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African Water Facility Promotes Multiple Use Water Services to Increase Access to Water of Rural and Peri-urban Communities in South Africa

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The African Water Facility (AWF) offered on August 20, 2014 a €1.3 million grant to the Water Research Commission of the Republic of South Africa to improve water delivery services, an initiative that will be supported and driven by the beneficiary communities of Limpopo province. Over 20,000 people are expected to get improved access to water for domestic and agriculture purposes, among others.

The project proposes to implement the holistic Multiple Use Services (MUS) approach to overcome water challenges faced by many South African households. Most rural and peri-urban communities in South Africa rely on ill-suited, single-use water services to sustain a variety of activities such as small-scale agriculture, household chores and cooking.

On the contrary, the MUS is a low-cost water service approach proposing systems that take into account people's multiple water needs as a starting point of planning, which leads to designs that can provide water services for a variety of uses all at once.

"The unreliability and unpredictability of access to water in Limpopo province, which is aggravated by climate change and population growth, poses tremendous water challenges to the most vulnerable communities," explained Akissa Bahri, Coordinator of the African Water Facility. "This project will not only bring much needed multiple-use water services for rural and peri-urban communities in the region, but create local knowledge of the MUS approach and of best practices in providing water services in line with the principles of Integrated Water Resources Management." The infrastructure to be built will include wells and boreholes, rainwater harvesting structures and water treatment technologies and will be used to demonstrate, establish local evidence of the value of the multi-use approach, and develop models for future up-scaling throughout South Africa. In addition, the project is expected to strengthen capacities for water planning and development within communities, local governments and other stakeholders in the region.

The estimated total cost of the project is €1.7 million, of which the AWF will finance € 1.3 million (77%). A part of the AWF support will go into disseminating knowledge on MUS approaches and in supporting resources mobilization activities to attract downstream investments through the preparation of development plans. The AWF will also support activities meant to raise awareness, and for research and study.

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