

UNAM Southern Campus Champions Regional Collaboration at 6th SADC Groundwater Conference in Lesotho

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A 1,200-kilometer journey from Namibia's southern region to the vibrant city of Maseru, Lesotho, marked a significant milestone for the University of Namibia's (UNAM) Southern Campus.

The Geosciences Department proudly represented UNAM at the 6th SADC Groundwater Conference from 13 – 15 November 2024.



Geoscience Department staff and students at the 2024 SADC GMI Conference in Maseru, Lesotho.
FLTR: Dr. J. Hamutoko, Ms. S. Kakoro, Mr. R. Mwateuvi, Dr. I. Muchingami, Mr. M. Shipanga, Ms. L. Wanailonga, Mr. S. Ashili, Ms. T. Angula, Mr. M. Johannes, and Ms H. Stuurmann.

Organised by the SADC Groundwater Management Institute (SADC-GMI), the conference revolved around the theme, *"Promoting peace across borders through conjunctive water management."*

Under the leadership of Dr. Josefina Hamutoko, Dr. Innocent Muchingami and Ms Hatago Stuurmann, a dedicated team of staff and students, including undergraduate and PhD candidates, travelled from Keetmanshoop to Maseru.

The journey, funded through the *Enhancing Sustainable Groundwater Use in Arid Southern Namibia* and the *Groundwater Grey Literature* projects supported by SADC-GMI, was as much an adventure as it was an academic milestone.

Reflecting on the conference's significance, Dr. Josefina Hamutoko, Senior Lecturer in Geosciences, stated, *"This event was not just about sharing research, it was about building relationships across borders. Groundwater is a shared resource, it does not know geographical borders, and how we manage it, has profound implications for peace and stability in the region. Winning the award for Outstanding Capacity-Building shows the strides UNAM is making in this critical field."*



Dr Hamutoko receiving the award for outstanding Capacity Building during the 2024 SADC-GMI Conference.

The team delivered nine oral and two poster presentations under sub-themes such as utilising advanced technologies, harnessing data for adaptive water management, and establishing innovative governance structures.

Their research highlighted cutting-edge applications like hydro-geophysical methods, isotope hydrology, and citizen science in water resource management, with case studies from Namibia's Orange-Fish, Cuvelai-Etoshia, Kavango, and Kunene Regions.

Dr. Innocent Muchingami, also a Senior Lecturer in Geosciences, joined a team of groundwater specialists from across Africa in the UNESCO special session to discuss innovative solutions that empower communities to sustainably use and manage their groundwater resources under a changing climate.

Dr. Muchingami remarked, *"Water scarcity and groundwater governance are among the SADC region's top challenges. By presenting research-based practical solutions, we aim to contribute to sustainable water management practices that encourage communities to build climate resilience and foster regional collaboration and peace."*



The team that attended the SADC GMI Conference 2024, at Maseru Bridge International Border Post (Lesotho).

The conference also offered students a rare opportunity for exposure and growth. For Ms. Sussana Kakoro, an undergraduate student on the trip, the journey was transformative: *"Driving across Southern Africa to attend an international conference was an eye-opener. The learning, the networking, and the chance to see our professors present ground-breaking research inspired me to dream bigger. It reminded me that UNAM students can truly compete on the global stage."*

The SADC Groundwater Conference provided a platform for academics, policymakers, and stakeholders to address pressing issues such as water scarcity, climate adaptation, and governance challenges. As Southern Campus's participation demonstrates, UNAM is at the forefront of these critical discussions.

The Southern Campus's involvement stresses its role not only as an academic institution but also as a contributor to international dialogue, research, and innovation. With continued support for such initiatives, the University of Namibia is cementing its place as a leader in advancing regional cooperation and sustainable development.