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UCT research investigates how to better manage water risk

Water has become a scarce resource around the world. According to the World Wildlife Organisation (WWF) "some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year. Inadequate sanitation is also a problem for 2.4 billion people." They estimate that by 2025, water shortages may affect two-thirds of the world's population.

Finding ways to conserve water levels in South Africa is therefore important for the sustainability of the country. University of Cape Town PhD graduate, Dr Hannah Baleta, conducted a study with the aim of supporting government and companies in managing their water risks in a supportive and collaborative manner. With effective engagement between parties it may be possible to better address the inequality faced by South Africans in terms of access to water, development from water and resilience in the face of climate change.

Her thesis, *The concept of shared risk in public and private sector water security: a case study of Grabouw, Western Cape, South Africa*, stems from her interest in effective water management after having grown up on a farm in Limpopo and having first-hand experience of the negative effects of both drought and flooding on people's lives as well as the economy of a sector.

According to Dr Baleta, one of the most effective ways to manage water risk is collaboration between private companies and local municipalities in maintaining infrastructure and devising new ways to conserve water. In her opinion, South Africa has become complacent with the infrastructure it currently has. We need to increasingly look at ways of improving efficiency going forward as we are growing in both development and population in South Africa.

According to government reports, [37%](#) of SA's clean, drinkable water is lost through leaking pipes, dripping taps and other inefficient ways of using water. Partnerships between government and the private sector could thus aid in preserving SA's diminishing water supply.

END

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