

## **Water shortage in Gaborone: its implications and determinants for whether and how to adapt**

*Water shortage affects households differently in Gaborone as people's adaptive capacity and vulnerability are not evenly distributed between the participants or within their associated social groups e.g. between the social category of 'women'. This research examines water shortage and its implications as well as draws on the concept of intersectionality to better understand the underlying factors that are either enabling or constraining households in adapting to water shortage.*

We are currently experiencing a global water crisis. Essentially this means that it is not unlikely that urban areas in the future will struggle to provide enough freshwater to meet the growing demand of their population. It is therefore increasingly important to understand how households are adapting to water shortage at the local level if we are to develop sustainable and resilient cities. This furthermore entails that we must understand what underlying factors that are influencing whether people can engage in such measures of adaptation.

This research is situated in Gaborone, Botswana's capital. It finds that households from different backgrounds face many implications when faced with water shortage, among others: disruption of lives and livelihoods, direct and indirect health challenges as well as social exclusion and embarrassment. To reduce exposure and impact households engage in various strategies most notably: water conservation efforts, storage, investment in structural equipment and finding alternative sources.

The choice of whether to engage and which strategies to engage in is however dependent on a household's adaptive capacity and vulnerability – properties that this research finds are not evenly distributed between the participants or within their associated social groups. In other words, the implications of water shortage and how the participants are affected by it is influenced by several underlying factors such as gender, age, nationality, socio-economic structures as well as health, caregiving, unemployment and land- and housing tenure. Together these form power structures that can enable or constrain the participants in engaging in measures of adaptation as well as inform their vulnerability.

The findings of this research furthermore illustrate how using intersectionality as an analytical framework can help better represent complex realities. It is argued, that utilizing this approach can potentially improve our understanding on the relationship between people, their adaptive capacity and vulnerability in the context of water shortage. This, as this approach allows for an exploration of the underlying reasons for the participants' differing vulnerabilities and capacities for adaptation.

The research is informed by 58 semi-structured interviews with people living in Gaborone as well as with key informants, all of which were collected during an 8-week field study.