



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

QUARTERLY UPDATE
January – March 2020



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The Giraffe Conservation Foundation's Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) was off to a great start in 2020 before we, as the rest of the world, were thrown a curve ball that no one could have expected. But let us start at the beginning. The KEEP team was geared up and excited about a new year of outdoor teaching and educating the youth in Namibia's Khomas Region. The KEEP team started with full speed into its fifth year of implementation, taking learners from primary schools into the bush for a life-changing and adventurous learning opportunity. Bookings came in quickly and 2020 promised to be another productive and successful year for KEEP.

While our participating schools were busy with their yearly planning and annual sport activities at the beginning of the year, the KEEP team made use of this office time to visit new schools to introduce the programme and initiate new bookings. The team also made some changes to our field programme and updated the KEEP workbook before it went to print. As an important resource for our programme, the workbook is regularly reviewed to further improve, keep it up-to-date and in-line with the Namibian National Curriculum for grades 3 and 4. We added new activity sheets and illustrations to the workbook and the team was excited to field-test this fourth edition with new groups of students in the field. The KEEP team also spent time in the field preparing the walking trail and ensuring that our outdoor classroom at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve was ready for another year of environmental education outings.



The first KEEP participants in 2020 were 'KEEP regulars' from Bethold Himumuine Primary School who joined us for four fun-filled days in the field. The next two schools were first-timers who filled our weeks and were very impressed with our programme. What a fun and educational experience at the same time! While KEEP focuses on primary school groups from the Khomas Region, we occasionally open the programme for special groups. This time we hosted a group of 15 teachers from around Namibia. The group participated in an eco-mentor training programme hosted by Children in the Wilderness, a non-profit organisation that focuses on educating children in rural communities close to Wilderness Safaris' lodges. GCF hosted the



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teachers to give them a hands-on experience of KEEP and expose them to a different type of environmental education training. Equipped with increased environmental knowledge and skills, they could return to their home communities to bring new energy to the environmental clubs at their respective schools. The KEEP team was excited to host the teachers and share the KEEP experience with them.



Not only KEEP was off to a great start, there was excitement throughout Namibia as most areas in the country, including the Khomas Region received good rains early in the year. The seasonal river in Daan Viljoen Game Reserve flowed and finally filled the dam. Good rainfall brought many animals back to our walking trail and our participants were lucky to experience this firsthand. Rain bring big and small animals alike and the landscape literally turned green over night. Zebra, who had become scarce in the dry season as they migrated in search for water, became regular sights during our walks again and new leaves made it easier for the participants to identify different trees along the way. We also spotted many animals with offspring, including eland, blue wildebeest, red hartebeest, warthog and even giraffe. It is always lovely to see young animals and these babies were the highlight of most of our field days, causing a lot of excitement amongst the learners. For our team, seeing the excitement on the young learners' faces is a



So, in a short period of time, KEEP hosted a total of 448 students and 25 teachers in in the field and our KEEP calendar was almost fully booked for the school term – when the Covid-19 pandemic threw a massive spanner into our wheels. On 15 March 2020, the Namibian Government declared a State of Emergency and the president directed schools countrywide to close with immediate effect. This decision brought KEEP to an immediate halt and our team had to stay at

home from 28 March 2020, when the Khomas (and Erongo) Region went into lockdown. This lockdown was later extended to the entire country and a slow and staged way out of the lockdown has only commenced on 5 May 2020. With limited internet at home, the KEEP team went on a break while part of our GCF team was able to continue implementing programmes.

However, this forced time at home did not stop us from planning for a time after lockdown. We have returned to the office with exciting ideas and plans how to implement an impactful environmental education programme without being able to take school groups into the field. Stay tunes for some



exciting news in our next update report. However, in the meantime it is our priority to keep safe and we hope you are doing the same!

As always, and in particular in difficult times like this, we would like to thank our generous donors for their support. We have been in touch with many of you who have been amazingly supportive and allowed us to re-allocate some of the budgets to ensure that salaries for GCF staff are secure. With many jobs in Namibia currently on the line and many people having to endure significant salary cuts, we are proud to make this commitment to our staff. We at GCF are ready to jump back into action and continue implementing KEEP once it is again possible.

Thanks again for your continued support.

