

UNITED WE STAND

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPING RESILIENCE TO DROUGHT IN SOUTH AFRICA



NERC SCIENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

MARCH 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Everyone who was involved in our research project had a hand in producing this briefing paper. We all wanted to be acknowledged as co-researchers and the briefing paper belongs to all of us. We pooled our different expertise and it really was a team effort. South African youth co-researchers and university students worked with young people from the UK to produce the detail of how drought affects them and their communities. Together they worked on possible policy actions that might be taken. Young co-researchers, academics and community partners have all played a role in choosing illustrations for the document and deciding on the overall design. Academics and youth co-researchers came up with ideas about the organisations that we would like to influence and we wrote those sections together. Youth co-researchers, academics and community partners met for a two-day workshop in South Africa which resulted in us completely rewriting the first draft of this document.

There is a film to go with this briefing paper. We were all involved in that too. Some of us had starring roles, but many others helped out more 'backstage' so to speak, including editing our efforts down so that the film didn't go on forever. . . . Some of us were technical wizards with cameras, lighting and sound. Whatever our contribution, we all played a part and here we all are:

RESEARCH TEAM

Young co-researchers living in Leandra, South Africa

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Nokwanda Dube	Zanele Portia Mahlangu	Zodwa Mngomezulu	Kwanele Nontuthuko Ngwenya	Nothando Getrude Vilakazi
Lungile Gili	Sthembiso Majangaza	Gugu Mngomezulu	Lifa Nyawuza	Thato Vilakazi
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Simphiwe Masesi Lukhele	Immaculate Xolile Mchunu	Jabulile Mthimunya	Thabiso Junior Shabangu	Sibiya Xolani
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Here's the reference for this document if you need to mention it in something you are writing:

Patterns of Resilience to Drought Project Team. (2018, March). *United We Stand: Youth Perspectives on Developing Resilience to Drought in South Africa*. England/South Africa: University of Brighton/Boingboing.

Retrieved from www.brighton.ac.uk/leandra

This document is available to download free of charge from: www.brighton.ac.uk/leandra

Details of the film to accompany this document:

Patterns of Resilience to Drought Project Team. (2018, March). *United We Stand: Youth Perspectives on Developing Resilience to Drought in South Africa* [Motion picture]. England/South Africa: University of Brighton/Boingboing.

You can watch the film here: www.brighton.ac.uk/leandra

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UNITED WE STAND: A SUMMARY

What is the problem?

These issues have been identified as central to this project:

- The general failure to implement existing drought policy in South Africa
- The absence of youth in developing and implementing policy
- The worsening effects of climate change and drought
- Weak government and community responses to drought

What has been done?

Through the '**Patterns of Resilience**' project, a number of young people in Leandra have been engaged as co-researchers by an interdisciplinary research team from South Africa and the United Kingdom, supported by the UK Natural Environment Research Council. A young co-researcher is a youth who volunteered to work with our team and were involved as equal partners being trained up to work alongside the other researchers and receiving payment for this.

After a series of workshops facilitated by postgraduate students from Pretoria and community facilitators from the UK, a group of young people in Leandra have developed their own ideas and gathered information from older people in the community. This has been used to generate important responses to drought, and they have co-produced a video and this policy document.

What are the main issues for young people?

- ✧ **Drought** is going to be a **recurrent problem** in the future
- ✧ Everyone needs to **save water** at every opportunity
- ✧ Schools are sometimes **closed** due to a lack of water which makes education difficult and impacts on later job opportunities
- ✧ **Businesses** have a **role to play**, and jobs are at risk because of water shortages
- ✧ Young people are concerned and want to **contribute** in some way

What are the recommendations for organisations at local, provincial, national and international levels?

Gert Sibande District Municipality

- Education is our future. Schools need to have water so youths can learn, so prioritise that if water is very scarce
- Young people aspire to have taps in their homes so take this seriously in policymaking
- Meaningfully involve young people in drought response plans, and engage young people when drawing up educational programme materials about saving water
- Support young people in spreading key messages about drought
- Make opportunities for positive distractions like sport, dancing and reading

South African government

- Young people should be engaged by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry as part of the National Water Resource Strategy

Mpumalanga Province

- Instruct district municipalities to support young peoples' initiatives in saving water
- Ensure better planning and infrastructure for water supply to local municipalities
- Involve young people in the Provincial Water Sector Plan

International organisations

- Young people should be supported to be more involved in policy decision-making in South Africa as they are very innovative

1. WHY WE NEED A YOUTH VOICE ON DROUGHT MANAGEMENT

1.1 The potential of youth

Young people will inherit and have to manage the environmental challenges of today. Water supply will be a major problem throughout the lives of most young people in South Africa today, and for future generations. The large population of people under the age of 25 represents an untapped resource for addressing the enormous challenges that the country faces with respect to water. There are significant opportunities for young people to get involved in policy development for both water management at community and national level, as well as in issues of water supply and infrastructure. The challenge is to find mechanisms for communication between youth and policymakers and politicians.



Plastic water bottles were great props for our theatre performance



***Youth make a difference.** For the sake of their collective future we need actions and strategies to support them to influence policy and the people who make decisions*

1.2 How can youth influence policy on water?

There is a big drive from the South African government for youths to become more involved in policy and planning.

The South African National Youth Policy for 2015–2020's slogan is “We are generation2020. We don't want a hand-out, we want a hand up!” Young people helped develop the plan which aims to mend the wrongs of the past and meet the needs of the country's youth, who will become the leaders of the future.

Youth have the ability to influence policies and plans for water, but for this to happen in reality, we need changes in the way decisions, plans and policies are made.



This sign should concentrate the mind of anyone who comes into Leandra

1 Who makes decisions and policy for water?



2 How are water policies and plans made?

3 What information is in water policies and plans?

Many organisations and people are involved in making decisions about water in the country and local area. Youths need to know who these people and organisations are, to try and influence the policies and decisions they make. Youths can have influence on who makes policy by messaging them, talking to them, getting the right information from organisations and even demonstrating. This is part of democracy and youths need to be able to influence these people and organisations.

1

Water is managed using the policies and plans made by organisations. These policies and plans affect who gets a regular and clean water supply. Deciding what's in these plans and policies involves local and national discussions. This happens in meetings, where people try to reach agreements to make progress. Youth need to know where and when these meetings are taking place and the organisations involved need to ensure youths are represented by young people and not adults. The meetings also need to be held at times and locations that are accessible to all young people, including those with disabilities.

2

Many policies and plans already exist and contain many good ideas for cleaning up water and ensuring people get the water they need. But these good ideas often don't happen. If youths know what's in policies and plans, they can help good ideas become reality. Youths can volunteer to help make things happen. Youths need to be encouraged and enabled to take part in the water projects and know that if they take part they will be valued and respected beyond a tokenistic level.

3



For youth involvement in water management, a fundamental step is meaningful participation in the process of creating policies and making them happen

2. MOBILISING THE YOUTH VOICE FOR DROUGHT MANAGEMENT POLICY

2.1 Involving youth through drought research

Many of us involved in this project were youth co-researchers. We explored the opportunities for youth to influence policy responding to drought in rural and under-served areas of South Africa. Our project focused on Leandra in Govan Mbeki district, Mpumalanga where nearly 50 of the project's youth co-researchers live. Leandra is a small town in the southern part of Mpumalanga Province of South Africa, approximately 100 km east of Johannesburg with many informal settlements. According to census data from 2011, Leandra has a population of 2023 spread across 508 households, with an average household size of just under 4 people. Around a quarter of the population is aged under 14. Nearly 90% of households have access to piped water inside the home and are connected to mains sewerage.

As young people from Leandra, we set about understanding our role in times of drought, as well as our potential to effect change where necessary.

Forty-nine of us contributed our personal and community perspectives on resilience to drought. Drawing on arts-based data collection approaches we were trained by 15 postgraduate students from South Africa, supported by academics from South Africa and the UK. Four young British community-based co-researchers with personal experience of overcoming complex life challenges, and of undertaking research on resilience, were also involved. South African co-researchers were trained to undertake research on the perspectives of elders in their community and were supported in communicating findings to policymakers. We mostly worked together in English, but co-researchers sometimes spoke in other languages which were translated.



We are all concentrating hard on checking over the data analysis

2.2 Using visual and performance art to mobilise youth views

Art can be used for social change in many diverse ways in activism, research, for therapy, for community building, and in resisting oppressive regimes. In our research work in Leandra, art involving the co-production of images, story boards and videos was used to uncover and translate for wider audiences, the characteristics of youth which make them more resilient to drought-related stress.

Our co-produced art outputs provide a base to communicate with policymakers and others who might

have relevant influence. We hope they can be used by policymakers to assist and support young people in Leandra and beyond, to be resilient in the face of drought.

Art, as a way of making meaning, as communication and research, translated our Leandra youths' strengths and resilience. This is art as collective expression and art for social change. This is art as a driving force for communication.

This collective art articulation and translation is a direct line of communication from the people who are most affected. We hope our art will effect change. We hope that people learning about our project will find roles for themselves in helping us to become more resilient when facing drought-related stress and difficulties.



These arts-based methods helped us to research and portray resilience to drought

2.3 'United We Stand': the film



In June 2017, some of our project co-researchers, who are all young people living in Leandra, created images and stories for our film. The film shows which of their characteristics and those of their families, communities and physical environments make them resilient to drought-related stress. In our film, the youth also imagined how policymaking can support some of these characteristics of resilience.



www.brighton.ac.uk/leandra

In the words of young people:

What does drought bring?

DISGUST **ANGER**
FEAR **SADNESS**

Courage Unity
Love Joy Peace
 Wonder

Drought impacts the entire community

These experiences come directly from those of us who are youth co-researchers from Leandra. We discussed them together whilst making our film. Take a look at our film to find out more about what we said.

The most hurtful moment is when someone is being compelled to go back home because there is no water at school.

Children miss out on proper education due to a shut down in school when there is no water.

A mother worked at a farm and farms require a lot of water. So she lost her job due to drought.

CHILD: "I'm starting to fright right now. First thing, you just lost your job mother, second, this whole drought thing – no mama I can't take it at all, I can't take it at all. I've had enough with this thing."

MOTHER: "Come my child come, everything is gonna be fine. Let's just pray that God intervenes into this situation of ours so that everything is gonna work out."

A BUSINESS MAN from a mining company makes his way around a community.

"There has been too much water wastage."

COMMUNITY: "Nobody thought that we'll come across such a huge drought in our community. Right now people have to walk a very long distance in order to have water."

"The problem could be drought or lack of infrastructure or both, but people don't have enough knowledge about the differences between drought and lack of infrastructure."

Young people responding to drought

What are the ways of dealing with the problems of drought?

During the course of our project youth co-researchers came up with lots of different ways to build future resilience to drought. Here are a few of our ideas.



BUSINESS OWNER: *"No matter who you are, what you are and what you do – I own a business and I'm proud to be part of a team that says # BeWaterWise. I'm urging everyone who is around and everyone who is here to save water 'cause it starts with you."*

3. WHY LEANDRA? DROUGHT IN LEANDRA (1889-2017)

3.1 Rainfall variability over Gauteng and southern Mpumalanga (1889-2017)

To understand the impact of drought in Leandra we need to understand how often drought occurs. For this, two university climate scientists were involved in the project. We looked at over 100 years of rainfall measurements for the area in which Leandra is located. Climatologically, Leandra is part of the South African Highveld region, which includes Gauteng, most of the Free State, Limpopo and part of Mpumalanga. This region is fairly dry and prone to regular droughts.

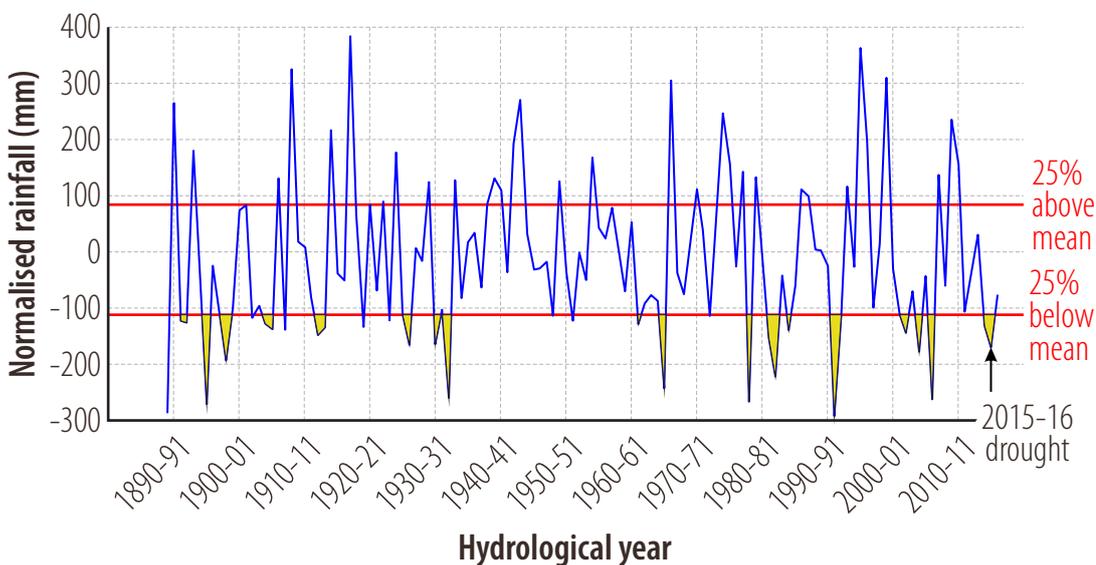
Two factors define drought:

- 1 How low is the rainfall compared to normal rainfall?
- 2 How many years does this low rainfall last?

The definition usually used for low rainfall is 25% less than normal. If this happens for more than one year, water supplies start to run low in dams, and water restrictions might result. The impacts of drought can be direct, such as a shortage of drinking water and crops dying; or indirect such as food being more expensive and people losing their jobs.

The study used monthly rainfall measurements from 29 weather stations from across Gauteng and southern Mpumalanga¹. The measurements were used to identify when and how often droughts occurred, comparing the severity of the 2015-2016 drought to other droughts. The graph below was constructed from these measurements. For the graph, something called the 'hydrological year' was used: this is because the rainy season always happens in summer and spreads over two calendar years.

¹ Rainfall data was obtained from the South African Weather Service and the Global Historical Climatology Network database



Rainfall variability for Gauteng and southern Mpumalanga for the hydrological years 1889-90 to 2016-17. Years with severe drought are shaded yellow.

So, for example, 1990-91 on the graph means the summer rainfall season from the beginning of October 1990 to the end of April 1991.

The blue line on the graph shows actual rainfall for each rainy season. When that line is above the top red line on the graph, that year was very wet, and when it is below the bottom red line, that year was very dry. The yellow highlighted sections show when drought occurred in the past. The driest summers were those of 1889-90, 1895-96, 1978-79, 1991-92 and 2006-07, with rainfall more than 250 millimetres below average in these years. The effect of drought is worse when rainfall is low for more than one year. This happened in 1891-93, 1904-06, 1912-14, 1981-83, 1991-93, 2001-03 and 2015-16. The most recent drought year (the summer of 2015-16) was the 11th driest during the 128 years that were studied.

Large scale weather systems like El Niño can cause extended droughts in South Africa. The 2015-2016 drought was associated with a strong El Niño.

What this all shows is that rainfall for the last 130 years varies a lot from year to year and droughts are common

The 2015-2016 drought was not the worst on record but was one of the worst in terms of experience. This is because other factors like water infrastructure, changes in population, and changes in jobs also influence how we experience drought. This links to the bigger picture of our project in Leandra.

4. WHICH ORGANISATIONS COULD YOUTH INFLUENCE?

4.1 Involving youths in water policy is an international movement

Increasingly, there is a global movement to get youths more involved in water policy. The **Global Water Partnership** has been running since 1996 and is a network of partners, organisations and movements in 178 different countries including South Africa. In 2015 it launched the Global Water Partnership **Youth Engagement Strategy**. The vision is that youths will be **agents of change** in water policy. After talking to and working with youths, the strategy says organisations and partners have to change how they work so that:

- Youths create change in policies and practice
- Knowledge is generated and communicated by youths
- Partnerships between organisations are strengthened because youths are involved

In South Africa, if organisations empower youths to work nationally and locally with key partners, then youths can be **agents of change for water policy**.



We're discussing roles for youth in developing drought policy

4.2 Who are the key national organisations for youths to work with?

The South African government says they want to involve youths in policy.

The **Office of the President** is involved with youth development and hosts the **National Youth Development Agency (NYDA)**, which is the result of the National Youth Development Act (2008).

The NYDA aims to advocate for integration and mainstreaming of youth development in all spheres of government, private sector and civil society. One of their key policy aims is to create youth development information and knowledge that informs the policy, planning, implementation and review of all government priorities.

You can take a look at their policy here:



www.wrc.org.za/Pages/KnowledgeHub.aspx

At the national level in relation to drought and water we need change in the government **Department of Water Affairs and Forestry**, which looks after South Africa's water. This department has created a policy for water called the National Water Resource Strategy. The Strategy runs until 2023 and wants to make sure water policy leads to the reduction of poverty and inequality, protects the environment, creates new jobs and manages water fairly for all people BUT...

In the National Water Resource Strategy youth are hardly mentioned, except for a single point that says youth must be empowered and a target for communication



There are some national organisations that are starting to link youth to what governments do about water, but more needs to happen.

The **Water Research Commission** is a national organisation set up in 1971 that brings together knowledge to help develop water policy. More and more the Commission is starting to work on youth issues and is one organisation that could do more to empower and communicate with youth. It wants to re-think how it works and to do this has established a Young Water Professionals Network to support the work of aspiring entrepreneurs.

The Commission provides lesson plans on water to support schools teaching the South African national curriculum from grade R up to high school level. The

Commission's national Water Wheel magazine contains Water Kidz articles.

The Water Research Commission's offices in Johannesburg are also home to the international charity **Water Aid** which works in 27 countries to give the poorest people access to safe water and sanitation. Water Aid always aims to work with local partners and in many countries supports youth involvement in fund- raising and working on projects.

Water Aid and the Water Research Commission are the types of organisations that could work with youth in rural areas, not just to provide information and learning for schools, but to empower young people to shape national and local policies and plans for water.



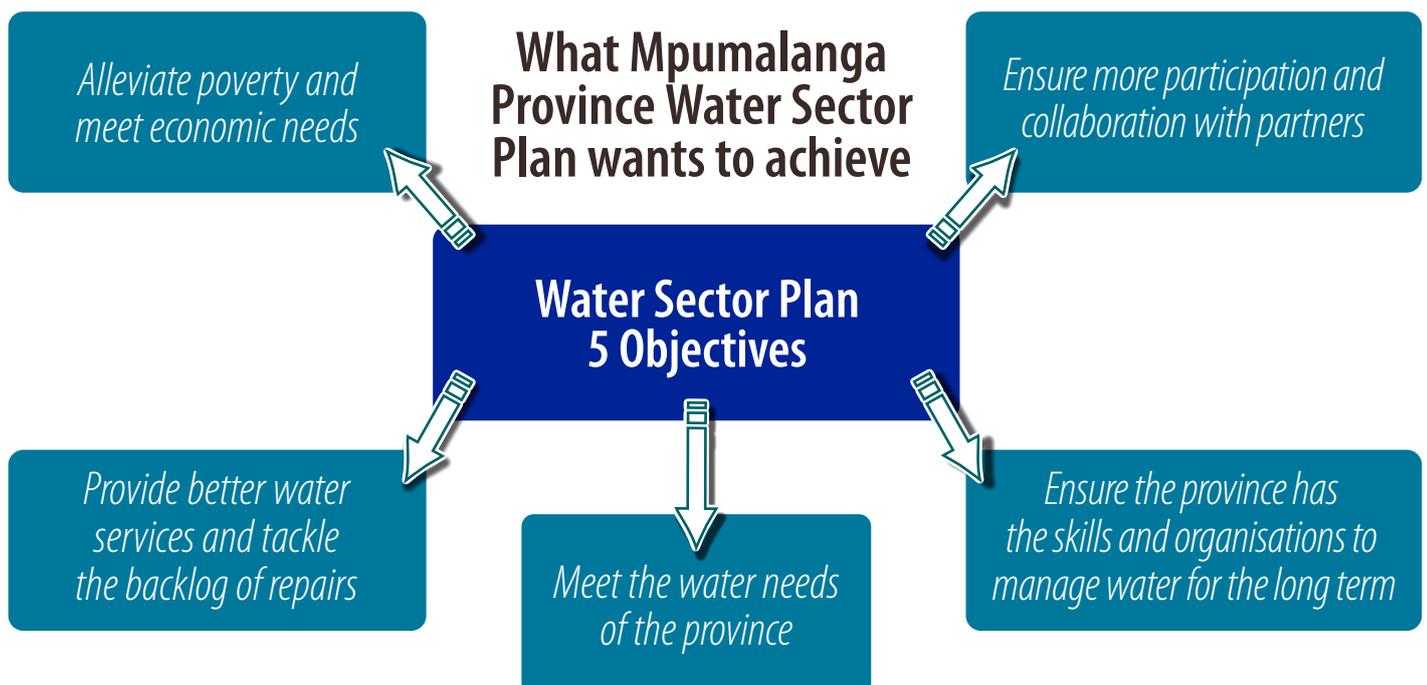
The Water Research Commission brings together partners who do research on water, and United We Stand has shown how this should include young people as co-researchers

4.3 Which organisations could youths work with locally?

The town of Leandra is part of Mpumalanga Province, home to over 4 million people. The province is a key organisation for involving youth in local water policy and plans.

Over 10 years ago in 2006 the Mpumalanga Province created the Provincial Water Sector Plan.

In 2007, the Province said that Water for All was one of its Five Flagship policy projects.



Youth views and research could help meet all 5 objectives of the Provincial Water Sector Plan and ensure the Plan achieves the objective of more participation



The Provincial Water Sector Plan is over 10 years old and needs updating. Youth must be empowered to participate to help create ideas and views for a new plan.

Co-researchers from our project all say 'Any other organisation that wants to engage with youth needs to work in a co-productive way, i.e with young people as equal partners.'

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

A useful **factsheet** on youth in South Africa is available here:



www.youthpolicy.org/factsheets/country/south-africa/

For more details of Department of Waters Affairs RSA. National Water Resource Strategy: Water for an Equitable and Sustainable Future. 2nd edition 2013



www.dwa.gov.za/documents/Other/Strategic%20Plan/NWRS2-Final-email-version.pdf

A useful document from the Black Sash about 'You and Your Rights to Water' is available here:



www.blacksash.org.za/index.php/your-rights/local-government/item/you-and-your-rights-water

The Global Water Partnership: Youth Engagement Strategy is here:



www.gwp.org/globalassets/global/about-gwp/strategic-documents/gwp_youth-strategy_web.pdf

If you'd like to read blogs about the project you can find them here:



www.boingboing.org.uk/drought

Check out our Tweets:



#Res2Drought

FINAL WORD

And now, let's leave the last word to our youth co-researchers. This is what some of them said they had learned from being involved:

Blessing Mutema

'I learnt that as a group you can achieve greater things than you can alone, in the future I'm going to university so it will help me there.'

Immaculate Xolile Mchunu

'I learned how to draw, how to do things using my own hands. Learned how to communicate with people and think much bigger!'



Getting to know each other at theatre workshop

Ayanda Dube

'I have learned that nothing is impossible. During a difficult situation there is always a way to overcome that situation – particularly in drought. I have learnt many things about how to combat drought – we need each other as people and you cannot do it alone.'

Lindokuhle Skosana

'I learnt a lot which I didn't know. I learnt to be a researcher. I will like to use my skill I have gotten to tell other people that I have been through this project and they must be calm when they face people they don't know.'



Our workshops were held near here in Leandra

Thobekile Nomcebo Magagula

'I learnt to communicate and to go out and spend time with different people, I've learnt to hang out with people I wouldn't normally hang out with, I do that more now. I also learnt to listen better and how to research, now I will be able to use that in school.'

Xolani Tressure Mfusi

'I have learnt team working skills, everything we did, we did it as a team, a unit. I also gained researching skills, analysing and being hypothetical about drought and research in general. I have decided to be more hands on and I need to teach people about drought and lack of infrastructure, so I want to take the initiative and teach them about differentiating the two.'

Sthembiso Majangaza

'I learnt from my grandma how to survive during a drought and ways to save water, it's helpful to know that for the future. It was my first time meeting people from England and it was good to work with English young people and talk about life in the UK.'

S'thandiwe Khanyisile Lukhele

'I've learnt from everyone that we should save water, be waterwise, if you waste it there won't be any! In the future I hope to advise other people and pass on the things I've learnt.'



Rehearsing theatre performance



Umdzabu Cultural Group performing at 'United We Stand' film premiere in Leandra

AS YOUNG PEOPLE FROM AN INFORMAL RURAL SETTLEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA, WE RESEARCHED WHAT WE, OUR COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT AND OTHER POLICYMAKERS SHOULD DO ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF:

DROUGHT

WE WORKED AS CO-RESEARCHERS ALONGSIDE ACADEMICS AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND THE UK. WE DEVELOPED MESSAGES THAT WE WANT POLICYMAKERS TO HEAR.

TAKE A LOOK INSIDE TO FIND OUT WHAT WE SAID, AND SEE LINKS TO THE FILM WE MADE ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS.



University of Brighton



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resilience research and practice



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