

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the progress of the one-year Water Research Commission (WRC)-funded Consultancy K8/937/1, awarded to the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) during 2010-2011. This Consultancy project entitled, *Incentivising Young Social Science Perspectives in the SADC Water Sector: Building a Forum for Young Scholars in Transboundary Water Governance*, aimed to establish and build collaborative linkages and partnerships between key institutions and networks in order to create an active community of young scholars interested in transdisciplinary research collaboration and information exchange on the topic of transboundary water governance. The YSF project therefore focussed its attention on Southern African water issues and their governance implications around specific themes, with the explicit goal of producing an agenda for future research. This report examines the degree to which it achieved these objectives.

Firstly, this report outlines the project's main research questions as perceived by young professionals in the water sector. This is articulated as the main challenges facing the water sector in Southern Africa in a period of emerging global change. Traditionally, technical and scientific communities have been called on to produce the responses and solutions to previous sectoral challenges. However, new and emerging challenges and complexities, such as climate change, eutrophication, acid mine drainage, skills flight and social inequality, are demanding more integrated levels of ingenuity and expertise from a diverse set of disciplines. Given this realisation, there is growing recognition of the need for more transdisciplinary responses to the challenges facing the water sector. But there are still very few social scientists working on water issues, there are few truly transdisciplinary research initiatives being pursued, and the challenge of creating the space for scientists, government officials and other stakeholders to work together around common areas of concern, remains difficult. Additionally, young social scientists are often unaware of how their skills can be applied, and indeed, are needed in the sector. The K8/937/1 Consultancy was therefore developed by several young water professionals who sought to address these challenges by establishing a forum for young professionals to grapple with these issues and come up with solutions of their own.

This report makes a case for transdisciplinarity, not only as a supra-discipline, but also as a methodology and a way of thinking and seeing the world, and one that is particularly conducive to the mindset and generational characteristics of a younger generation of water professionals, who are more comfortable working in a multi-, or even trans-disciplinary environment.

In making this case, the report provides an overview of the Young Scholars Forum (YSF) in Transboundary Water Governance, summarises main events organised within its ambit, and documents primary outputs. Additionally it highlights two of the project's main components: capacity building and the development of collaborative partnerships, both of which included multifaceted ways in which to pursue the dual objective of incentivising transdisciplinarity as well as building the capacity of young professionals in the sector. The report concludes with a description of the way forward in terms of the sustainability of the forum beyond the Consultancy's one-year funding cycle, and presents a plan for continued and mutually-beneficial collaboration with the Southern African Young Water Professionals (SA YWP).