

## The ongoing story of SDP

A venerable programme still delivers quality results

Mary Seely

One of Gobabeb's annual projects, run in conjunction with the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia (DRFN), is the Summer Desertification Programme (SDP). A research methodology course, the objectives of the programme are to equip Namibian students and recent graduates with experience and training in integrated sustainable land management through applied research approaches, critical thinking and problem solving. In its 20 years of operation (3 years under the name Summer Land Care Programme), SDP participants have gone on to work in many prestigious areas, including Namibian NGOs, private consulting groups, and the Government of the Republic of Namibia.

### SDP 2011-2012

Three years later, the results of the SDP study of Prosopis invasion in the Stampriet Basin has been submitted to the Journal of the Namibian Scientific Society for publication later in 2014.

### SDP 2012-2013

During December 2012 and January 2013 seven participants of SDP 16 completed a comparative study of



Reading borehole levels in the Kuiseb River.

tree mortality in the Kuiseb and Swakop Rivers, focussing on Ana Trees (*Faidherbia albida*) and Camel Thorn (*Acacia erioloba*). In addition to vegetation counts and observations, participants interviewed stakeholders from uranium mining companies, the Uranium Institute, the Swakop River Farmer's Working Group, the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, the Topnaar community, and Gobabeb researchers. The purpose of the study was to promote sustainable resource management in the

lower Kuiseb and Swakop Rivers for all interested and affected stakeholders.

### SDP 2013-2014

The 17th Summer Desertification Programme (SDP 17) ran again this year over the summer holidays. Starting in late November 2013 with a week of lectures and talks in Windhoek, 11 students tackled the issues of water sources, wastewater, and solid waste management in the Greater Sossusvlei-Namib Landscape (GSNL) during the 2-month programme. December was dedicated to creating a questionnaire for lodge owners and managers that was then used during 10 days of fieldwork in the GSNL. After a brief hiatus over the holidays, students returned to Gobabeb to generate a management plan based on results from the study, which they presented in mid-January to stakeholders in the area. After feedback from stakeholders, the aim of the project changed from a management plan to strictly results. The programme officially concluded on 01 February 2014 with Information Day where the students gave an motivating role play set 20 years in the future. The role play explained the challenges encountered in the GSNL



Tertu presenting the results of the SDP study to visitors at Gobabeb Information Day.

because stakeholders did not prioritise water, wastewater, and solid waste management. Participants of SDP 17 presented at the annual general meeting for the GSNL Committee in late February and plan to give further presentations, such as to the Namibian Scientific Society in Windhoek.