

# Voyage of groundwater discovery

The first 'Professional Management of Water Well Drilling Projects and Programmes' online course, provided by Unicef, Skat Foundation and Cap-Net kicked off in early March 2018

**R**unning over six weeks, the new online course provides participants with an overview of what is required to improve borehole drilling professionalism in the countries in which they work.

Requiring about six hours of investment per week, plus an additional four for the final assignment, it provides a 40-hour training opportunity for people from all over the world – and they can take part without leaving their home or workplace.

The application process was open for a month, and we received 648 applications spanning 381 organisations and 96 countries. We were astounded by the level of interest.

Unfortunately, we could only accept 85 participants, a mere 13% of those who applied, our limitation being funding for

sufficient, good facilitation. And so over the past weeks we have been interacting with the participants who work in 35 organisations in 43 countries, of whom 33% are women.

We provide extensive reading material and videos for each module, and the participants engage with the topics through their weekly assignments, participation in online discussion forums and a weekly quiz. For example, they have been tasked with looking at the drilling supervision practices in their own organisations, to prepare a hydrogeological desk study and to reflect on regulatory policies and practices in the countries in which they work.

I was sceptical about online courses until I undertook my first one three years ago. This time, as a facilitator, I've witnessed that this course provides an opportunity for people who are already managing drilling projects and programmes to improve their skills and knowledge from far and wide.

So what are we learning every day from the participants? For example, that drilling data is not shared because of fear that the information may be used for gaining the upper hand in mining minerals in one country. Or about the rapidly falling groundwater levels in Sanaa, Yemen, threatening the agriculture and domestic water supplies of the future. And

*Kerstin Danert*



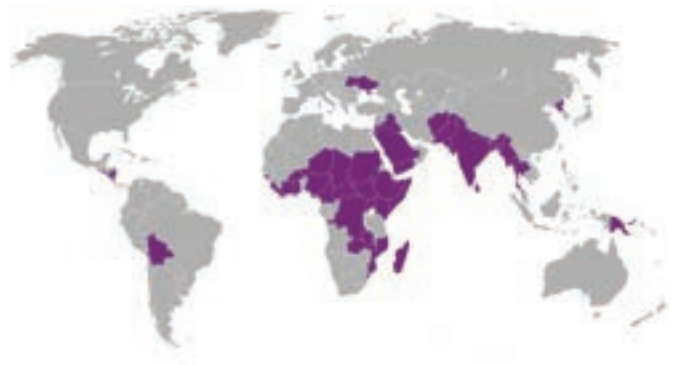
## Course details

The course facilitation team includes Dr Kerstin Danert, Skat Foundation, Switzerland; Dotun Adekile, independent consultant, Nigeria; Prof Moustapha Diene, Cheikh Anta Diop University, Dakar, Senegal; Africa Groundwater Network (AGW-Net) and UPGro Ambassador, Tom Armstrong, J.B. Drilling, Kenya; Dr Charles Serele, Unicef, Madagascar; Damian Indij, Cap-Net UNDP (course co-ordinator), Argentina; and Stephanie Theis, Skat Foundation, Switzerland.

The course is hosted on the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Cap-Net's virtual campus. The initiative is part of a Unicef and Skat Foundation project to raise drilling professionalism, and is also being financially supported by UPGro (Unlocking the Potential for Groundwater for the Poor).

## Course modules

- Module 1: Introduction and Groundwater Information and Siting
- Module 2: Costing and Pricing, and the Procurement and Contract Management
- Module 3: Borehole Drilling and Supervision
- Module 4: Institutional Frameworks for Borehole Drilling Professionalism
- Module 5: Dialogue and Actions to Raise Drilling Professionalism



*Map indicating countries in which the course participants work*

we've found out about nuances in the way in which corruption affects the regulation of drilling professionalism in different contexts. Through the course, innovative approaches are also being revealed, such as new regulations in a number of countries, efforts to improve procurement procedures in Nigeria, or post-construction monitoring of water supply systems through private management combining mixed farming and water supply systems in northern Madagascar.

Integral to the course is that it provides an opportunity for participants to learn from each other, reflect on what can be improved and to debate contentious topics – a key one being who should pay for the cost of drilling a dry borehole? The final assignment in the course involves sharing what has been learned more widely and trying to inspire others to improve borehole drilling management practices.

Once the course is complete, all of the materials are accessible through the Cap-Net virtual campus ([www.cap-net.org](http://www.cap-net.org)).

So what next, you may ask? Firstly, we shall learn from this first course and make improvements. We would then like to run the course again later in the year, repeat it in the future and also make it available in other languages, starting with French. We know that there is demand. With the structure and materials now developed and online, future courses will

be less costly than developing and running the first one. But we need to assure the cost of good facilitation. So if anyone would like to sponsor a course, say as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR), either fully or partially, please contact us at [foundation@skat.ch](mailto:foundation@skat.ch). ▼

**Course facilitator commentary**

"As a facilitator I have learnt a lot from the forum discussions and assignment submissions by the participants. It is like being on a voyage of discovery, wondering where the assignment I am about to open is from, Nepal or Sierra Leone or Saudi Arabia, and yet to read it and find something similar to other countries."

– Dotun Adekile

"This is my first time participating in an online course – as a participant and as co-facilitator as well. So I am learning thanks to the training course. It is like a hydrogeology trip through the world."

– Moustapha Diene

"It is exciting to hear from people working in such different countries and contexts. Other than an online course, what opportunities are there for you to learn about these topics in such a structured way if you are working in Yemen or northern Iraq, for example?"

– Kerstin Danert

Kerstin Danert works for Skat Foundation and Skat Consulting in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and leads the Rural Water Supply Network's (RWSN) theme on Sustainable Groundwater Development. In 2017 she was awarded the Distinguished Associate Award by the International Association of Hydrogeologists

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