



Science20 (S20) and Ocean20 (O20) G20 Engagement Groups

invite you to a webinar on

Open Climate: Advancing data sharing for climate action through academia and research communities

Date: Thursday, 28 August 2025
Time: 10:00 to 12:00
Venue: Zoom
RSVP: [Click here to register](#)

BACKGROUND

As the impacts of climate change intensify, the need for accessible, reliable, and interoperable climate data is more urgent than ever. Effective mitigation and adaptation strategies depend on the open exchange of high-quality data across disciplines, sectors, and borders. This webinar will explore how academia and research communities - particularly within G20 countries - can take a leading role in advancing the Open Climate agenda.

This webinar aims to examine the current state of climate data sharing and interoperability across research institutions in the G20, with particular attention to the Global South. It will explore how Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are being integrated into climate data ecosystems and discuss enabling policy frameworks and initiatives that support open climate data. The discussion will identify opportunities for scientific communities to bridge policy and practice and take a leadership role in open data governance. South Africa's contributions and challenges will be highlighted, particularly through the work of ASSAf, SAEON, and the National Climate Change Information System (NCCIS). Finally, the webinar will explore how these efforts align with global initiatives, such as the G20 Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group and the Initiative on International Cooperation in Open Science, launched by China, Brazil, South Africa, and the African Union at the 2024 G20 Summit.





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PROGRAMME

Programme Moderator: **Galaletsang Keebine**, NRF-SAEON

10:00-10:05	Opening and welcome	Ms Galaletsang Keebine Junior Data Scientist, NRF-SAEON
10:05-10:10	Opening remarks on behalf of SAEON and O20	Ms Nicole du Plessis Science Officer, Egagasini, NRF-SAEON
10:10-10:15	Opening remarks on behalf of ASSAf and S20	Mrs Susan Veldsman Director Scholarly Publishing Programme, ASSAf
10:15-10:25	Climate Change Monitoring and Evaluation & National Climate Information System	Ms Mikateko Sithole Director: Climate Change M & E: Impact and Adaptation; Climate Change Adaptation CD Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
10:25-10:35	Towards climate resilience: data interoperability and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)	Dr Wilfred Lunga Chief Research Specialist, Developmental, Capable and Ethical State Research Division, HSRC
10:35-10:45	Human, governance, and adaptation dimensions of climate change	Prof Coleen Vogel Global Change Institute, University of the Witwatersrand
10:45-10:55	Intersection of Indigenous Knowledge, community engagement, and climate resilience	Ms Yanga Malotana Project Manager and Communications Lead - Emerging Scholars Initiative (ESI); ECP Coordinator for IORAG SA
10:55-11:05	Data governance: best practices and models for trustworthy and equitable data sharing	Mr Leo Chiloane Manager, uLwazi Node, NRF-SAEON
11:05-11:15	Infrastructure, interoperability, and practical use of environmental data in support of science and policy	Dr Gustav Rautenbach Ocean Modeller, SOMISANA, Egagasini Node, NRF-SAEON
11:15-11:25	Q&A	Ms Galaletsang Keebine Junior Data Scientist, NRF-SAEON
11:25-11:55	Closing	Dr Melusi Thwala SAP and Strategic Partnerships Manager, ASSAf



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BIOGRAPHIES



Galaletsang Keebine is a Junior Data Scientist at the South African Environmental Observation Network (NRF-SAEON), under the National Research Foundation. She holds an MSc in GIS and Remote Sensing from the University of the Witwatersrand and an undergraduate degree in Geography and Environmental Management from North-West University. Her work focuses on transforming data into meaningful insights and decision-ready products. She specialises in analysing diverse datasets to support evidence-based decision-making and effectively communicate risk and vulnerability. Galaletsang also serves as SAEON™s representative on the Sustainable Development Solutions Network South Africa (SDSN SA). Through her role, she contributes to sustainable environmental management by mobilising and interpreting data to develop tools that highlight risks and vulnerabilities impacting both natural ecosystems and human communities.



Nicole du Plessis is a project coordinator and science communicator at the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) Egagasini Node, where she leads strategic ocean science initiatives at both national and international levels. With over a decade of experience in environmental research, policy support, and stakeholder engagement, she plays a pivotal role in shaping collaborative programmes that bridge scientific knowledge and societal benefit. Nicole has contributed to the advancement of blue economy dialogues, and inclusive science networks in Africa and the Indian Ocean region. Her background in marine science and passion for strategic impact have allowed her to build a unique portfolio that blends research coordination, science-policy interface work, and inclusive capacity development. Her career reflects an ongoing dedication to scientific integrity, inclusivity, and the belief that science must ultimately serve both people and the planet.



Mrs Susan Veldsman leads ASSAf's Scholarly Publishing Programme, advancing South Africa's Open Science agenda; raising the visibility, quality, and accessibility of SA journals (including SciELO SA); and shaping policy for publicly funded research. She launched SciELO SA in 2009 and secured its government recognition, accreditation, and funding. An early OA pioneer, she established South Africa's first institutional repository at the University of Johannesburg (1996), worked at EIFL, and received the 2013 Electronic Publishing Trust award. She co-chaired the 2022 IAP report on predatory journals and conferences. She holds a master's in science and technologies from Stellenbosch University.



Mikateko Sithole is heading the Climate Change Monitoring and Evaluation: Impact and Adaptation Directorate which is responsible for tracking South Africa's just transition into a Climate Resilient Society. This role involves establishment of functional systems that are data intensive. It is a role that requires interaction with a range of stakeholders such as data providers as well as data users. She also oversees The National Climate Change Information System which is designed to be the Mother of all Systems and the South African MRV System. Ms Sithole has over 15 years experience in Climate Change Management. The experience she embodies range from Research, Policy development at National and Sub-national government levels, catalyzing implementation through project proposal development as well as supporting Project Implementation.



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Dr Melusi Thwala is Manager: Science Advisory and Strategic Partnerships at the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) and Coordinator for The World Academy of Sciences Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Partner (TWAS-SAREP). Additionally, he is a Research Associate at Nelson Mandela University and University of the Free State. He was previously Principal Research Scientist and Research Group Leader at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, South Africa. He holds a PhD from the University of Johannesburg and specializes in environmental water quality effects assessment and monitoring. He is the UNESCO Keizo Obuchi Fellow and undertook the research fellowship at University of Clemson: Centre for Environmental Toxicology, USA. Dr Thwala was a member of the DSI Platform for Nano Health Safety and Environment Risk Assessment, responsible for leading the Water Node of the Platform. He is a committee member of the SABS/TC 147/SC205 working group on aquatic toxicity testing. He is on the Editorial Board of *Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry*, as well as Guest Editor for *Springer Nature: Applied Sciences* journal.



Dr Wilfred Lunga is a multidisciplinary researcher working at the intersection of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, climate change, and disaster risk reduction. With a strong commitment to community resilience and adaptive social services, he bridges scientific research and traditional knowledge, showcasing how indigenous insights can enhance climate data use and policy. He has lectured at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Zimbabwe and supervised post-graduate research at North-West University (NWU) and the University of the Free State (UFS) in South Africa. His expertise spans climate data integration, stakeholder dialogue across cultures and languages, and risk communication, including with nomadic and remote communities. A skilled leader in research, evaluation, and project design across Africa and Asia, He champions inclusive, data-informed approaches rooted in local knowledge to drive sustainable and equitable climate solutions.



Yanga Malotana is a versatile energy policy and climate change analyst with a passion for addressing global challenges through innovation, collaboration, and strategic problem-solving. Currently a PhD Candidate at the University of Pretoria, Yanga is supported by the prestigious Andrew Mellon Foundation Scholarship and is an Allan Gray Orbis Foundation Fellow, reflecting her entrepreneurial approach to driving meaningful change within organizations. She is Project Manager and Communications Lead for Emerging Scholars Initiative (ESI); and Early Career Professionals (ECP) External Stakeholders Coordinator for the Indian Ocean Rim Association Academic Group South Africa (IORAG SA). She focuses on blue economies, climate change, energy, and trade, leveraging her skills in stakeholder engagement, fundraising, and innovation to bridge academic insights with real-world applications.



Gustav Rautenbach is an ocean modeller based in Cape Town, South Africa. With a background in marine science, Gustav has spent the past 10 years studying and recently completed his PhD in physical oceanography at Nelson Mandela University. His research focused on how Agulhas Current frontal eddies influence coastal circulation and drives mixing along the east coast of South Africa. He is passionate about the role of western boundary currents in generating submesoscale turbulence and shaping coastal ocean dynamics. Gustav works at the NRF-SAEON Egagasini Node as an ocean modeller for the SOMISANA team (Sustainable Ocean Modelling: A South AfricaN Approach). He develops and maintains the ocean forecast system used for decision-making, supports product development, evaluates model outputs, and publishes them for public use.



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Prof Coleen Vogel is a Distinguished Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is a climatologist by training but has increasingly worked in the social dimensions of climate change, focusing particularly on climate change adaptation. She currently serves on various local and international boards. She has, for example, chaired and been the vice chair of international global environmental change scientific committees (e.g. IHDP and LUCC and involved in the Earth System Science Programme), groups that preceded the current Future Earth developments. She was also one of the lead contributors to the preparation of the Disaster Management Act in South Africa. She has been Chapter Lead Author and co-author of chapters in the IPCC (4th and 5th assessment reports) and as a lead author in the IPBES Transformative assessment. She has also received the Burtoni Award for international excellence in adaptation research and received the University of the Witwatersrand Vice Chancellor's award for excellence in teaching.



Leo Chiloane is the Manager of the uLwazi Node at the South African Environmental Observation Network, where he leads the data curation, systems development, ICT infrastructure management, and data science teams in implementing information platforms. He has worked with several global communities involved in supporting the development of best practices and standards to enable open and interoperable sharing and re-use of research data. These include the DataCite metadata working group, the International Long-Term Ecological Research Network, and the CoreTrustSeal Assembly of Reviewers. Leo currently serves as the co-chair of the in-situ data subgroup for the intergovernmental Group on Earth Observations' Data and Knowledge Working Group.