turns out we had equal numbers of boys and girls participate with



a mind-boggling 1,288 each), accompanied by 101 teachers from 26 different schools and organisations. While there appears to be an ever-increasing number of school holidays and exam times, KEEP hosted more participants compared to last year. To fill up open weeks in our yearly calendar, the team continued to visit additional schools to introduce and promote our programme as well as to build important relationships with new as well as repeat schools. School holidays are also becoming increasingly busy as we increased the number of additional groups from orphanages, outreach and after-school-programmes from the wider Khomas Region. The more children we can introduce to KEEP and the beauty of our Namibian environment, the better! It is our aim to spread the word about (giraffe) conservation and raise environmental awareness with as many Namibian children as possible.

The KEEP workbook, with its close links to the Namibian Primary School Curriculum, continues to be a living resource. It contributes significantly to the value of KEEP and is an important component of the programme we deliver. The workbook is used as a guiding tool and plays an important role during the field days. Our field days experiences are always different, no two days are ever the same, as seasons



change and wildlife encounters are not predictable. After the good rains that were received throughout Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, this year's participants experienced many amazing sights: from creatures that come with rain such as terrapins, tadpoles, hairy caterpillars, and rain bugs, to a variety of wild animals and plants found in the reserve. We encountered several snakes from a huge python to small grass snakes; stick insects



and other small critters; spotting leopard and hyena tracks and many more; and during one field day a buzzing swarm of bee was the cause of some excitement. Other highlights included sightings of wildebeest calves, eland, oryx, kudu and even giraffe. A firm favourite during recent months was the baby giraffe which the students named *Pokie*, a name they felt was suitable for both sexes as we do not know yet whether *Pokie* is a boy or a girl. What an amazing opportunity for these young Namibian students!



A highlight for the KEEP team this year, was the visit of a group of Nature Conservation students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST). This was a KEEP first! The field visit was part of the NUST students' Environmental Education (EE) module to give them an opportunity to experience EE in action. This experience has now inspired us to extend a similar invitation to other Namibian institutions that offer EE modules to check out what we are doing and get involved hands-on. We are hoping to receive more interest and host similar groups in 2019.

KEEP was again joined on two field days by delegates from international conservation organisations. Walking through the bush with a group of conservation experts was very inspiring for our KEEP team and a great opportunity to share ideas and experiences as well as brainstorm ways to tackle challenges we face while implementing all different aspects of KEEP. These informal discussions were very encouraging and useful – a great way to share our passion for conservation with like-minded people.



Another opportunity to mingle with like minds and network was at the annual conference of the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN) in May. Getting to know each other and learning what other organisations do in EE in Namibia was as important as sharing experiences and discussing common challenges. In addition, KEEP also participated in the World Environment Day (5 June) festivities in Windhoek, which involved stakeholders from different Namibian organisations and

schools, focusing on good waste management practices and waste avoidance. Other important calendar days in 2018 were World Giraffe Day (21 June) and National Arbor Day (12 October). Discussing these environmental days with groups that were hosted on or around these days gave opportunity for some interesting discussions about conservation and natural resource protection in Namibia.



As part of the KEEP team’s professional development, we continue to bring in experts to teach us new things and help with improving the programme. This year, we worked with the experienced former game ranger and specialist guide Michael Whitelock and Namibian EE experts Viktoria Keding and Mally Mott-Adams. All three worked with the team to further improve the delivery of our goals and objectives. This included developing innovative ideas on how to make KEEP even more interactive

and increase its impact. While we were able to incorporate some of these ideas immediately, we are working on some changes to KEEP for 2019. These changes help our team to stay up-to-date and keep the programme fresh. Stay tuned for some exciting changes in the field delivery of KEEP, more advanced activities and interactive games with lots of fun in the bush.

When it comes to challenges, school bookings remain one of our biggest issues. However, as KEEP’s reputation increases and more new schools participate in the programme, we are confident that the message about KEEP is spreading and reaching most schools in the region. We really appreciate our repeat schools who have realised the importance of KEEP for their students. KEEP field days might be the only opportunity for their learners to experience, explore nature and be equipped with the knowledge they need to conserve natural resources around their schools and communities. While we normally approach schools to book with us, we can slowly see a trend that schools approach us to make their booking for the next year. Furthermore, we were excited to hear that during the annual planning meeting of headmasters from schools from the Khomas Region, KEEP was mentioned. Some of our regular participants recommended that all schools should book their Grade 4 students into KEEP – what great news for us! So far, ten schools have already made their bookings for 2019 without needing a prompt from us.

Our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) database continues to be a reliable feedback tool for the programme. We continuously keep track of some important statistics throughout the year, to make sure our programme runs smoothly, and all data is well captured. M&E helps us to ensure we continue to implement KEEP at a high-quality level and that we are on the right path towards our annual goals. These

KEEP in Numbers (2018)

5	Non-school groups
6	Private schools
15	Government schools
17	Schools who have participated in KEEP for the second/third time
36	International visitors who joined KEEP
74	Primary school classes joined KEEP
259	Kilometres walked by KEEP team
296	Hours spent in the bush
2,677	KEEP workbooks provided to students and their teachers
2,677	Sandwiches provided to KEEP participants
5,354	Feet that walked the KEEP hike
0	Litter left behind



include our participation numbers, feedback from participants and field review information.

From the positive feedback we receive from teachers as well as from learners we are certain that KEEP is having a positive impact on the lives of our participants. In the field, participants experience the beauty of nature and learn how we as humans affect our environment. This experience helps young children to connect with and develop a

positive attitude towards nature. During the field day students get actively involved and learn how everything in nature is interlinked, how we are part of the bigger picture and how actions have consequences. An important take-home message for all students is about the impact our lifestyles have on the fragile Namibian environment and how they are in a position to have a positive impact.

As you know, GCF could not implement KEEP without our donors. Most of our participants are from under-privileged communities and depend on the government schools' feeding schemes. KEEP provides a healthy snack and a sandwich for these students when they join us in the field. While we encourage schools to make a financial contribution for their participation in KEEP, we are determined to not make money a limiting factor. This year, GCF provided financial support to transporting 1856 students to Daan Viljoen Game Reserve to participate in the field day.

Feedback from Students and Teachers

"KEEP is helping learners to be keen about environmental matters."

"KEEP is so informative and makes learning fun."

"My highlight of the KEEP field day was the joy on my learners' faces. Some of them have never seen a giraffe or a zebra before. Thanks to KEEP, now they have."

"My best highlight of the day was seeing my learners enjoy tracking animals. They enjoyed learning about the importance of protecting the environment and were all fascinated by all the things they learnt about nature."



So, we would like to use this opportunity to thank all our donors to make KEEP possible: A big thank you also goes to our everyday partners, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism for allowing GCF to continue to run this programme at Daan Viljoen GR and the Ministry of Education for allowing students and teachers from the Khomas Region to join us for a memorable day in the bush.



Please visit our website at (<https://giraffeconservation.org/>), for more information about GCF and KEEP.

Thanks again for your support.

