



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

Update December 2024

Where did all the time go? 2024 marked our eighth year of providing young Namibians in the Khomas Region with a transformative experience that reconnects them with nature and fosters sustainable living practices through the Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP). We are proud to have reached this milestone as we reflect on eight impactful years and the meaningful difference we have made in the lives of our participants.

At the end of each year, we take time to reflect on our accomplishments and assess the work we have done. Achieving or even surpassing our annual goals is our priority, and we take pride in knowing that KEEP has become a firm part of the curriculum for many schools in the Khomas Region. Our passionate environmental education team is committed to delivering the best experience to every child and teacher, and to expanding our reach by engaging as many young people as possible every year. Through KEEP, we offer young Namibians a connection to their country's natural beauty, nurturing a appreciation and responsibility for protecting our delicate environment – often for the very first time.

We are excited to report, that in 2024 we hosted 3,413 Namibian school children and 214 teachers. These children came from 31 different schools and other organisations and our team spent 91 days in the field. In total, since KEEP started in 2016, we have now hosted 21,487 Namibian school children and 1,123 teachers. Our team has spent over 650 days in the field delivering an excellent and impactful environmental education curriculum to young Namibians. Additionally, we have now distributed over 15,000 copies of our GCF Nature Workbook to schools throughout the country and it is widely regarded a value teaching resource.



While in the past, our EE season often started slowly, we now have a regular line-up of schools and soup kitchen groups who like to join early in the year. It is always great to see some familiar faces when teachers and soup kitchen staff bring new children every year. Hosting groups from organisations that care for children from the informal settlements on the outskirts of Katutura in Windhoek is particularly exciting for our team. Experiencing nature is a rare treat for these children and often a transformative experience. We should also highlight that we provide healthy snacks for all KEEP participants and for most groups, in particular the less privileged, and to avoid putting up barriers, we often cover the cost for transport to and from Daan Viljoen Game Reserve.

Over the years, our team has refined their ability to host diverse groups and has become very skilled in adapting our programme for different groups – often *ad hoc*. While KEEP is designed for Grade 3 and 4 students (ages between 8–10), our team is experienced in hosting a much broader range of groups, ensuring that anyone will benefit from participating. This flexibility allows us to reach more young Namibians, host diverse groups and inspire a deeper understanding of the importance of protecting our planet.



In 2024, we had the privilege of hosting several remarkable groups and sometimes the field outing becomes more of an exchange where everyone learns new things. Early in the year, a student group from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, visited Namibia as part of an educational field trip and participated in KEEP. Through our collaboration with the Namibia University of Science & Technology (NUST), we again hosted their first-year Nature Conservation students. NUST has made KEEP a key component of its Environmental Education module, sending students annually to see EE in action and gain hands-on experience in delivering an effective environmental education programme. Another exciting group that joined us in the field were the members of the Namibian Youth Chamber of Environment, an initiative under the Namibia Chamber of Environment. These passionate young leaders wanted to learn more about our programme, deepen their knowledge of local environmental

challenges and build the skills needed to drive positive change in their communities. Additionally, we welcomed three High School Environmental Education Clubs and provided a valuable opportunity to inspire and empower future environmental stewards with the knowledge and inspiration to lead efforts for a sustainable future. Each group brought its own unique energy and perspective, further emphasizing the impact of KEEP in connecting people of all ages to the environment in meaningful and lasting ways.

Our team is also active beyond their regular field outings and takes environmental education to teachers. As such, our KEEP team participated in and facilitated group discussions on Environmental Education and Education for Sustainable Development (EE/ESD) at a Teacher Training Workshop in Windhoek. Under the theme "Fostering Environmental Awareness for Sustainable Future: Integrating Environmental Education in the Classroom" this workshop served as a platform for primary school science teachers to exchange information on their teaching and learning practices, build networks and gain fresh insights and peer support for implementing Education for Sustainable Development in their classrooms.



During the seminar, teachers from various schools shared their experiences and insights, alongside a few invited local science experts. The seminar featured hands-on activities and field visits to key environmental sites in and around Windhoek. On the final day, approx. 80 science teachers joined our team at Daan Viljoen Game Reserve and experienced our KEEP field activities first hand to get ideas for environmental activities that can be integrated into their classroom teaching. This experience aimed to enhance their ability to teach environmental education effectively and the feedback from all teachers was very positive and encouraging.

The KEEP team also takes on the role of strengthening GCF's connections with other environmental stakeholders in Namibia. As such, the KEEP team attended a workshop on Circular Bioeconomy Opportunities in Namibia, which focused on developing the skills and knowledge needed for implementing circular practices in education, workplaces, and communities. Another workshop focused Experience-Oriented Environmental Education and offered hands-on strategies for enhancing

environmental learning and a third workshop focused on assessing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) reporting in Namibia. This workshop aimed to foster collaboration and strengthen the role of Civil Society Organizations in Namibia's SDG reporting process. The KEEP team also represented GCF in a meeting hosted by the Namibian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) focusing on the development of a management plan for Daan Viljoen Game Reserve, where our KEEP programme takes place.

One of our goals this year was to empower our participating schools to implement environmental activities at the schools. We want to focus on enabling students to take the knowledge and skills they gain through KEEP and transform them into real-world actions. In addition to raising awareness, which is the first step in the process, we want to enable more tangible outcomes.

Most schools that participate in KEEP are government schools (85%) and they often face challenges due to limited resources and funding. To address this, GCF took a step to support schools directly. In an initial pilot, the KEEP team identified five primary schools in Windhoek to focus on and provide additional support. As a first step, 35 fruit tree seedlings donated by MEFT were planted at these schools.



To ensure the success of this initiative, we partnered with experts from the National Botanical Garden of Namibia, who helped with the tree planting and trained the children in proper planting techniques and aftercare, helping to ensure these trees thrive and will produce fruit over time.

In addition to tree planting, the KEEP team also assisted in clean-up campaigns at the schools. The students demonstrated their creativity by transforming waste into fashionable clothing. In collaboration with the City of Windhoek the collected waste was safely and responsibly disposed of.



Planting fruit trees specifically was important as not only will they benefit the environment, but also provide a sustainable source of food for the schools, while our collaboration with the City of Windhoek reinforced the importance of waste management, teaching students the value of proper disposal and fostering a sense of environmental responsibility. This hands-on approach will not only help us measure the programme's impact but also inspire both students and their teachers to put what they learn into practice, creating lasting changes in their communities. Ultimately, our goal is to see schools achieve measurable, visible outcomes from their participation in KEEP, demonstrating their commitment to sustainability. We plan to expand on this pilot and increase our collaboration with schools in the Khomas Region beyond their participation in our field programme.

We extend our appreciation to all the schools, groups, and organizations that we had the pleasure of hosting this year. We hope that you had as much fun as we did and that you benefited from our programme. It was an honour to host you all, and we look forward to welcoming your students again next year. All that remains is to thank our amazing donors for their continued support. We could not do this without you! We hope you know how much we value your support.



