



Khomas Environmental Education Programme (KEEP)

Update December 2025

As this busy and rewarding year draws to a close, we pause to reflect with pride – this year marked KEEP’s ninth year of operation. For nearly a decade, we have worked tirelessly to inspire young minds and nurture a deeper connection between young Namibians and nature, fostering a lasting sense of environmental responsibility. Each year has strengthened our mission to inspire, educate, and empower the next generation of environmental stewards. We have watched countless young people step into nature with wonder, discovering the beauty of their country while learning not only about the environment but also about their role in protecting it.

KEEP’s growth over the years has been nothing short of impressive, with no two years ever the same. Since its inception, the programme continued to welcome an increasing number of participants and achieve significant milestones each year – a clear reflection of the growing relevance and impact of our hour programme. The introduction of a two-semester school system following the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced this growth, allowing us to host more schools compared to the previous three-term system. The increase in teaching time and fewer school holidays have together created more opportunities for participation.



In 2025, KEEP reached a new participation milestone once again: our team hosted **4,086** Namibian school children and over **190** teachers from **36** schools. For **105** days in the field, the KEEP team worked dedicatedly to deliver immersive, hands-on learning experiences, carefully adapting to different seasons and participant groups, which included learners with visual impairments.

Since KEEP started in 2016, more than **25,500** students and over **1,200** teachers in the Khomas Region have benefited from our programme by gaining a deeper appreciation for the natural world and their role in caring for it. In addition, more than **19,000** GCF Nature Workbooks have been distributed nationwide, strengthening environmental education across Namibia.



The Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) recognises that strong partnerships are essential for our work, including for enhancing KEEP's impact and providing meaningful learning experiences for young Namibians. This year, our collaboration with the City of Windhoek (CoW) enabled our participants to learn directly from experts in urban environmental management. In the first quarter, the CoW Waste Education Officer, Ms Theophilia Ndahalele, and her team visited KEEP, engaging participants and sharing their expertise on solid waste management and the operations of the city's water reclamation plant. The participants and our KEEP team gained a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with managing waste and recycling water in Namibia's dry climate, particularly in Windhoek, where high population density increases the need for sustainable practices.



Following the visit, the KEEP team toured the CoW's solid waste management facilities to gain a first-hand understanding of urban waste management. At the Waste Buyback Centre, they observed how recyclable materials brought in by the community in exchange for money to promote a circular economy and reduce the amount of waste to landfill. At the Incinerator and Autoclave, the team learned how hazardous and medical waste is safely treated with minimal emission of pollutants. The tour that concluded at the municipal landfill provided valuable insights into recycling, resource recovery, and waste reduction, which the team can now share effectively with participants in the field.



Throughout the year, the KEEP team attended several key events, strengthening partnerships, connecting with schools, and supporting environmental education initiatives in Windhoek. One such event was the CoW's European Union funded Secondary Schools Recycling Competition at Havana High School., which brought together learners from various schools, including students with visual and hearing impairments, to showcase their innovative recycling and upcycling projects. Among the participants were several learners who had previously taken part in KEEP, and their continued engagement in environmental initiatives was truly rewarding to witness. The competition awarded monetary prizes to the top projects, inspiring attendees to recognise the potential of transforming waste into meaningful creations. For the KEEP team, the event was a moment of pride, celebrating creativity and standing alongside the City of Windhoek in building a cleaner, greener city for all.



The KEEP team also took part in the “Adventure into Citizenship” programme hosted by the Rotary Club of Windhoek, engaging Grade 11 learners from secondary schools in Windhoek. Under this year’s



theme, *“Wildlife Conservation, Protection and Law Enforcement – Your Role and Responsibility as Citizens,”* the event provided a platform for the KEEP team to present GCF’s giraffe conservation initiatives and introduce the KEEP programme to emerging leaders. It was certainly a motivating experience, as the team shared their conservation journeys and encouraged students to explore careers in conservation to ensure that conservation efforts continue in the future.



Another event attended was the groundbreaking ceremony for the City of Windhoek’s second Waste Buyback Centre in Okuryangava. Located near the informal settlements where nearly half of Windhoek’s population resides, the new centre will be more accessible to people in Katutura encouraging greater participation in recycling and waste management initiatives. Equipped with new understanding and appreciation of the complexities of waste management, the KEEP team can better inspire learners and encourage them to contribute to their communities.



KEEP successfully engaged a diverse range of groups this year. We welcomed participants from government and private schools, community feeding programmes, orphanages as well as students from the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), for whom KEEP has become a key part



of their Environmental Education module. A particularly exciting first-time group were the tourism students from the International University of Management (IUM), who joined as part of their practical *Animal and Plant Taxonomy* coursework. Both students and lecturers took part in hands-on activities and learned to identify animals and plants by their local and scientific names. It is inspiring to see another university embracing KEEP, providing their students with meaningful, real-world experience in the field.



KEEP's curriculum aligns with both national and international environmental education standards and is regularly reviewed by the KEEP team and external experts. This year, we were honoured to work with Ms Renée Lighton, an experienced education specialist from South Africa. Renée observed the KEEP team in action before making some suggestions on how to participant engagement during and after field experiences. Ms Lighton also shared practical strategies to support learners in implementing environmental education initiatives at their schools and communities, including establishing EE clubs to continue learning beyond the programme.



At the beginning of the year, our team outlined several concepts for new interactive games and activities to make field days more engaging and keep the programme refreshed. As part of these new ideas, we now include a new water cycle activity in the programme, which allows learners to actively identify and sequence the stages of the cycle. This hands-on approach enhances engagement and understanding and at the same time strengthens

critical thinking and helps learners connect classroom theory with real-world environmental processes.

We also made some updates to the KEEP Field Workbook by adding new and exciting information to several topics, most importantly updating the giraffe population numbers and their distribution based on the GCF State of Giraffe 2025 report, which was released at World Giraffe Day. The new and



improved KEEP Field Workbook will be officially launched in 2026, and we are looking forward to also completing the remaining additional activities we are currently working on.

This year, we were fortunate to have the support of two dedicated volunteers, who stepped in at a time we needed extra hands the most. Kyla-Ann Tjombe, a fourth-year Honours student in Environmental Biology at the University of Namibia, joined us for a month in July to gain practical field experience before completing her course. She overlapped with Hazel Fairweather, an Honours graduate in Environmental Science and Psychology from New Zealand, who volunteered for two months in order to further develop her skills while gaining first-hand experience in environmental education. Their contributions are a rewarding reminder of how GCF continues to nurture the next generation of environmental leaders.



End-of-year exams have started at Namibian schools, and we have now hosted all the groups booked for the year. While we are ready for a well-deserved break, we are also excited for 2026 and curious what the new year will bring for GCF, KEEP and our entire team. The first schools have already booked for the first quarter when nature promises to be green and vibrant, so will hit the new year running. If you haven't secured your dates for 2026 yet, be sure to get in touch before schools close for the holidays – spots are filling up fast!

As we sign off for the year, we want to reflect on the incredible experiences we shared with all our participants. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the schools, groups, and organisations – both new and returning – that participated in KEEP this year. Your learners' excitement and curiosity brought so much energy to our field day sessions, and your wonderful feedback shows that they did not only enjoy the experience but also learned a lot about Namibia, nature and, of course, giraffe! Thank you for being part of our journey in inspiring the next generation of environmentally conscious leaders. We look forward to welcoming your students again next year. In the meantime, we wish you a joyful festive season and a good start into the New Year.

Thank you to our generous donors!



IOWA'S WILDEST ADVENTURE



A few photos of learners exploring, discovering, and connecting with nature during KEEP field days.

