

8TH SADC GROUNDWATER CONFERENCE

Theme: Shared Aquifers, Equal Voices: Accelerating Groundwater Resilience for a Water-Secure Future

Date: 18 - 20 November 2026

Location: Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania

Venue: TBC



GROUNDWATER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

CONTACT DETAILS:

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INVITATION TO SUBMIT ABSTRACTS

We invite you to submit oral and poster abstracts for the upcoming 8th annual Southern African Development Community (SADC) groundwater conference hosted by the SADC Groundwater Management Institute (SADC-GMI). The conference is held annually, providing a platform for advancing knowledge sharing on sustainable groundwater management at national and transboundary levels across the SADC Member States.

The conference will be held from Wednesday, 18 November 2026, to Friday, 20 November 2026. When submitting an abstract, please note that we plan to hold this event in person. We seek cutting-edge best practice presentations addressing the theme and sub-themes below. However, all presentation topics that advance our understanding of groundwater are welcome.

Please direct all enquiries to conference@sadc-gmi.org.



BACKGROUND

Throughout the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region and beyond, groundwater is an unobtrusive yet fundamental resource underpinning communities and economies. It supplies towns and cities, meets rural water needs, supports irrigation and food production, enables industry, and provides a critical buffer during droughts and climate variability. Yet because it is largely out of sight, groundwater is often undervalued and poorly governed, even where aquifers are shared across national borders.

The theme “**Shared Aquifers, Equal Voices**” speaks to the reality that groundwater flows through interconnected systems, yet decisions about its use are often fragmented across mandates, sectors, and borders. Excessive abstraction in one area can reduce supplies elsewhere; large-scale agricultural and industrial demands can outcompete domestic needs; and scientific evidence and monitoring data do not always translate into policy and practice. In too many contexts, those who depend most directly on groundwater—farmers and local water users, women and youth, Indigenous peoples, and marginalised communities—remain under-represented in planning, monitoring, and enforcement. As a result, the costs of mismanagement are not shared equally, and resilience is weakened for everyone.

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Enhancing resilience requires collective stewardship: moving from unilateral extraction to shared governance frameworks, from hydro-nationalism to cooperation, and from expert-only solutions to collaboratively co-designed approaches grounded in local contexts.

The conference is founded on a straightforward premise: safeguarding groundwater is a shared responsibility, and resilient outcomes depend on inclusive decision-making. Accelerating groundwater resilience, therefore, means pairing technical solutions with participatory, transparent, and adaptive governance—supported by shared data, coordinated monitoring, and sustained dialogue across borders and sectors. It requires a shift from unilateral extraction to joint stewardship, from hydro-nationalism to cooperation, and from expert-only solutions to approaches co-designed with the people and institutions that live with the consequences. It also recognises that “sustainable yield” is not only a hydrogeological calculation, but a social agreement about priorities, rights, and accountability in shared aquifers.



PROPOSED SUB-THEMES

The proposed sub-themes translate the conference theme—“**Shared Aquifers, Equal Voices: Accelerating Groundwater Resilience for a Water-Secure Future**”—into focused areas for dialogue and research. Together, they examine how inclusive governance can be advanced in practice (who participates and who benefits), how shared evidence and innovation can strengthen cooperation across borders (how we monitor, model, and decide), and how priority groundwater uses such as irrigation can be managed to build climate resilience without compromising aquifer sustainability.

SUB-THEME 1: BEYOND THE BOREHOLE: GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE APPROACHES TO WATER SECURITY

“**Beyond the Borehole**” recognises that infrastructure is essential, but it does not guarantee water security. A borehole may deliver access, yet social norms, institutional barriers, and power relations still shape who benefits from shared aquifers. This sub-theme advances the conference call for “equal voices” by focusing on what inclusion requires in practice: gender-transformative approaches, accessible participation pathways, and attention to intersecting inequalities. It invites contributions that examine how gender, age, disability, livelihoods, and location influence groundwater use, decision-making, and outcomes. The role of traditional leaders and customary governance systems in enabling or blocking equitable water access. Practical approaches to engaging men and boys as allies in shifting harmful norms around water collection, decision-making, and resource control.

Papers may address governance reforms, community engagement, financing and service delivery models, safeguarding, and monitoring approaches that make equity measurable. The aim is to move from participation as presence to participation as influence, strengthening resilience for all.

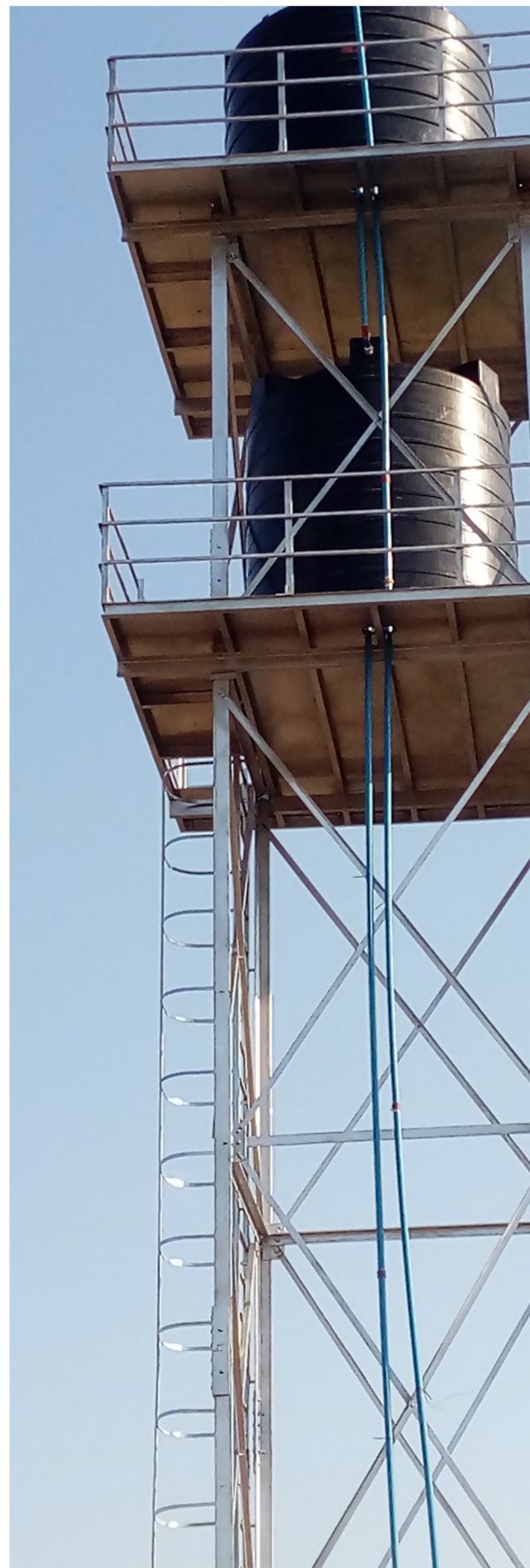


SUB-THEME 2: TECHNOLOGY, TOOLS, AND TRANSBOUNDARY TRUST: INNOVATING FOR SHARED SECURITY

This sub-theme explores how technology can be designed and governed to build trust among the many actors who share a transboundary aquifer. It connects to “**equal voices**” by asking who can generate, access, interpret, and challenge groundwater information. Tools such as remote sensing, open data platforms, and joint monitoring can reduce information asymmetry and create a shared evidence base for cooperation. At the same time, opaque “black box” models, one-sided data collection, or poorly communicated uncertainty can undermine legitimacy and trigger suspicion. Contributions are invited on participatory monitoring, data standards, model transparency, capacity building, and governance arrangements that turn technical collaboration into durable cooperation. The goal is innovation that supports dialogue, accountability, and shared security.

SUB-THEME 3: IRRIGATION FOR ADAPTATION: CLIMATE-SMART AGRICULTURE AND GROUNDWATER GOVERNANCE

This sub-theme focuses on the tight link between climate adaptation in agriculture and the sustainability of the groundwater that enables irrigation. It addresses a central tension: expanding irrigation can reduce climate risk for farmers, yet uncontrolled pumping can erode aquifer resilience over time. In line with “**equal voices**,” it examines how power differences shape who irrigates, who decides, and who bears the costs—between large and small producers, tenants and owners, and present and future generations. Contributions are invited on governance and incentive design, extension and subsidy models that reach smallholders, demand management, conjunctive use, and approaches that integrate climate-smart practices with aquifer protection. The emphasis is on solutions that strengthen food security while maintaining the sustainability of shared aquifers.



The conference modalities will include high-level plenary sessions focusing on the theme and sub-themes, technical presentations, and panel discussions led by the partners of the SADC-GMI. Partners and Stakeholders wishing to run special sessions and panel discussions under the sponsorship program must submit an expression of interest by **30 June 2026** and a programme in line with the conference's theme by **30 September 2026**.

Authors are invited to submit abstracts for both oral and poster presentations for the sub-themes outlined above. Authors are requested to indicate the sub-theme for which they are making submissions.

Deadline: 30 June 2026

ABSTRACT SPECIFICATIONS

The conference uses the EasyChair conference platform for abstract submissions. We request authors to:

- Have a short title (concise and informative) that adequately captures the scope of the presentation.
- Authors are discouraged from using excessively long titles
- Be written in English, French or Portuguese
- Indicate the authors of the abstract and their affiliations with the corresponding author, clearly marked and contact details provided
- Provide the main results, the main conclusion, statement of the problem, objectives, methods, and results
- Avoid using abbreviations
- Be a maximum of **200 words**
- Provide keywords for the abstract (up to 5)

Abstracts will be peer-reviewed by the Technical Committee, which comprises representatives from universities, international institutions, and national governments.



SUBMISSION OF ABSTRACTS

The Technical Committee reserves the right to reject or accept an abstract. By submitting an abstract, the authors commit to having the presenting author register before **30 August 2026**.

[CLICK HERE TO SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT](#)

IMPORTANT DATES

Submission of Expressions of Interest for the Sponsorship program: **30 June 2026**

Submission deadline for abstracts: **30 June 2026**

Notification of abstract acceptance: **15 August 2026**

Confirmation by authors and presenting authors' registration: **30 August 2026**

Final Program: **31 October 2026**

Conference run: **18, 19 and 20 November 2026**

REGISTRATION COSTS

Early bird conference registration: closes 15 September 2026

Physical conference attendance: **\$250.**

Late conference registration: opens 16 September 2026

Physical conference attendance: **\$300.**

Young professionals/ Students (Below 35 years old) **\$100.**

[REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE](#)

PAYMENT DETAILS

Account name: SADC-GMI

Bank: ABSA

Account Number: 4107554267

Branch Code: 632005

SWIFT Code: ABSAZAJJ

Send proof of payment to monica@sadc-gmi.org after you make your payment.



ORAL AND POSTER PRESENTATIONS GUIDELINES

- Presenters are allocated 10 minutes to deliver their presentation and 5 minutes for a Q&A.
- The presentation file should ideally contain approximately 10-12 PowerPoint slides based on the time allocated for the presentation. You are responsible for the content of your presentation. A PowerPoint template will be provided.
- All presenters, including **Keynote Speakers**, **Invited Talk**, and **Sub-Theme Presenters**, must submit their presentation file to the operator of each presentation on a **memory stick** during registration on the first day of the conference or at least 30 minutes before the session starts. It is not possible to use your computer for your presentation.
- Suppose your presentation contains links to video files. You must bring not only your PowerPoint file but also your video files to the operator. All videos linked to PowerPoint slides must be checked to ensure they function properly.

Please note that each presenter is given a maximum of 1 podium presentation per meeting. If a presenter has multiple abstracts deemed acceptable for a meeting, the presenter must either (1) decline all but 1 podium presentation or (2) make arrangements for a co-author to present the abstract.






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