



EU-AU-IIASA Evidence and Policy Event

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Thobekile Zikhali
African Scientist



Biography

•Thobekile Zikhali is a Researcher in the Democracy, Governance and Service Delivery (DGSD) Programme at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in Pretoria, South Africa. She is also a PhD Candidate in the Department of Political Studies at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), South Africa. Her research interests broadly include theoretical and empirical research that falls at the intersection of governance, environment and public service delivery in Africa. This includes natural resource management, international environmental politics, transboundary water governance, climate change, poverty and inequality as well as sustainability. Thobekile sits at the HSRC Research Ethics Committee and has independent research experience in South Africa, Belgium, Botswana and Zimbabwe. She has attended short research training courses in the United States of America, Germany, China, Norway, Ethiopia, Zambia, Kenya and South Africa. She is a Social Science Research Council (SSRC) Next Generation in Africa Research Fellow. Thobekile holds a Master's degree in Political Science with a specialisation in International Relations and Transnational Governance; and a sub major in Environmental Governance from the VU University Amsterdam, Netherlands.

My Research

•At HSRC, I belong to a multidisciplinary team that conducts evidence based research and assists policy makers in making informed choices and decisions in response to South Africa and Africa's development challenges. DGSD contributes to national, regional and international debates on issues related to democracy, development, justice, governance and service delivery. This includes research on poverty and inequality, social justice, culture, national identity, social cohesion as well as women and gender in a democratic South Africa.

•My PhD work broadly focuses on Transboundary Water Governance in Southern Africa. In a water-scarce sub-region, a river basin shared by many states presents multifarious socio-political and international relations challenges. Such challenges become accentuated where there are glaring economic and power differentials among the affected riparian countries. This is the situation with the Incomati River Basin, which South Africa shares with Mozambique and Swaziland and the background against which this study is undertaken. The thesis's goal is to demonstrate how socio-political relations constructed around water at a transfrontier level – in this case the Incomati River Basin - intersect with (sub) regional peace and stability.

Policy & Science Interface

•A true conservationist is a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children. This quotation by John James Audubon motivates and puts emphasis on sustainable development. To me, our environment is connected to us in such a way that our actions have direct influence on how our natural resources develop. This calls for coordination at all levels of society and speaks largely to the science-policy interface. Every country's drinking water supply, food production, energy supply, industrial development hinge on water availability. This makes water a vital strategic resource for all economies, yet efforts to coordinate the relationship between water resources; food production and energy security are often not successful, particularly in developing countries. In Southern Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) through its Water Dialogues deliberates on how best to raise awareness of the nexus and encourage its implementation. While this is a good initiative, the platform has largely been open to policy makers. In the future, more comprehensive solutions could be achieved with the inclusion of scientific aspects as well as indigenous knowledge in the dialogues.

