



USAID | SOUTHERN AFRICA

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Environment Program Highlights

Integrating Democratic Governance and Natural Resource Management

Africa is rich in natural resources, including: precious minerals, agricultural land, water, fisheries and forests. Yet, Africa continues to suffer from incidences of extreme poverty, deepening inequality and underdevelopment.

Recognizing that a thriving extractives industries sector can contribute to economic development, alleviation of poverty and an improved standard and quality of life throughout the region, USAID also recognizes the need for a strong human rights approach to natural resource governance that is transparent and holds governments accountable.

USAID Southern Africa's Democracy, Human Right and Governance (DRG) team is providing support to the Legal Resources Center (LRC) in South Africa to increase awareness and engagement of communities' customary rights to natural resources on a regional level including legal practitioners, government officials and social movements through the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR). This includes the development of African jurisprudence on customary law as a source of law and increasing the understanding of local communities' rights to natural resources. Complementing this work, from March 9-13, 2015, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) Lawyer's Association (SADC LA) hosted training in Johannesburg, South Africa for twenty five lawyers from across the SADC region on natural resource governance. As a result, lawyers who participated in the workshop continue to report multiple contributions to natural resource governance in their home countries.

Managing Groundwater Across Borders

Water is essential for biodiversity conservation, resilience of ecosystems, economic development, population health, welfare and security in Southern Africa. Managing water resources to balance these demands is challenging enough, but when you add growing populations, increasing impacts of climate change and the international politics when the water system crosses international borders you often end up with inaction.

USAID Southern Africa has focused on these transboundary water resources for several years in the Okavango, Limpopo and Orange/Senqu river basins. Collectively these basins include Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe, all members of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). As a result of years of investment by USAID, the Southern Africa Environment Team was approached to lead the development of one of the first transboundary aquifer management projects in Southern Africa.

According to the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), there are 592 transboundary aquifers identified worldwide, 70 of which are in Africa, but only 5 aquifers have legal management arrangements between the countries that share the resource, and none of these are in the SADC region.

The lack of a shared management agreement, however, hasn't slowed the withdrawal and use of groundwater for agriculture, industry and personal use.

The Ramotswa aquifer is one of the most important shared aquifers in the Limpopo River Basin - it bisects the border of South Africa and Botswana, including Gaborone, the capital of Botswana and home to over one million people.

To address the challenges inherent in managing an aquifer, about which very little is known, USAID/Southern Africa and the Global Development Lab, along with the USAID funded Resilience in the Limpopo River (RESILIM) project, IWMI, the University of the Witwatersrand, U.S. Geological Survey, and partners from the governments of South Africa and Botswana have come together to develop a program to map the Ramotswa aquifer, develop a shared management plan, build the capacity of resource managers on both sides of the border, and develop low-water agriculture solutions.

The three-year Ramotswa project will advance the science of groundwater management in Southern Africa through a Partnership for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) project with the USGS and Wits University, and the placement of a Research and Innovation Fellow from one of the Lab's partnering U.S. universities. This PEER award will be funded by the South Africa Department of Science and Technology and the Lab, making it the first ever PEER award to be co-funded by a host government.



Interesting Links

Publications from Seychelles Coral Reef Project:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2989/1814232X.2015.1078259>

<https://peerj.com/articles/1287/>