



International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance

Alianza Internacional para la Gestión del Agua de Lluvia (IRHA)
Alliance Internationale pour la Gestion de l'Eau de Pluie (IRHA)

bRAINstorming

NEWSLETTER No. 22 - NOVEMBER 2008

Our newsletter focuses on the activities in Rainwater Harvesting, field of the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) and its partners.

Topic of this issue: HUNGER IN THE WORLD

Editorial

Dear Rainwater Harvesters, Readers, the IRHA Members and Friends,

On October 16th, the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) celebrated the World Food Day. The aim of this annual celebration is to heighten public awareness of the world food problem and strengthen solidarity in the struggle against hunger, malnutrition and poverty.

It is indeed difficult to understand and even more difficult to accept that in our modern world, where science and technology have made such spectacular progress and where specialists of the FAO inform us that the world agriculture has the capacity to feed twice as many people as the present global population, one of the main problems we are faced with is hunger and food insecurity.

Food security is a universal human right, and one of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations, was to reduce by half the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. However, hunger is far from decreasing. Only in 2007, the number of undernourished persons increased by 75 millions, thus reaching 923 millions of people who suffer from hunger in the world.

Beyond the immediate multiple reasons for hunger, climate change poses the greatest threat to food security in the 21st century. Paradoxically, although agricultural communities, food producers and people who live in rural areas in poor countries, have contributed relatively little to the causes of climate change, they will be the most affected by scarcity or lack of crops, particularly in regions of rainfed agriculture. Indeed, the scarcity of water is an additional consequence of the climate change and among the main factors provoking hunger in the world.

When discussing climate change issues in regional, national and international agricultural development planning and policy-making fora then, rain collection should be considered as one of the simplest measures, therefore easiest to implement, to reduce crops vulnerability and attain food security. Not only can Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) be used to improve soil moisture, hence soil fertility, but also, it can reduce the amount of energy needed in the process of cultivation.

It proves that rainwater harvesting is a concrete way of enriching food availability. The FAO has already recognized the rainwater harvesting potential for food security in Sub-Saharan Africa. As the study made by Moïse Sonou¹ shows, the FAO invests in an important programme of RWH, aimed at nurturing rain-fed agriculture in various African countries.

Thanks to simple soil and water conservation methods, Rainwater Harvesting can also be practiced in school orchards and vegetable gardens. This not only enriches the diet of children, but links them to nature and food production, while encouraging their responsibility as individuals to work for the common good.

Gladys Ambort

(1) http://www.afdb.org/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/ADB_ADMIN_PG/DOCUMENTS/NEWS/PARAL-8-2-SONOU-FAO.PPT#13

PROFILE

Dr. Jean Ziegler, our Honorary Member



We take pleasure in informing you that since September 2008 the IRHA is privileged to count on Dr. Jean Ziegler as its Honorary Member.

Sociologist, writer, head of the Emmaus community in Geneva, renowned politician in Switzerland, where he was born and has lived until now, senior professor at the University of Geneva and the Sorbonne in Paris, France. Dr. Jean Ziegler has written several books on food and hunger in the world.

He was the Special Reporter of the United Nations on the Rights to Food from 2000 till March 2008. In this role, he reported on the situation of hunger and malnutrition in many countries including Nigeria, Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, Mongolia, Brazil, Palestine and Guatemala, among others. He is presently a member of the Consultative Committee of the United Nations Human Rights Commission.

Dr. Jean Ziegler is one of the most considerable protagonists of the alter-globalizations movement. He denounces what he calls the crimes committed in the name of global finance and capitalism. Among these crimes there would be the production of agro-fuel which diminishes the amount of land available to grow crops to feed people, he claims. He considers it to be a "crime against Humanity". Dr. Ziegler also denounces the policy of European agricultural dumping which destroys peasants' lives in the poor countries, as well as the lack of action of northern countries and their denial to provide resources to save people from dying from hunger whereas they produce millions of dollars to save their financial system. Therefore, he does not hesitate to affirm that "a child who dies of hunger nowadays is a child who is murdered".

Aware of the importance of rainwater harvesting as a means to fight against hunger, Dr. Ziegler immediately accepted the IRHA's suggestion to become its Honorary Member. His support encourages us to continue the promotion worldwide of the management of the water resource RAIN. It is true: the fight against hunger and thirst in the world is one fight.

A Quotation

"If one puts in effort and is helped by rain; next if dung¹ is laid, karma is activated."

*A proverb from the Union of Myanmar,
official name of Burma, in southeastern Asia,*

Most Myanmar people believe that to be successful three factors are essential, namely good karma, intelligence and effort. Karma means deeds. A good karma, generally speaking, is the result of good past actions and good present doings. So this proverb means that with effort, rain and natural fertilizer, karma will be on one's side and the land will surely yield.

¹ Natural fertilizer

The power of art contributes to the creation of a better world

Competition Geneva Raindrops Award 2007



As a means to accomplish its mission, which is to raise awareness amongst the populations of the world of the advantages offered by rainwater harvesting and to inform on the variety of technologies in this field, the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) launched an art competition in 2007 - the Geneva Raindrops Award.

One of the participants in the first contest was Shashidhar H.M., from India. He contributed the poster we are presenting here. This drawing suggests the possibility of enriching water availability by stopping the rain on the site on which it has fallen. It draws our attention to the terrace cultivation, a traditional practice in some parts of the world and completely neglected in some other regions.

The terrace cultivation is a method of growing crops on leveled horizontal parts of a hill. Apart from maximizing arable land area and reducing soil erosion, this method, combined with other techniques to keep or infiltrate rainwater on the terraced plots, helps to recharge the aquifer downstream. Terraces are particularly useful in areas where the rainfall is relatively low.

The IRHA Secretariat Projects



In the bucket

This section is dedicated to the IRHA projects which are ongoing, or already implemented.

Schools: how to cope with hunger? Blue Schools in the region of Koulikoro, Mali

This project is a part of the IRHA programme "[Blue Schools](#)"

Two schools in Mali have already their own vegetable gardens and in the school yards children take care of their young fruit trees. This project is a good example of the multidisciplinary diapason of the IRHA action. When we began to work in mid 2007, the pupils in the villages Zambougou Djitoumu and Dialakoro Djitumo used to go to school knowing that there would be no water to drink. Often, their school bags didn't keep even a small breakfast for breaking the hunger. Now, in the newly organized vegetable gardens, the women from the villages and the children after classes work in alternation.

The committees of Children-Parents-Teachers are responsible for the fair sharing of the vegetables. The exceeding production will be sold on the market.

In the school yards the young plants of fruit trees are growing with the same speed of the children's hope to have fresh fruits after classes.





50 cubic meters reservoirs keep the rainwater which fell during the rainy season.

Is it really difficult to fight against hunger and thirst in schools? The donors of this project (the Canton of Geneva, the French *Foundation Ensemble* and the Water Services Company in Geneva) were ready to bet that it isn't. The Malian partner, HIC-Mali, and the IRHA proved that good organization and a lot of work with the population is the guarantee of success.



In the pipeline

This section is dedicated to the IRHA projects which are under formulation or in a process of fundraising

Securing Food and Livelihood through Community-led Watershed Developments in Semi-arid, Draught Prone Regions in India: States of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, India



In ecologically fragile and rain fed regions of India, land degradation, local climatic variations and frequent droughts together with unsustainable resource exploitation have led to severe depletion of land, water and biomass resources; thus significantly reducing the availability of water, food, fodder, fuel for cooking and fibers for household consumption and economic production.

Poverty and hunger resulting from depleting water resources, environmental degradation and declining land productivity are forcing large numbers of rural households to abandon their villages and become “ecological migrants” in search of a living, often in hazardous conditions (sugarcane cutting, brick kilns, chemical factories, etc) and barely above subsistence level.

The Indian organization WOTR and the IRHA formulated a project seeking to address the issues of water, food and livelihood security for poor people living in semi-arid, ecologically fragile and drought prone regions of India, on a sustainable basis by undertaking integrated community-led watershed development. So, the main goal of the project is **to increase water, food and biomass availability** as a basis of poverty alleviation through empowerment of the village communities.

The project area is planned to be implemented in remote, backward and populated by predominantly tribal communities in two states of India, in Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh for a period of three years.

The project components, on which the two partners will work on, are:

- ✓ Improved water access;
- ✓ Social Development, a guarantee for sustainability;
- ✓ “Snowball effect”. Training and dissemination of the experience
- ✓ Collection of information, climate changes adaptation studies and dissemination of the results

The ongoing economic crisis and even previously risen of prices of food products make from this project a model, an event of the moment, for regions already affected by climate changes.

The project formulation is achieved and the IRHA is in a process of fundraising.

Events and Networking

DRINKING WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

Looking for development alternatives, the India Water Portal is organizing a capacity building series training on management of the quality of drinking water from 16 to 18 December 2008 in New Delhi, India.

The course is addressed to organizations. It is conceived to help understand the importance of water quality monitoring in water quality management, to impart technical skills on various practical aspects of water quality monitoring and management, and to promote surveillance of drinking water. [Read more](#)

AGRICULTURAL ENGINEERING INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION 2009

The Research Institute for Irrigation and Drainage, part of the Ministry of Agriculture of Cuba is organizing the Agricultural Engineering International Convention. This meeting will be held between the 2nd and the 5th of June, 2009 in Santiago, Cuba.

The Convention's main concern will be the Climate Changes and their impact on the Latin American and Caribbean Agriculture. It will be held in the Spanish language. [Read more](#)

Geneva Raindrops Award

Art and development: In search of creative minds!



The Geneva Raindrops Award 2008 Contest has been extended

In the last issue of the “bRAINstorming” e-newsletter, we informed you that the International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) was launching a competition intended to demonstrate the advantages of catching and using rainwater through Video Films.

The date for the final submission of the videos was 23rd November 2008, but due to technical reasons, we have extended it. The new deadline is 25th May, 2009.

You now therefore have more time to take your camera and reveal or unfold your creativity to promote effectively rainwater harvesting. Be kindly free to participate in the competition and contribute to the IRHA effort to sensitize people to the benefits of this practice of rain collection as one of the simplest among the several solutions to the problems related to the lack of water around the world!

Demonstrate to the world how talented you are, at the same time contributing to save the planet and ensuring a better future for humanity. Please visit our website, where you will find the rules of our **Geneva Raindrops Award 2008** contest. [Read Rules of the Competition](#)

Upcoming newsletter

The next issue of the IRHA "bRAINstorming" e-newsletter will deal with the large experience of our colleagues in USA.

IRHA will be asking you, our newsletter readers, to contribute to the writing of our future issues. Please send your articles, photos or comments linked to the topic announced. We thank you in advance for taking the time to making your e-newsletter and helping the IRHA focus on your needs.

The editor of the IRHA newsletter online

We are happy to confirm that we have kept our promise and that our newsletter online is already available in its three versions, English, French and Spanish. Our editor, Ms Gladys Ambort, would be pleased to reply you whenever necessary: secretariat@irha-h2o.org

Become a member

The IRHA members benefit from our extensive network and contribute to increasing rainwater harvesting in the world.

Become a member online (choose one of these):

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