

Addressing water-related data scarcity in Sub-Saharan Africa

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Efficient and systematic monitoring strategies and systems providing reliable data form the base for successful water management. Therefore, several regional/global initiatives have been launched to provide basic water-related data (e.g. GRDC, AQUASTAT, IWMI WaterDataPortal). At the same time, it is increasingly acknowledged that an integrated water management approach must include both water quantity (all compartments and phases) and water quality aspects, taking inter-related resources such as soil and waste into account. The Global Water Portal and the Freshwater Information Platform are recent examples that point into this direction.

The availability of reliable data, provided by field and monitoring stations, differs strongly among regions. Sub-Saharan Africa in particular suffers - despite all efforts - from data scarcity; at the same time this region faces immense challenges in the water sector. Addressing this paucity of data requires concerted action including strengthening of “classical” monitoring programmes based on field stations and sampling. This backbone of environmental monitoring can - for specific applications - be supplemented by remote sensing technologies, Citizen Science and crowdsourced data.

Each of the mentioned items in itself is complex and has specific challenges. Concerning the backbone, this relates e.g. to opportunities of multipurpose meteorological networks, requiring coordination between sectors and across borders. Concerning supplementary data it relates to the identification of suitable applications and developing tools and methods for data integration and analysis.

The workshop aims at:

1. providing current examples of projects and initiatives addressing data scarcity in SSA;
2. discussing potentials and limitations of available water-related data infrastructure;
3. identifying needs and opportunities for R/D projects in SSA addressing water-related data scarcity and define priority areas (scientifically and geographically);
4. developing a roadmap for further action.

Concept of the workshop

The workshop (120 min) will start with brief introductory statements (max 10 min each) of co-convening organization. This introductory part will focus on different aspects of water-related information in SSA and provide an overview/update of existing data platforms and monitoring programmes followed by an extensive discussion leading to clear action items for future research activities.

Assuring (a) contribution(s) from SSA is essential, participation of a representative of IWMI Africa is ensured.