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Cultural and Demographic Factors Contributing to Environmental Degradation along the Metsimotlhabe River near Gaborone, Botswana

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ABSTRACT Environmental degradation in developing countries is caused by several factors including demographic, economic, political and social factors. Poverty alleviation and the pursuit of economic development are often prioritised in many developing countries at the expense of environmental wellbeing. This scenario has resulted in environmental degradation. This paper highlights the role of cultural and demographic factors in environmental degradation along Metsimotlhabe River on the northern outskirts of Gaborone city, Botswana. The river is under intense human use as source of construction sand. Field observation, focus group discussions and questionnaires were used in determining the cultural and demographic factors that are contributing to environmental degradation in the area. Rapid rise in the human population, unemployment, rural to urban and cross border migration and the cultural norm of livestock keeping have contributed to degradation along the Metsimotlhabe River. The traditional communal system of keeping large livestock herds has also been a contributory factor.