



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

UPDATE
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As the Giraffe Conservation Foundation's (GCF) Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP) kicks off another year of educating and increasing environmental awareness among school learners and children from other institutions in the Khomas Region, we are once again filled with excitement for what lies ahead in 2024.



The first quarter of the year is typically the busiest time for our KEEP team and the most rewarding for our participants. We often receive many bookings during the initial three months of the year, which coincides with Namibia's rainy season. The environment is lush and beautiful, which makes it a great time for outdoor activities.

The year started well, with many of our 'KEEP regulars' booked and just in the first quarter we managed to host 883 students and 39 teachers from five different schools and two non-school groups. The two additional groups came from a soup kitchen that caters for vulnerable children in Goreangab, an informal settlement on the remote outskirts of Katutura, a suburb of Windhoek, and a student group from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, who are visiting Namibia on an educational field trip. They group were excited to learn about the Namibian environment and wildlife as the first stop during their African adventure.





Over the years, our team has gathered a lot of experience in hosting different groups and adapting the programme on the fly. The field visit of this group of international students was a highlight for the KEEP team as they were very interested and keen to learn and interactions were rewarding for both sides. It also offered both our team and the students an opportunity to form personal connections and exchange insights from their diverse backgrounds.

Early in the year is the best time to visit Daan Viljoen Game Reserve as the park is bursting with many fascinating discoveries, offering an excellent opportunity to learn a lot about nature. While the ephemeral/seasonal rivers in the reserve are partially flowing, many animals are out in the open foraging during the day. Many little creatures that come with the rain can be seen almost everywhere. Plant identification also becomes notably easier during this time of the year because the trees have leaves, some show flowers or are bearing fruits, which all aids in the identification. During our field days, our participants were treated to several rare sightings, including a monitor lizard, a baby tortoise, and a baby Puff Adder. Other sightings included giraffe and a variety of antelopes such as eland, wildebeest, hartebeest, kudu, oryx and many small critters. In addition to gaining knowledge and skills on different environmental topics, these sightings make the field days fun for the participants as 85% of the participants come from underprivileged backgrounds, with little to no exposure to nature. For many, this nature experience is somewhat life changing. It is a real treat for our team to watch their faces light up from the excitement. It is these moments that reassure us that KEEP is truly a remarkable experience for almost all participants.



But our KEEP team is not limited to providing an environmental education experience for kids. As part of the GCF team, we are committed to collaborating and networking with relevant stakeholders. In March, our senior educator Naemi Antonius attended a workshop on Circular Bioeconomy Opportunities in Namibia. The workshop focused on the circular skills, knowledge, and competencies essential for working life, education, and training in Namibia. Its primary objective was to identify best practices, pinpoint gaps that need to be filled, and explore opportunities for collaborative projects. Multiple organizations presented their work, highlighting their contributions to the bio-circular economy. This platform facilitated networking among stakeholders, offering them valuable insights they can implement in their workplaces and within their communities.

Additionally, the KEEP team again attended a two-day Experience-Oriented Environmental Education (EE) Workshop, which took place just outside Windhoek. This workshop's primary objective was to foster momentum for an experience-oriented and sustainable environmental education in Namibia and integrate different insights into environmental education throughout the country. The KEEP team was introduced to new pedagogical approaches and methods aimed at enhancing EE programmes and optimizing their impact.



In addition to implementing our EE field programme, GCF has started distributing our GCF Nature Workbook to interested schools throughout Namibia. The GCF Nature Workbook is based on the KEEP Workbook but has been developed as a more generic and in-depth version during the Covid pandemic. Since the beginning of the year, the KEEP team has distributed over 3,000 copies of this books to many schools and other EE centres in the country. We receive a lot of interested and schools are excited to use the GCF Nature Workbook as a teaching resource and to spread our EE message. Together with other EE organizations in the country, GCF is building a nation of environmentally literate young Namibians by equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills they need to lead more sustainable lives both now and in the future.



While our calendar is already fully booked for the first school term, there are still a few open spots in the second term, and we are also still taking bookings for groups that would like to join us during the upcoming school holidays. If you are interested in bringing a group to our KEEP programme or know of any group that would enjoy and/or benefit from a 'KEEP experience', please do not hesitate to get in touch with us.



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