

Namibia's International Day of Biodiversity celebration 2016

Background

Namibia is the most arid country in Sub-Sahara Africa. Nevertheless, it's natural resources and biodiversity offer high potential for the country's socio-economic development. Unique land- and seascapes, rich wildlife and mineral resources attract both tourists and investors alike. The Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), in partnership with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, is currently implementing the Biodiversity Management and Climate Change (BMCC) Project.

As an approach to promote mainstreaming of biodiversity and sustainable development, MET has over the years been celebrating the International Day of Biodiversity (IDB) with other key stakeholders such as the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre (<http://www.gobabebtrc.org/>), EduVentures (<http://www.eduventures-africa.org/>), as well as other Namibian academic institutions.

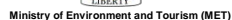
Namibia has celebrated 6 Biodiversity Action Days to date, with the 2013 and 2015 respective events drawing over 150 and 200 participants from more than 7 regions. Each Biodiversity Day is celebrated under a specific theme. This year's edition of the IDB Namibia was celebrated in the Etosha National Park, Oshikoto Region, under the theme: ***“Mainstreaming Biodiversity; Sustaining People and their Livelihoods”***, which is the official theme from the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD).

The Youth Environmental Summit (YES) and the Biodiversity Day Namibia

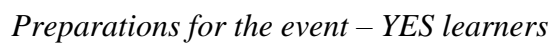
The Biodiversity Action Day in Namibia has always been celebrated as a very participative approach with several stakeholders involved in the event. This year, Gobabeb once again guided the YES learners on science projects based on the IDB theme for 2016 and also in consideration of the local environment in Etosha National Park. Various science-projects on key Biodiversity topics were conducted by 29 grade 11 learners during the week-long YES, more precisely:

- (1) Comparing freshwater algal biodiversity in Etosha;
- (2) Sustainable Tourism at NWR Namutoni;
- (3) Reforestation in Etosha's degraded landscapes.

Students presented the results of their work very creatively through songs and drama at the Biodiversity Action Day event 2016 with more than 100 participants.

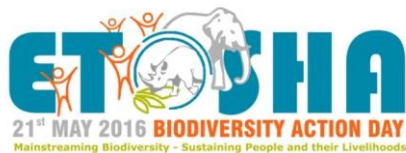


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Preparations for the event – YES learners II

EduVentures and the Biodiversity Action Day Namibia

EduVentures guides Namibian youth to make informed and accountable environmental decisions, and contributes directly to Namibia's environmental knowledge. This is achieved through its three core functions - education, scientific data collecting and social upliftment – and a step-by-step approach. During expeditions (with scientists and educators) and science programmes, children actively collect biodiversity data. These highly effective hands-on environmental learning activities simultaneously bring in quality scientific data (indispensable for sustainable development e.g. monitoring of development projects) for Namibia's biodiversity institutions. EduVentures have been involved in the Biodiversity Action Day events in Namibia since its beginning in 2010, through organization of the whole event as well as through facilitation of activities before and during the IDB event itself. At the heart of EduVentures

activities is the Edu-mobile classroom programme. Titled Ombombo (meaning “Butterfly”), the programme targets school learners, exposing them to a wide range of environmental issues, including erosion, recycling, as well as flora and faunal diversity, which are relevant to the Namibian environment. Moreover, students are also guided in exploring possible environmental careers. The mobile classroom is equipped with user-friendly tablets with internet access. At each teaching point, the mobile classroom conducts a five-day programme and helps to establish an environmental club at each school.

In the build up to this year’s event, EduVentures guided a group of 15 school learners from the Okaukuejo Combine School through the **Enviro Club Artwork** program. Learners were trained and exposed to visual arts activities that advocate for conservation of biodiversity and the environment as a whole. At the Biodiversity Action Day event, the learners displayed their acquired skills, through a wall painting exercise based on the IDB 2016 theme.



Preparing for the event - Learners Enviro Club Artwork program



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Preparing for the event - Learners Enviro Club Artwork program II



Preparations for the event – Setting up the EduMobile Class room

The Biodiversity Action Day 2016 in Namibia

The IDB event itself started off with three speeches, including one by Dr. Konrad Uebelhör (GIZ) on behalf of the German Embassy to commemorate the IDB, a presentation by Dr. Gillian Maggs-Kölling (Gobabeb) on the YES experience, and a key note address by Mr. Olimpio Nhuleipo (MET). This was followed by the YES presentations, as well as the Biodiversity Day poster launch. The event was rounded off with the Enviro Club Artwork and the Ombombo mobile classroom and Back yard excursion, facilitated by EduVentures. The whole event was could be followed live on Twitter (@ BMCC_GIZ).

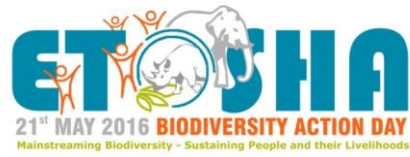
Biodiversity Action Days have helped increase awareness on sustainable development and conservation of biodiversity. It has also allowed for capacity building amongst stakeholders in biodiversity management at all levels of governance. The event has been widely enjoyed by participants over the years, and is considered as one of the most important Environmental Awareness platforms in the country.



Performance YES - Reforestation in Etosha's degraded landscapes.



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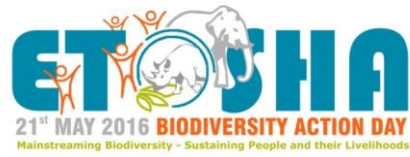
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Performance YES – Comparing freshwater algal biodiversity in Etosha



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Performance YES – Comparing freshwater algal biodiversity in Etosha II



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YES receiving performance certificates



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Launch of the winner of the Biodiversity Poster competition



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Launch of the Enviro Club Artwork



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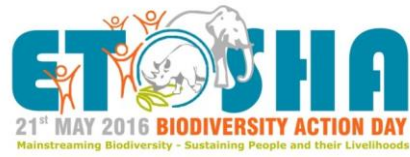
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Participants experiencing the mobile classroom



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Participants experiencing the mobile classroom II