

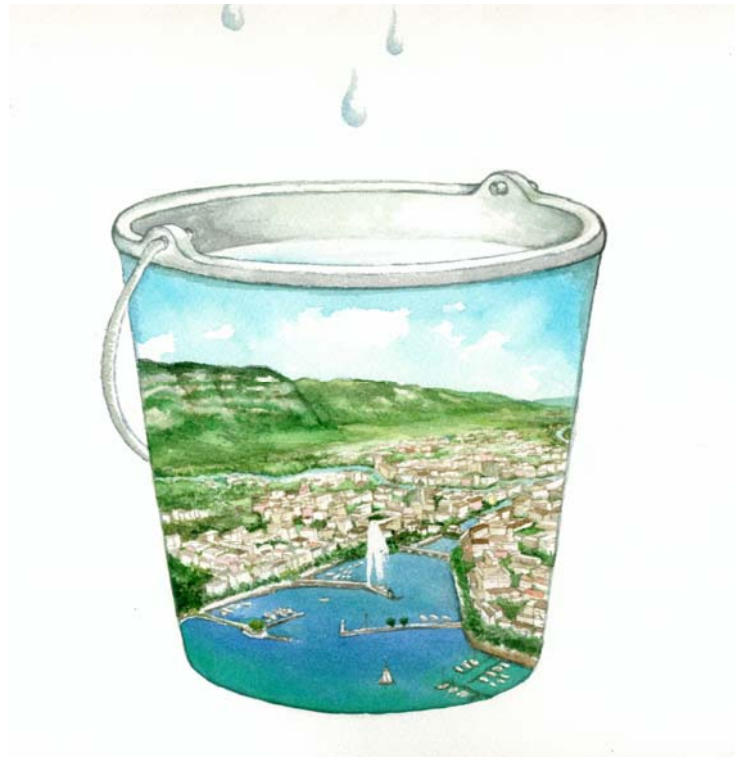


# **International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance**

Alianza Internacional para la Gestión del Agua Lluvia (IRHA)

Alliance Internationale pour la Gestion de l'Eau de Pluie (IRHA)

## **IRHA Secretariat**



## **Annual Report 2005**

## A growing worldwide constituency

As the most decentralised water supply option, *Rainwater Harvesting* has entered the political agenda as a complementary solution to acute water shortages, depleted centralised water supply systems, water waste and mismanagement practices. In some areas, rainwater management is the only option to access freshwater.

It is the cases of small islands and of very deep or depleted ground water tables. In some regions, such as Rajasthan, the existing water shortage had engendered the introduction of regulations obliging all new constructions to be provided for Rainwater Harvesting or groundwater recharge. In the island of San Andrés and old Providence in the Colombian Caribbean, it is a traditional practice as it is the main freshwater source.

By promoting the installation of affordable and appropriate rainwater systems, IRHA encourages the public sector, institutions, private businesses and individual *rain harvesters* to confront water shortages themselves – to empower themselves. IRHA is pursuing this task of empowerment of local partners in Nepal, Ethiopia, Mexico and Bulgaria, aiming to find a dignified place for rainwater management within national Integrated Water Resource Management plans.

## Geneva, the hub for rainwater harvesters

IRHA's VISION is safe freshwater for sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem conservation in all regions of the world.

IRHA's MISSION is to promote Rainwater Harvesting within the context of Integrated Water Resources Management, linking local social and economic development with the protection of vital ecosystems.

The Secretariat, based in the International Environment House II, in Geneva, is progressing towards a wider comprehension of rainwater management and its diverse utilisation to reduce poverty and contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.



## **Federating the Rainwater Harvesting Movement**

Since its creation in September 2002 at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, the Alliance was given the mandate to unify the dispersed individuals and organisations around the world committed to the promotion of rainwater harvesting. The IRHA's Secretariat in Geneva, its members and partners on five continents have been working to change the world's vision on the utilisation of rain. Since then, the founding members, the Consultative Committee and an Advisory Board have insisted on preservation its vision and mission.

There is a *growing interest* to include Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) options in national and local political agendas for water and development. IRHA has been very active at major events to influence Rainwater inclusion, and has contributed to start changing attitudes and reducing reticence among policy makers, donors and private companies. Bridging with the private sector in view of being recognised within the framework of Corporate Social Responsibility is an ongoing effort to diversify funding sources.

These stakeholders' political engagement is vital to mainstream and finance rainwater harvesting and management at national and local levels.

Political dialogue with decision makers in the water field is starting to bear fruit. Successful, but scattered rainwater projects carried out around the world by members of the Alliance and by other rainwater harvesters prove that massive scaling up is as necessary as pilot projects. IRHA maintains the principle that where highly decentralised rainwater options are appropriate, they must be considered as an integral part of local development and poverty reduction strategies. This approach is being implemented by IRHA's partners SEARNET in Eastern and Southern Africa, Watershed Organisation Trust in India, CIDECALLI in Mexico, NGO Forum for Water and Sanitation in Nepal, and by many others.

IRHA is convinced that the momentum must continue. Strengthening changes in the consciousness of policy makers, project managers, educators and community organisations is leading them to reconsider rain as a precious resource deserving better management and less waste. The fact is that most decision makers only seem to think about rain when there is either too much (floods) or too little (drought and starvation). A sustained long term vision for rainwater management is needed worldwide as a part of IWRM.

### **2005 Activities**

Associate executive directors Margarita Pacheco and Vessela Monta share responsibility for the IRHA Secretariat, coordinating a small team of professionals. The task is very demanding: the international platform for rainwater harvesters serves a constantly growing, world wide audience, whose initiatives need coaching and technical and institutional support.

### **Positioning RWH in Political Agendas: A must for scaling up and implementing local actions**

IRHA is active in major international events as a part of its commitment to continue influencing stakeholders to include RWH as a component of IWRM. Positioning rainwater management in political agendas means awareness raising, lobbying and ensuring the incorporation of RWH at local, regional and international levels, in Ministerial Declarations and UN Statements.

Geneva is the ideal city in which to carry out these activities due to its dynamic international setting, in the cooperation, humanitarian and business sectors. The presence of different UN agencies and international and Swiss NGOs engaged in these fields, helps IRHA to find synergies and solutions with many different partners and also to influence them.

During CSD 13 in New York, IRHA successfully lobbied government delegations and UN agencies to ensure that RWH was included in the official statements. These efforts resulted in the recommendation that rainwater management be considered in national plans as an appropriate low-cost technology to improve water resources. These political commitments have to be followed up however existing national RWH associations do not yet have the infrastructure to formally accomplish this task.

During the Alternative World Water Forum in Geneva, IRHA organised workshop presentations by partners from Ethiopia, India and Nicaragua. Partner visits to Switzerland only strengthen demands for maintaining an international RWH platform based in Geneva for political and strategic reasons.

IRHA was present at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification and was granted a stand in UN Nairobi, thus providing a platform to promote case studies from SEARNET, UNEP, WOCAT, UN HABITAT and other organisations engaged on food security strategies using RWH.

IRHA's exhibition booth in S-Dev 05 in Geneva presented a series of posters on urban RWH activities. Wilas Lohitkul, of IRHA member "Population and Community Development Association" (Thailand), presented livelihood improvements based on RWH practices. IRHA presented its own RWH project, implemented in an orphanage in Bulgaria, on the Canton of Geneva Solidarity Fund stand.



S-dev stand in Geneva

At the "EU Water Solidarity Week" in Strasbourg IRHA presented "Rain, a forgotten resource" and established contacts with potential Eastern European partners interested in projects in Slovakia, Serbia and Kosovo.

Throughout 2005, and alongside IUCN, WWF International and RAMSAR, IRHA actively participated with UNEP and UNECE in the Geneva discussions on the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes.

Following IRHA's lobbying the Colombian National Apprenticeship Agency (SENA) has decided to design a national level Rainwater Harvesting apprenticeship programme. This political will requires a follow-up in the three regions which have expressed interest of implementing the new training.

IRHA's preparation for the important 2006 4th World Water Forum in Mexico included 2005 negotiations with the Mexican National Commission on Water, with UNEP/PNUMA Latin America and the Caribbean, CIDECALLI, the Governor and Secretary of Rural Development of Puebla State.

Following the December SEARNET conference in Kigali, the Rwandan government addressed an official request for IRHA to help introduce RWH at a national level.



Maasai - WOTR - IRHA exchange in Africa

## **Project implementation**

Promoting project implementation has been one of IRHA's core tasks. However, in most countries where IRHA has been requested to intervene (such as Azerbaijan, Rwanda, Kenya and Belize), political and financial mechanisms are not yet in place to provide funding, subsidies, loans or tax exemptions, capacity building and technical expertise. New national Rainwater Harvesting strategies are needed to create the conditions to scale up good, local (but scattered) examples and influence regional and local authorities in both urban and rural environments.

Thanks to the Canton of Geneva's International Solidarity Fund IRHA's project in an orphanage in Bulgaria was terminated early in 2005. The children and staff from this public institution now benefit from the new RWH installation and have improved sanitation and hygiene. After a full year of functioning, the monthly water bill was reduced to 13% of previous years. The pilot project located in the small city of Blagoevgrad is providing an excellent example to replicate in other small towns. The same funding source granted IRHA resources for a pilot project in Bolivia which will be implemented in collaboration with Green Cross International and the Peace Corps in Bolivia in 2006.

Projects formulated by IRHA and partners lead to making grant requests for private sector co-funding with such companies such as ALCAN, FAIREY Ceramics and HOLCIM, which expressed interest in promoting their products via projects. This collaboration requires building a long term trust and convincing private partners of the profit they can obtain from joint cooperation.

Although IRHA continues to lobby bilateral donors and to sensitize them on the theme of RWH, few incorporate RWH specific directives, policies and spending into their programmes. Continued work on this in 2005 consumed more time and resources than planned.

Bottom-up proof of RWH success in water resource supply drives public policy in countries such as Nepal, India and Ethiopia but in general, big donors, private water providers and private financial institutions largely ignore the decentralised, economic, social and environmental benefits of RWH. IRHA is lobbying for all relevant groups to think outside the bore-hole.

## **Training, Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer**

Throughout 2005 the IRHA Secretariat gathered a wealth of useful material from all over the world for knowledge transfer. This material can be adapted to specific cultural contexts for the capacity building needs of IRHA's local partners, it facilitates South-South cooperation and transfer of know-how.

A Cooperation Agreement with the UN HABITAT Infrastructure Branch led to publication of 3 Blue Drop Series Guidebooks on "Rainwater Harvesting Utilisation" for which IRHA carried out the peer review. The guidebooks were launched in major UN events in Kenya, Geneva, Delhi and New York for educational purposes at country level.

UNHABITAT Water for African and Asian Cities Programme also proposed that in 2006 IRHA Secretariat establish testing methodologies for the Blue Drop Series in Nepal and Ethiopia within National Rainwater Harvesting Strategies.

The need to improve a dialogue between soil conservationists and rainwater harvesters in Africa became evident in 2005. The WOCAT-IRHA-CETRAD training activity in Nanyuki, Kenya, confirmed the necessity to revise conceptual and practical work with national institutions. IRHA's second Exposure and Dialogue Programme helped to share knowledge and build capacity in "Rainwater Harvesting and Soil and Water Conservation for Food Sovereignty" for some 20 project managers from over a dozen mainly African countries.

Thanks to IRHA's lobbying and assistance the Norwegian Refugee Council has included RWH in its Emergency Camp Toolkit 2005.

Workshops and discussions within the Geneva Environment Network during 2005, with the Canton of Geneva's "Domaine de l'Eau" water authority, with local political parties have greatly raised IRHA's profile in 2005 and interest to maintain the Secretariat in Geneva and offer capacity building services to different UN organisations.

The collaboration with IUED and HEI of the University of Geneva facilitated internships for 5 students, enabling them to complement their academic experience of Development or International Studies and to become part of an international team. A two-day training course on "Rainwater Harvesting: a sustainable solution" was given for a Nigerian delegation and University of Geneva students at the International Environment House.

During 2005 IRHA's E-Newsletter and the website were powerful awareness raising and communication tools to broaden the network, transfer information on training possibilities, technical advances, funding sources and a wide variety of initiatives. Newsletters reached 6,500 people by end 2005 and subscriptions increased monthly, as did visits to the web site.

## **Federating the RWH Movement**

The world faces huge demands for water and sanitation from its expanding population, yet despite government promises on the Millennium Development Goals there are numerous obstacles to overcome. IRHA's response has been to build a federative platform from which its members have a far greater chance of having their voices heard, whether they are from the North, South, East or West.

In October 2005 the IRHA launched a Charter for Membership in English, French and Spanish. The aim for coming years is to federate the RWH movement, building further on the Geneva platform and providing a voice to facilitate policy dialogue and project implementation. As a hub to the many regional and local organisations wishing to be affiliated value is added by greater visibility of local actions, by technological transfer and recognition, in shared knowledge and increased communication between partners. In parallel, this is contributing to strengthening national and local RWH associations and new constituencies.

## **Conclusion**

The IRHA Secretariat team has provided technical assistance & support to local partner's project formulation process and dissemination of their local work. This has also become a non-formal training support.

2005 saw an ever increasing demand from IRHA partners for aid in evaluation and scaling up project implementation. IRHA also received several requests from African and Asian partner organisations to contribute to the design of National RWH Strategies. This is the result of active Policy Dialogue, Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer activity in three years of active work. These costs were not taken into consideration in the original project so they have to be included as new activities within the core funding costs. Fundraising is a priority.

With the devotion and commitment of its professional team and despite the difficulties of developing its activities due to its "youth", IRHA Secretariat fulfilled its mission and obligations to its funding sources by implementing its 2005 Work Plan as laid out in the documents presented to SDC.

### ***Why drill for water?***

### ***Rainwater belongs to you!***

*Rain is the primary source of freshwater. Properly managed, rainwater becomes an immense reserve for drinking, sanitation, hygiene, productive uses and a basis for local development. All ancient cultures practiced rainwater harvesting. The Swiss-based International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) brings modern rainwater harvesting practices back into play – to improve livelihoods in communities and in households.*

**(Preparatory statement for the Swiss Fountain of Experience in the World Water Expo in Mexico in 2006)**