



The University of Gloucestershire has been working with researchers from South Africa and Egypt to develop understanding of how new research methods to evaluate ecosystem services can help secure water and food security and therefore support poverty alleviation.

University researchers, Drs Julie Ingram and Kenny Lynch, won funding from the British Council to lead a 3-day workshop in Stellenbosch, South Africa, to equip early career researchers from the UK, Egypt and South Africa with tools for evaluating ecosystem services, which are crucial for our food and water security. Over 30 participants from Egypt, South Africa and UK took part in the workshop, which included visits to locations where the link between ecosystem services and food and water security is being actively researched.

Human impact on ecosystems, such as over-exploitation of water resources and land degradation, threatens our biodiversity and the ability to support human well-being depends largely on how the ecosystems are managed. This is the same whether in Gloucestershire or in Africa, although the consequences for poorer populations in developing countries are far more serious.



Julie said,

“The welfare of poor rural inhabitants depends on the capacity of ecosystem services (supporting, regulating, provisioning and cultural) to provide goods and services. They underpin food and water security and are essential to people’s livelihoods, especially in Africa.”

Kenny added,

Kenny added, “The challenges of understanding and managing these services in natural and agricultural systems are complex, and beyond the scope of a single field of research such as economics, geography, soil science or biology. Instead they require interdisciplinary methods which combine approaches. We gathered an international cohort of young researchers, who have the potential to combine such methods, and ensure this kind of research is effective, relevant and applicable to poorer populations whose livelihoods depend on their environments and the services they provide. The participants have gone home with lots of new contacts and ideas and there are a number of projects now being planned. Watch this space!”

The funding was awarded by the Researcher Links Workshops programme, launched by the British Council and delivered under the Newton Fund, with the aim of building collaborations between UK and key partner countries in academic groups, industry and third sectors.