SUSTAINABLE WATER PARTNERSHIP IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The USAID-funded Sustainable Water Partnership (SWP) develops and implements participatory water resource management to strengthen water security, which is essential to improving public health and livelihoods, alleviating poverty and supporting economic growth as well as political stability.

BIG DATA AND TRANSBOUNDARY WATER COLLABORATION IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

In the spring of 2018, SWP started facilitating a partnership process involving USAID along with the South African Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Water Research Commission of South Africa, the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and the United States Geological Survey (USGS). This partnership is meant to support research teams comprised of domain experts and data scientists in addressing key research questions related to the management of water resources that are shared by two or more Southern African countries, with a particular interest on the interaction between groundwater and surface water. This process will involve supporting four research projects, providing training opportunities in big data, and providing opportunities for experts to network and work together.

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The collaboration primarily supports Southern African researchers and students: developing their skills, building their capacity and providing them with valuable networking opportunities. Long-term, the activity aims to establish a Community of Practice (CoP) whose objectives are to find new ways to understand, manage, and collaborate around transboundary groundwater resources in Southern Africa. But what sets this activity apart from others of its kind is the utilization of big data analytics to inform policy and decision-making for the cooperative use of transboundary water sources.

EXPECTED RESULTS

The goals of these activities are to:

- Enhance current understanding of shared groundwater resources;

- Improve transboundary ground water management and collaboration; and

- Provide big data skills development, capacity building and networking opportunities for Southern African researchers and their students.

INTERMEDIATE RESULTS

The collaboration will support four research teams of domain experts and data scientists who will define and research the key questions surrounding transboundary water management in Southern Africa. The collaboration has reviewed the proposals for four research teams, each with a slightly different angle on transboundary water and data collection. In the past six months, the coordinator has structured the collaborative process to:

- Ensure the signing of the various MOUs and other collaboration documents;

- Finalize the drafting of the four calls for applications;

- Launch these calls and receive applications; and

- Initiate the application review process.