



# Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

QUARTERLY UPDATE  
October – December 2019



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It is almost the end of 2019, and the Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) is getting ready to wave goodbye to another remarkable year of educating Namibia's youth. As we prepare to wrap up, all of us at the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) would like to express our gratitude to all schools and other organisations that used the opportunity to participate in our fun-filled field-based environmental education programme and kept us busy during this year.

At this time of the year, we take a moment to reflect on our achievements and experiences, check that we are still on track with delivering our objectives and determine the progress KEEP has made over the year. 2019 started off slowly, with the first school only joining us in the field in February, almost one month after GCF reopened for the year. We have come to realise that bookings at the beginning of the year are always slow as the schools are busy with their annual sport activities early on in the school year. School holidays and midterm breaks also disrupt our schedules



somewhat as schools are reluctant to book a field-day too close to any of these off days. However, as KEEP becomes better known, the quiet school holidays allow us to cater for other groups from different institutions such as orphanages, after-school programmes and youth groups, so that we keep our participation numbers up and the KEEP team busy. Quiet times also allow us to make changes to the KEEP field-day programme, catch up with admin or visit new schools to introduce GCF and the KEEP programme to build new relationships.

In 2019, KEEP has provided an interactive learning experience to a total of 2,452 learners (1,289 girls and 1,163 boys) accompanied by 95 teachers from 24 different schools and organisations.



2019 has been an incredible and a productive year for KEEP. Early in the year, our KEEP press release was picked up by four Namibian newspapers and subsequently our team was joined in the field by a journalist from Allgemeine Zeitung, Namibia's German newspaper, who wrote a full-page feature on KEEP. This media coverage helps to promote the programme as it reaches out to primary schools from other regions and gives exposure to the programme to a wider audience. As a result, KEEP hosted quite a few new groups including two classes from a



school in Okahandja in the Otjozondjupa Region. While it is logistically challenging to host schools that are outside of Windhoek due to the travel time, we are always prepared to try and accommodate learners from beyond the boundaries of the Khomas Region. For most students KEEP is their first-ever outing of this kind and a great opportunity to be introduced to a different part of their home country. Our aim remains to raise environmental awareness and educate as many Namibian children as possible about (giraffe) conservation.



Our passionate and hard-working KEEP team has again worked tirelessly this year to educate and encourage young Namibian learners to take responsibility for looking after their (and our!) environment. They love sharing their enthusiasm for our beautiful country, nature and conservation. In order to explain why it is important to care for the environment, learners actively participate in fun, interactive games and activities as well as engage in

discussions about Namibia's most important and relevant environmental topics such as climate change, waste and water management.



It is a real privilege for the KEEP team to spend time in the bush with the learners and experience many exciting sightings together. These sightings are often a first for many learners and after their initial excitement the students are always

incredibly curious to take in as much information as possible. Spotting different wildlife that can be found in Daan Viljoen Game Reserve such as giraffe, wildebeest, oryx, jackal, ostrich and many others, is always a highlight for the students, but also identifying Namibian plants or unusual animals like frogs, millipedes and rain bugs can cause excitement. This year we regularly encountered leopard and hyena footprints – what a thrill!

In March, we were excited to see a familiar face in the group from the SOS Children's Village. Chuster Fredrick joined us again as part of a mixed age group and proudly presented his coloured-in workbook that he received when he first participated in KEEP back in 2016. As a treasured item, the workbook





was well used, yet still in good condition. What an exciting highlight for the KEEP team! It is encounters like this that remind us of the value we add to some children's lives and encourage us to work hard to ensure we deliver the best programme we can. We always believed that the workbook was an important resource, but this experience just manifested this.



As an important component that significantly contributes to the value of KEEP, the workbook is reviewed at the end of every year to further improve it and keep

it up to date with the Namibian Primary School Curriculum. We also take this time to review our field activities and games. These changes help us to deliver a fresh programme that has maximum impact on our participants. Since we started KEEP in 2016, we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from our participants and in this regard, we can proudly take the credit for making a difference and influencing attitudes of young Namibians towards nature.

Another highlight for KEEP this year was hosting a group of second-year Nature Conservation students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST) for the second year in a row. The students joined our team in the field along with learners from Otjomuise Primary School to observe a 'normal' KEEP field day. This field day formed part of their programme's Environmental Education (EE) module. It was a great learning experience for the NUST students to get a hands-on EE experience. At the same time, it was a great opportunity for the KEEP team to show off their skills and catch up with old friends,





as it was only a few years ago, that all our KEEP team members graduated from NUST in the same course. We hope that NUST will make these visits an annual part of their EE module.

The GCF KEEP team again attended the annual conference of the Namibian Environmental Education Network (NEEN), of which GCF is a member. The NEEN annual conference aims to bring environmental educators together, including teachers and learners of environmental clubs from schools throughout the country to share environmental knowledge, raise awareness and discuss conservation challenges and ideas. This time, the conference was hosted in Rundu, approx. 700km north of Windhoek. The conference was themed 'Promoting blue and green economy through communication and public awareness'. Our team's presentation on how KEEP contributes to this goal in Namibia was well received. The conference offered a great opportunity to network with other environmental education stakeholders in the country, learn from each other, and work collaboratively towards the common goal of

enhancing environmental awareness in Namibia.

The most important day of the year for the giraffe community is World Giraffe Day (WGD) which is celebrated on 21 June – the longest day or night for the tallest animal. This year's WGD marked a special occasion as we celebrated at the new GCF office in Windhoek. Yes, GCF finally has a proper home! Additionally, the KEEP team spent the day celebrating WGD with learners from Orange Babies Foundation, an after-school programme that has regularly



participated in KEEP since its inception. The learners specially prepared short plays, and posters based on what they learned during their KEEP field days to raise awareness for our tall friends. The highlight of the morning was a dance especially choreographed for the occasion.



As an organisation, GCF is dedicated to supporting sustainable living. As such, GCF donated supplies to the Solid Waste Management Unit of the City of Windhoek to support Namibia's National Clean-Up Day, which was held on World Environmental Day on 5 June under the motto 'Namibia, healthy and clean!'.

To ensure the safety of our KEEP team and learners, all KEEP staff are first aid certified. To update their certificates, the team attended a



three-day first aid training with E-med Rescue during the April/May school holidays. In addition, the team also attended a one-day workshop on Namibian snakes with the local snake expert and renowned snake catcher Francois Theart. Both trainings contribute to ensuring the safety of our participants and the KEEP team in the field.



While we strive to implement the programme smoothly, KEEP has long-term challenges such as securing class bookings, transporting participants and general funding for the programme. As for transport, this year we were fortunate to receive support from the Tourism Supporting Conservation (TOSCO) Trust. Some TOSCO members provided busses free of charge to a few school groups in May and June, a slow time for tourism in the country. TOSCO is a voluntary Namibian based non-profit membership organization for all tourism companies, guides and travellers who support conservation. We are grateful for this generous support and hope that they will continue their support.

We are currently taking bookings for 2020, thus if your school or group is interested in join us in the bush for a life changing and adventurous learning experience, get in touch to reserve your space in our calendar.

As you know, GCF could not implement KEEP without our donors and as always, a big thank you goes out to everyone listed below. As most of our participants come from under-privileged communities and depend on the government schools' feeding schemes, we provide a healthy snack and a sandwich for these students when they join us in the field. To keep costs low, our team currently prepares all the sandwiches themselves however

#### **KEEP in Numbers (2019)**

<b>4</b>	Non-school groups
<b>5</b>	Private schools
<b>15</b>	Government schools
<b>17</b>	Schools who have participated in KEEP for the second/third time
<b>12</b>	International visitors who joined KEEP
<b>75</b>	Primary school classes joined KEEP
<b>249</b>	Kilometres walked by KEEP team
<b>284</b>	Hours spent in the bush
<b>2,547</b>	KEEP workbooks provided to students and their teachers
<b>2,547</b>	Sandwiches provided to KEEP participants
<b>5,094</b>	Feet that walked the KEEP hike
<b>0</b>	Litter left behind



if you would like to help us provide nutritious snacks, please get in touch. Your support would make a big difference and remember that your contribution does not necessarily have to be financial.

We would also like to use this opportunity to thank our every-day 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. advanced activities and interactive games with lots of fun in the bush.



Thanks again for your continued support.

