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Understanding and communication on groundwater — education and public involvement

title: **Groundwater education: One drop plus one drop equals self management**

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Groundwater scientists around the world have done some groundbreaking research over the past four decades. Each day we are improving our understanding complex issues like fractured rock aquifer hydraulics, contaminant transport and long-term planning. But somehow we are still struggling to engage all role-players and align environmental policies to ultimately manage groundwater resources optimally. The key to this? Products and tools to facilitate groundwater education and public involvement.

Groundwater education products and tools can manifest as many things: written media, a populated website, interactive discussions and games, as well as the visual and audio media through television inserts and radio interviews. We need to make sure that any specific media chosen has to adhere to basic criteria for optimal audience impact. These criteria include 1) contextualisation of information for the target audience; 2) identifying and designing a combination of the most appropriate communication media; and 3) highlighting of knowledge benefit to the target audience. Going hand in hand with these criteria, is the design of the minimum factual information needed to successfully convey the science message.

To address this challenge, the Water Research Commission of South Africa has started a range of projects. This includes the publication of a book on groundwater that focuses on easy-reading for the general public, from scholars to farmers and water management decision makers. Many more communication media will be utilised in more projects, but the book forms the first important stepping stone to fill an important knowledge gap.



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