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Water Recycling in Botswana

The terms **water recycling** and **water re- use** can be used interchangeably, as they have the same meaning. The following article, written by Alma Balopi, was published on the [SADC Waterwire](#) via the [Inter Press Service \(IPS\)](#) on 20 August 2010. It discusses some of the issues behind water recycling and investigates some of the public opinions about drinking treated waste water.

Acquiring a Taste for Recycled Water

Many Batswana are quick to recoil at the mere mention of drinking treated waste water

"As soon as I hear it is treated waste water, my mind will be flooded with the images of the waste water before being treated and I will never drink it," says 25- year- old Chandida Matebu, the look on her face confirming her words.

"I would drink if I was not aware that it was treated. But even if it comes bottled and shipped all the way from America, I will not drink. The water would not pass down my throat, no way."

Obert Gakeope is a rare exception. "Most people have drunk it without knowing. It is the idea of knowing that is putting people off. I have taken the water when I was in Windhoek and in America and I know it is not dangerous for my health."

Gakeope said that he would not be scared to drink the water as long he knew the process that has been used to treat it.

His open- ness to recycled water - and Matebu's much more common rejection - will be put to the test in the not- so- distant future. According to Water Utilities Corporation (WUC) Public Relations Manager Matida Mmipi, a groundbreaking project to reclaim wastewater from treated effluent at the Glen Valley Wastewater Treatment plant in Gaborone is in the tendering stage.

She explained that the project, which was started after 2006/07's debilitating drought, has passed the pre- feasibility and feasibility stages, with the hired consultants reporting that reclamation of wastewater is both technically and economically workable for the Botswanan capital.

Within two years, residents of greater Gaborone could be drinking reclaimed water, as their counterparts in Harare, Windhoek and London have been doing for decades.

Energy, Minerals and Water Resources Minister Ponatshego Kedikilwe said the wastewater project was pushing ahead.

"The aim is further treatment to augment potable water supply to greater Gaborone by 2013, when a water supply deficiency is expected."

The feasibility studies included an extensive public participation exercise undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment process. The WUC's consultants cast their net wide; alert to the fact that many Batswana had already expressed their revulsion to consuming reclaimed water.

However, the consultants reported that "the EIA process did not identify this to be a major concern in all the areas that will be affected, which include areas currently supplied by WUC from Lobatse to Mochudi including Gaborone."

Wary of the prevailing perceptions, Kedikilwe was quick to assuage the public's concerns.

"All of us have travelled outside the country at one time or another. If you have been to South Africa, you drank treated water or if you travelled to Israel or London. So

enjoy it in your own country," Kedikilwe said.

"That water has to be treated and used for irrigation or crops; treatment for the likes of beetroot will be different for maize. But there must be a stage where the water is treated and gets back into the system and we drink it," Kedikilwe added.

It is expected that the reclamation plant will use six high technology filtration, disinfection and stabilisation processes. This could however be cold comfort for some consumers, who question whether there are alternatives to wastewater reclamation and whether the final product would be safe for human consumption.

The wastewater reclamation project is part of the WUC's water supply interventions, which anticipate a shortage of water in Gaborone by 2030.

Source: Alma Balopi/ IPS 2010

The original article can be found on the [SADC Waterwire](#).

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