

Call for water laws to be 'decolonised'

African governments should recognise customary rights to water for millions of small farmers who have been side-lined or 'criminalised' by permit systems created during the colonial era, said a study published last week. According to an **SABC News** report, restrictive permit systems in Kenya, Malawi, SA, Uganda and Zimbabwe have left more than 100m people without access to enough water, according to the report by the Sri Lanka-based International Water Management Institute. **Those countries should 'decolonise statutory water law through a hybrid approach'**, according to the report. A hybrid system that recognised both existing permits and included customary laws would improve water access for small farmers, said Barbara Schreiner, a co-author of the report released at a conference in Libreville, Gabon. 'This is critical for expanding smallholder irrigation,' said Schreiner, who is executive director of the SA-based advocacy group Pegasys Institute. 'It will lighten the administrative burden on the state, while making formal legal access to water more equitable,' she added.