



AMCOW GLOBAL WEBINAR

THE ROLE OF GROUNDWATER IN AFRICA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An AMCOW Quarterly Learning Paper

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A report by AMCOW Knowledge Management & Information Sharing Unit

Introduction

On Thursday, the 20th of May 2021, AMCOW organized its first series of the global webinar on Groundwater. The webinar, titled “The Role of Groundwater in Advancing Africa’s Socio-Economic Development” prioritises groundwater as a key factor for economic development.

So much on the subject of sustainable groundwater management was canvassed. The webinar demystified the invisible asset that is groundwater. Among the speakers included leading scientists, researchers, governance experts, and financiers who all pointed out several known and unknown areas that can be summarized in the following five-point significant outcome:



Africa's Promise

Groundwater holds Africa's promise to water security and resilience in the face of rising and competing for water demands and climate change threats. Groundwater could exponentially change the continent's socio-economic narrative if effectively and sustainably managed. For instance, intra African trade is presently at about 20 per cent, and Africa is predominantly an agri-based economy that depends on water resources in many ways. Groundwater could therefore contribute to improved intra-continental trade through increased food production, which forms the bulk of this trade segment. Other areas where groundwater can contribute significantly include job creation for the youthful population, improving WASH services, and spur industrialization.

Governance

An enabling environment is critical in ensuring that groundwater finds a comfortable space to augment surface water in supporting national and regional development needs. Dynamic policy instruments are therefore needed to support this goal at various levels and in achieving equitable access and sustainable management of groundwater resources.

Role of Science & Innovation

Science and innovation have the answer to sustainable groundwater management, especially in the face of climate change and environmental threats arising from return flows and infiltration. Innovative approaches relevant to local climatic and environmental challenges are therefore needed for Africa to seize the opportunity presented by groundwater. Furthermore, a science-driven and innovative approach in respect of the development and utilization of groundwater resources will also engender sustainable management of this vital resource in Africa.

Financing

Longer-term, innovative financing options are needed to advance the groundwater development agenda. But this needs to be premised on sound

scientific data and in a way that points the continent to reliable groundwater use as opposed to the perennial pilot to pilot studies and exploration as is the present case. Building a menu of scientific tools -data, approaches, skills, among others- and a mix of governance options designed to fit individual circumstances at national and regional contexts is necessary in establishing a more substantial business case for groundwater financing in Africa.

Coordination and Leadership to Unlock Potential

Groundwater remains a grey area in many ways. AMCOW's convening mandate is central to Africa's groundwater agenda. There is, therefore, the need for the APAGroP to strengthen its coordination role and offer thought leadership in developing the continent's groundwater resources. Furthermore, the actual economic and social value of groundwater remains untapped in most African countries. The APAGroP should thus lead the continent in putting in place the building blocks -structures, systems and processes - necessary for groundwater development across national and regional scales, including transboundary aquifers.

Objectives of the webinar is to raise the voices and enlighten relevant stakeholders about:



The significance of groundwater and its values in terms of social, cultural, economic, and environmental dimensions,



The need to ensure its sustainable development for the benefits of livelihoods in Africa, and;



The need for the relevant decision-makers to take cognizance of the vital roles of groundwater in IWRM and Transboundary Aquifer Management.

Name	Bio	Topic Presented
Osward Chanda	Acting Director for Agriculture, Human, Social and Water Development; African Development Bank – 15 mins	Keynote Address 1: Unlocking the Potential of groundwater for human and economic development of Africa:
Erwin De Nys	Program Manager -Cooperation in International Waters in Africa (CIWA); World Bank – 15 mins	Keynote Address 2: Investor Risk Analysis and Strategies for attracting Donor financing for Groundwater Infrastructures in Africa:
Prof. Cheikh Gaye	(Membre de l'Académie Nationale des Sciences et Techniques du Sénégal, 61, Boulevard Djily MBAYE, Dakar, Sénégal) – 10 mins	Presentation 1: How much do we know of African Groundwater Resources?
Eng. James Saraumba,	Executive Director, SADC-Groundwater Management Institute (SADC-GMI) – 10 mins	Presentation 2: Key bottlenecks to Groundwater use for food security and socio-economic development of Africa.

Panel Discussion and Q&A Session on Actions Required and Way Forward - 45 mins) Moderated by Rennie Munyai and Kitch Bawa

Name	Topic Presented
Callist Tindimugaya –	Commissioner for Water Resources Planning & Regulation, Republic of Uganda
George Krhoda; Member	African Groundwater Commission (AGC)
Astrid Hillers:	Practice Lead -International Waters in Africa and Asia; Global Environment Facility (GEF)



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ET TECHNIQUES DU SÉNÉGAL
ANSTS

Composition of the webinar

The webinar was coordinated and facilitated by AMCOW's staff, including:

1. The Director of Programmes, Dr. Paul Orengho,
2. The Groundwater Desk Officer, Moshood Tijani,
3. The Communications and Visibility Manager, Maïmouna Tall, and
4. The Sanitation Project Manager, Kitchenme Bawa.

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