



Giraffe Conservation & Capacity Building in Namibia

July 2024

The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) is the only organisation in the world that concentrates solely on the conservation and management of giraffe in the wild throughout Africa. GCF is dedicated to securing a future for all giraffe populations in the wild. We envision a world where all giraffe live wild and free within their historical range or habitat in Africa and are protected by the people around them. GCF works closely with governments, NGOs and academic partners throughout Africa to secure a sustainable future for all giraffe populations in the wild. The main threats to giraffe are human-induced, particularly habitat loss, habitat destruction and fragmentation, as well as poaching and disease. These threats are exacerbated by increasing mining and oil exploration pressure in some areas of Africa, alongside an increasing number of infrastructure development projects.

From our headquarters in Windhoek, GCF works on, manages and supports giraffe conservation initiatives that concern all four species of giraffe in 20 African countries. Our work has an impact on over 100 million acres of giraffe habitat, and we have supported the successful translocation of over 270 giraffe in seven countries, which has effectively increased giraffe habitat in Africa by over 15 million acres. In Namibia, we run a comprehensive and multi-faceted giraffe conservation programme in the country with a focus on giraffe conservation research and environmental education.

Raising environmental awareness and capacity enhancement are important parts of our work as we firmly believe that African wildlife can ultimately only be conserved by African people.

Namibian Wildlife Veterinary Capacity Building Training

Wildlife medicine is arguably one of the most challenging branches of veterinary medicine. African wildlife veterinarians are frequently required to work in remote and isolated settings with dangerous species and possibly even more dangerous drugs. In addition, most wildlife veterinarians start their careers with little knowledge in safe handling of dangerous drugs, darting and capture equipment, and appropriate protocols for handling wildlife, as these topics are not generally included during their university training. Training opportunities outside university settings in African wildlife restraint and immobilisation are limited and cost is often prohibitive for young veterinarians or government employees. It is further essential that in addition to obtaining a solid foundation in wildlife medicine, wildlife veterinarians are equipped with the soft skills and valuable networks of professionals to enable them to successfully perform their roles in conservation.

With this in mind, GCF partnered with the University of Namibia (UNAM) School of Veterinary Medicine, and with the generous support of the African Wildlife Conservation Trust (AWCT), to develop a dynamic, practical wildlife veterinary immobilisation course specifically targeting the training of young African wildlife veterinarians in 2022. We have now successfully held three wildlife medicine and immobilisation courses in Namibia (May 2022, June 2023 and June 2024) which involved a combination of theoretical learning with practical, hands-on training at the Etosha Heights Private Reserve in northern Namibia.

The 2024, nine African wildlife veterinarians successfully complete the course, namely participants came from Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Namibia, Tanzania and Zambia.

In 2022 and 2024, the practical course was preceded by a continuing professional development course (CPD) in Windhoek. The CPD component was open to all Namibian veterinarians and provided insights in the latest updates in the wildlife medicine field. It also offered a unique opportunity for the international course participants to network with Namibian colleagues and share experiences.

With each year we continue to adapt the course to better fit the needs of the veterinary participants and learn as much from them as they do from us. It is our goal to build the capacity of African wildlife veterinarians and enable them to effectively undertake veterinary work on the local to national scale, leading to overall better conservation of wildlife throughout the continent. Additionally, the course offers a unique opportunity for all participants to meet like-minded peers and establish a strong network for future support and collaboration. Ultimately, by enhancing the capacity of young African wildlife veterinarians we are building Africa's future conservation leaders and are making a significant contribution to conservation on the continent.

Way forward

We are committed to continuing this valuable course as it has already demonstrated a major impact on the careers of the participating wildlife veterinarians. As a direct result of participating in this training, two wildlife veterinarians have received promotions in their respective countries to leading wildlife veterinary positions. We will continue to adapt the course to ensure participants get as much practical experience as possible and access to the theoretical and foundational knowledge that is vital to the start of any wildlife career. We hope that we can apply for further support to the First Rand Namibia Foundation Trust in the future.

Capacity building in numbers

Number of veterinarians trained

25 (8 in 2022, 8 in 2023, 9 in 2024)

Number of Namibian veterinarians and para-veterinarians earning CPD credit

47 (xx in 2022, xx in 2024)

Countries represented

Central African Republic (1), Democratic Republic of Congo (2), Ethiopia (2), Ghana (1), Kenya (1), Namibia (5), Nigeria (1), Malawi (1), Mozambique (2), Rwanda (2), Tanzania (4), Uganda (1), and Zambia (2).

Species immobilized

African lion, African savanna elephant, Angolan giraffe, blue wildebeest, common eland, gemsbok, greater kudu, Hartmann's mountain zebra, plains zebra, sable, , waterbuck, white rhino

Procedures performed

Dehorning, disease surveillance, GPS satellite collaring, tracking collar/unit replacement and removal, GPS satellite tagging, translocation





