

Sustainable Groundwater Management in SADC Member States

PROJECT BRIEF

Project Details

A regional project to build *Sustainable Groundwater Management in SADC Member States* is under preparation by the SADC Secretariat with the support of the World Bank. With the challenges of climate change, pollution and rapidly growing water demand in southern Africa, the project will aim to strengthen the management and development of groundwater for social and economic development. The project will support activities at regional, basin and national levels. There are over 30 shared aquifer systems identified across southern Africa and Member States often share similar groundwater challenges.

The project will implement priority actions in the work-programme for groundwater in the SADC Regional Strategic Action Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management (RSAPIII, 2011–2015). Institutional and technical capacity to implement national reforms will be strengthened; and cooperation on shared aquifers in the region will be facilitated as a result of the project (in alignment with the *Revised SADC Protocol on Shared Watercourses* of 2000 and river basin agreements across the region). To achieve these objectives, the project would consist of the following components:

- **Component A:** Operationalising the *SADC Groundwater Management Institute* (GMI) as a regional center of excellence hosted by the University of the Free State in South Africa on behalf of and under the strategic guidance of the SADC Water Division and the SADC Subcommittee on Hydrogeology (consisting of national representatives).

- **Component B:** Enhancing institutional capacity of governments in SADC Member States and transboundary organisations.
- **Component C:** Improving availability of and access to knowledge, scientific research and data on groundwater.
- **Component D:** Promoting infrastructure solutions for sustainable groundwater management.

The project will be financed by the World Bank through a proposed US\$9 million grant from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and US\$2.0 million from the multidonor trustfund, Cooperation on International Waters in Africa (CIWA).¹

¹The World Bank's engagement for the US\$2m grant was endorsed by the CIWA Advisory Committee, May 2013. Confirmed commitments are pending trustfund replenishment.



■ SADC Secretariat ■ SADC Groundwater Management Institute (Hosted by the University of the Free State)

Source: Transboundary aquifers delineation at the courtesy of IGRAC 2012



THE WORLD BANK

Regional Background

Groundwater is a fundamental resource for social, economic and environmental sustainability across the 15 Member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Human well-being, livelihoods, food security, ecosystems, natural habitats, industries and growing cities are directly reliant on groundwater.

It is estimated that the SADC Member States have 2,491m³/capita/year in renewable groundwater—higher than either Europe or Asia. Yet only 1.5% of groundwater is utilised. Access to and quality of groundwater directly affects the wellbeing of households and livestock, as well as productivity of subsistence farming (e.g., groundwater is the primary source of water for 70% of the 250m people in the region). Economic growth, in sectors ranging from commercial farming to mining to factories, is increasingly dependent on groundwater. However, groundwater issues are often not granted equal priority in national and international water management discourses. Overall, groundwater is not prominently featured in water legislation or policies in southern Africa. The resource is often excluded in water planning, and there is shortage of skills to monitor compliance with standards and abstraction.

The proposed project intends to build on previous and ongoing achievements related to groundwater management in the region. Prior efforts have included those which strengthen stewardship of existing groundwater resources, to those which utilise advanced technologies to collect and compile data on groundwater into centralised and accessible databases.

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Institutional Context

The project will be strategically managed by the SADC Secretariat's Water Division in Gaborone, Botswana. The SADC Groundwater Management Institute (GMI) and the project will be hosted by the University of the Free State (through its Institute for Groundwater Studies) on behalf of the SADC Secretariat.² Member States representatives will provide strategic guidance and be actively involved in project activities at regional and national levels. These representatives serve on the SADC Subcommittee on Hydrogeology (who also report to the SADC Water Resources Technical Committee).

The primary stakeholders in the project will include decision-makers and technical staff in government agencies at local, national and regional levels. The implementing agencies will also coordinate with a variety of parties, including other International Cooperating Partners (ICP) engaged in national and transboundary water management. By working through the

SADC structure and the GMI, the proposed project intends to create a platform for cooperation and information sharing in the region for the region.

In southern Africa, the World Bank provides financing to strengthen water resources management and transboundary cooperation in a number of SADC Member States and shared river basins. The proposed SADC groundwater project is aligned with the World Bank Strategy for Regional Integration as well as agreed priorities in Country Partnership Strategies and Country Water Resources Assistance Strategies.

²The University of the Free State was selected to set up and operationalise the GMI as part of *the SADC Groundwater and Drought Management Project* that was concluded in 2011 (also supported by the GEF).