

Aquifer project to tap underground water

By: Tumisang Tlhabiwe- The Voice Botswana

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The Protea Hotel, Mahikeng – South Africa, was last week the venue for a 5 day training workshop pertinent to the Ramotswa Aquifer and Aquifer Area trans-boundary ground water project.

The project, in essence, seeks to address water scarcity through the utilization of underground water sources and the training served to increase the aptitude of the Project team and its various stakeholders.

The training covered a wide spectrum of topics by seasoned experts of their respective fields but primarily prioritized; Airborne Electro Magnetic (AEM) methods, Geophysics methods, the mapping of environment and livelihood into the Information Management System, Institutional capacity self- assessment methodology and hydrological modeling.

Organized by the international Water Management Institute (IWMI) in conjunction with XRI-Blue and the International Groundwater Resource Assessment Centre

(IGRAC), the training also revealed the results of the helicopter conducted AEM survey that was done in February of this year.

Speaking at the workshop, XRI-Blue geophysicist – Andrew Genco, spoke of the challenges faced when conducting such a survey.

One such problem was gaining permission from the respective Civil Aviation Authorities to traverse borders as the Project is spread across both South Africa and Botswana but was also quick to stress that assistance was offered readily.



TRAINING: Andrew Genco conducts the workshop

In addition he was pleased with the accurate results that the survey yielded as a consequence of minimal infrastructure which resulted in easily decipherable uncompromised readings.

Much commentary has been attributed to the severe drought – induced by El Nino, which currently plagues the entirety of the Southern African region.

The drought, the most acute in twenty years, has markedly reduced accessible water, triggering a chain reaction of adverse effects.

These effects are namely; a reduction of grazing plains – subsequently diminishing livestock production, a decrease in crop yield – subsequently exacerbating malnutrition within the region and an inability to access drinking water especially in remote areas.

It is thus not surprising to witness institutions from different countries mobilize to address the issues surrounding water scarcity.

The training was supported by the likes of; The University of Botswana, University of the Free State, University of the Witwatersrand, IWMI, IGRAC, XRI-Blue, USAID and a host of others.

Although, not the most extensive source of water, groundwater is still a vital resource for domestic, environmental and agricultural purposes especially in arid and semi-arid areas and is instrumental in diversifying water sources.

It is thus imperative for initiatives like this to enjoy continued support.