

An overview of **ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION** *in Namibia*

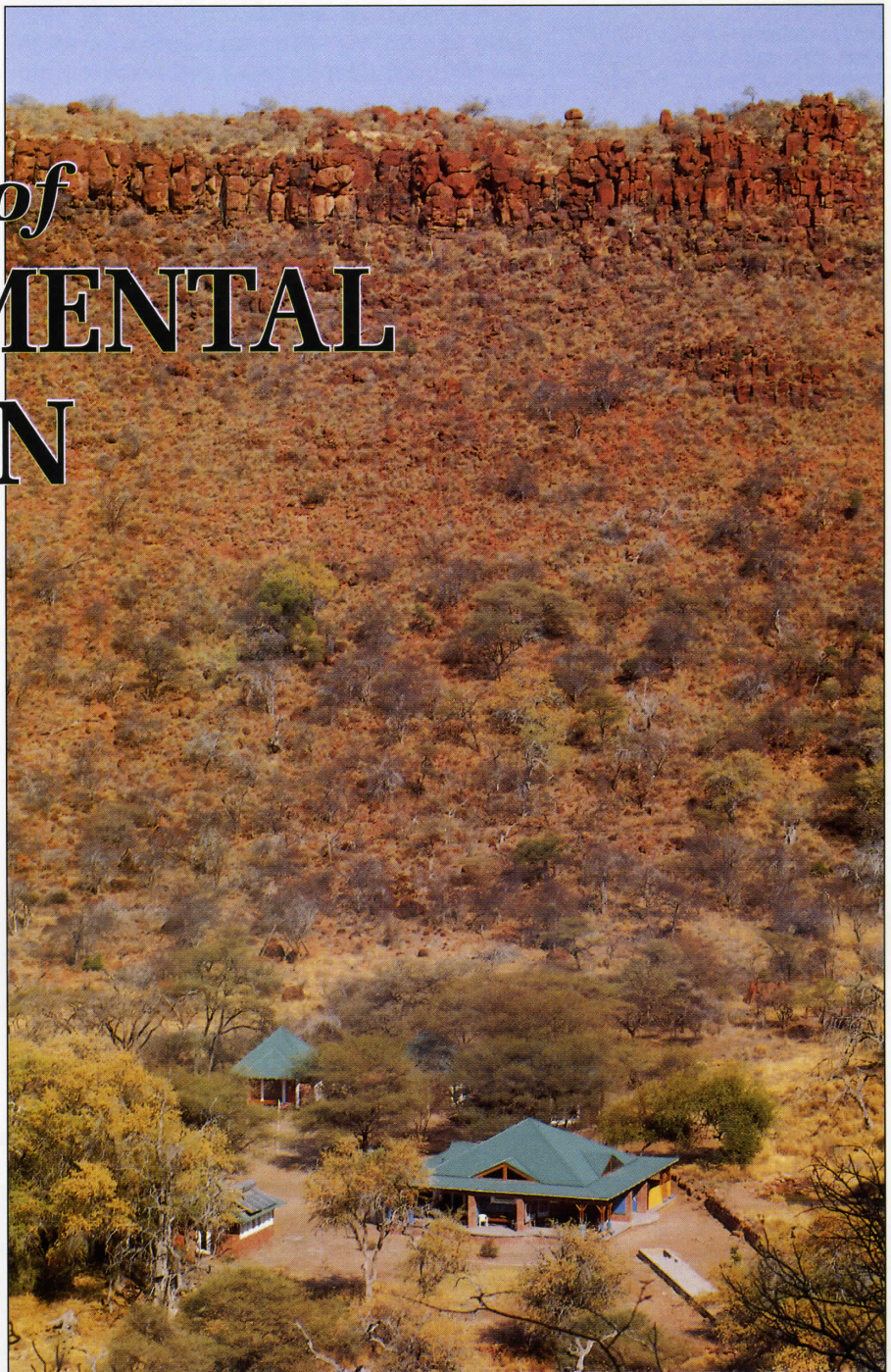
BY

LOUISA MUPETAMI
AND
LEN LE ROUX

NAMIBIA'S Green Plan defines environmental education as "the process of developing an environmentally literate citizenry which is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and is empowered through knowledge, attitudes, skills and shared decision making to individually and collectively achieve an improved quality of life through sustainable utilisation and appropriate development of Namibia's resources".

The past three years have witnessed a significant increase in activities aimed at meeting these objectives. Environmental education in Namibia has been categorised into formal education aimed at schools and teacher training institutions and non-formal education aimed largely at an adult audience, from community members to decision makers in rural and urban areas.

Ministries involved in implementing environmental education in Namibia are Environment and Tourism, Basic Education and Culture, Youth and Sport and Agriculture, Water and Rural Development. Environmental education activities in the public sector cover a wide range of activities and programmes. Implementation targets include unemployed youth, public awareness campaigns, curricula for schools and education colleges, individuals and organisations active in the fields of agriculture, development, mining and other economic activities. These programmes are conducted through awareness campaigns or through one of a



Peter Tarr

number of centres managed by government institutions that focus specifically on environmental education.

In addition to the various government programmes, a number of non-governmental organisations have been at the forefront of establishing environmental education in Namibia. It is fitting that these NGOs have now taken their rightful place alongside government in implementing environmental education programmes.

In some cases NGOs have collaborated closely with government to supplement and complement existing or new programmes. Examples of this cooperation are evident in activities of NGOs such as the Life Science Project, Cheetah Conservation Fund and EnviroTeach. Activities by NGOs include the

Namibia has a number of environmental education facilities including the Okatjikona Environmental Education Centre in the Waterberg Plateau Park. During 1994, this centre was visited by over 1 000 children from 50 schools around the country.

The authors:

Louisa Mupetami is an environmental education officer at the Rössing Foundation, and secretary to NEEN. Len le Roux is Deputy Director of the Rössing Foundation, and treasurer to NEEN.

development of school curricula, development and testing of resource books for teachers, textbook development and teacher training.

There are also NGOs working in the field of non-formal environmental education, providing courses at environmental education centres and working closely with schools and communities. These include NGOs like NARREC, IRDNC and the Wildlife Society of Namibia. The Rössing Foundation Environmental Education project supports environmental programmes through capacity building and institutional support, grants, materials development and training in the field of environmental education. The project also provides bursaries for studies in environmental education.

Other activities are organised by the Namibia Programme to Combat Desertification, a programme aimed at raising awareness about desertification in Namibia, community-based organisations, farmers associations and the Enviromessengers, a group that uses drama and songs to raise environmental awareness.

NETWORKING

The idea of an environmental education networking body was first raised in 1992, but it was only on 23 June 1995 that the Namibia Environmental Education Network (NEEN) finally came into existence. The Network aims are to:

- serve as a network to link efforts in Namibia and a forum for discussion of environmental education and related issues;
- coordinate environmental education

efforts among ministries, non-governmental and other organisations;

- encourage the development of existing and new environmental education projects;
- support and coordinate with the various organisations, by compiling a directory of organisations and individuals involved in environmental education;
- represent and promote the interest of, and issues related to environmental education in local, regional, national and international forums;
- encourage and coordinate monitoring and evaluation of environmental education activities and approaches;
- coordinate and to encourage research on relevant aspects of environmental education in Namibia.

The founding members of the Namibia Environmental Education Network include most of the organisations and government ministries mentioned previously. NEEN is drafting a policy on environmental education for Namibia as well as compiling a directory of all the players active in this field. It has also launched a quarterly newsletter to share information and encourage networking among members.

Environmental education has increasingly appeared on the agendas of government ministries and NGOs over the last few years. This has happened as a direct result of the extended demands made by development activities in Namibia. As more and more demands are made on the environment, the need for environmental education will increase and the role of a network such as NEEN will become larger.

The Enviroteach Programme By DERICK DU TOIT

ENVIROTEACH is an environmental education programme developed by the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN) in conjunction with the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture. Financial requirements are met by money pledged to the Namibian government by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

A three year pilot phase of the programme was initiated in March 1992. The main aim was to investigate ways of implementing environmental education on a national level in secondary schools. A sample of 24 pilot schools was chosen, four in each of Namibia's six education districts. During this time Enviroteach produced and evaluated resource materials designed for use by teachers and provided assistance and instruction to teachers in each of the pilot schools.

The resources have a strong Namibian flavour. They are designed with all teachers in mind, not just life science and geography teachers. The philosophy of Enviroteach is to encourage all Namibian teachers to incorporate envi-

ronmental issues into their everyday teaching. It involves the development of themes based upon simple practical projects, self-study programmes and outdoor teaching. Themes included energy, water, people, seaweed, soil and outdoor activities.

An important component of the pilot phase was the monitoring and evaluation of progress in the pilot schools. Based on these findings a list of recommendations and guidelines will be drafted to aid the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture with the implementation of environmental education on a national level. An external evaluation committee has already pinpointed key areas on which the Ministry should focus its efforts.

Enviroteach aims to provide further support and recommendations to the Ministry of Basic Education and Culture in 1995. Future programmes will probably focus more on pre-service training and teacher resource centre programmes.