

***Interactive comment on* “Establishment of a catchment monitoring network through a participatory approach in a small rural catchment in South Africa” by V. M. Kongo et al.**

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I have read the paper with interest - the paper is a well written account of the authors' experiences in setting up a catchment monitoring network in rural South Africa. I agree with the two reviewers that the paper addresses an important fact of life in many developing societies.

My principal concern (same as the two reviewers) is whether the manuscript makes a useful contribution to the literature. The paper goes into much detail about what they did and what instrumentation they employed, but it does not say much about what the

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authors learned!

1) what lessons did they learn from their experiences, especially with respect to the participatory approach?

2) What benefits did accrue to the community that lives within and near the catchment in return for their contribution to the project? Could they quantify the improvement in understanding of the hydrology of the catchment, the ability to make better predictions, towards sustainable management? Does the community have an appreciation for what they are getting in return for their involvement? Clearly, to be sustainable, the community must surely see some dividends for their participation.

3) From the description of the monitoring network I had the impression that this was well thought out, but then it will also be expensive to install and maintain this. Would the authors say that this is the minimum instrumentation they would need to understand the hydrology of the place? How much more do they know compared to what they knew in advance? How do they intend to communicate these advances to the community?

They can take the story in many different directions - they just have to decide what their story is and then the discussion can revolve around this story. As it is, the title talks about participatory approach, the text focuses much more on the technical details: the gap between these two aspects must be bridged.

The bottom line - there must be something original and educational for the reader (say from another part of the world, who is trying to do the same), if this is to be published in HESS as a journal article. What lessons can be drawn from the authors' study for their situation? Some kind of organizing principles can be extracted (hopefully) from their study as recommendations for similar efforts elsewhere. I challenge the authors to respond to these questions. I recommend major revision, and look forward to receiving a revised manuscript in due course.

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