

risk and vulnerability atlas

A bridge was created to transfer cutting-edge research on climate change from researchers to decision makers in our country.

The intention of the South African Risk and Vulnerability Atlas (SARVA) is to do just that. A landmark workshop was held to determine the information requirements of users in the government sector. The aim is for researchers and potential users to walk hand in hand from the start so that the Atlas meets user requirements.

As an introduction to the workshop, six case studies were presented by global change researchers to illustrate practically how the Atlas could be used in decision making. The ensuing discussion identified gaps in existing climate change research.

The Atlas will co-ordinate research, identify gaps, and be a one-stop shop for relevant climate change findings. As a living platform, new information will become available as it is added to the body of knowledge.

Keeping decision-makers informed. The Atlas will equip decisionmakers with information on the impact and risk associated with climate change in the region. It will provide easily understood climate change sensitivity and vulnerability information at regional, national, provincial and municipal levels. It will also support national initiatives such as the National Disaster Management Framework.

The Atlas will provide an electronic geographical information system. South African researchers from various disciplines will continuously update new data related to aspects such as groundwater, surface water, forests, biodiversity, human health, crops, demographics, economics and social dimensions.

Participants at the workshop suggested that the Atlas should also provide a platform where environmental impact assessments can be shared. This will allow lesser-resourced municipalities access to this information and will drive down costs.

The SARVA project is sponsored by the Department of Science and Technology and is managed by the CSIR, with key inputs from South African institutions and research groups. It will be launched in January 2010 in electronic and hard-copy versions.

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