



## **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. 25 - MAI 2009**

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

**Topic of this issue: 5<sup>th</sup> WORLD WATER FORUM – ISTANBUL**

### *Editorial*

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

The 5th World Water Forum (WWF) in Istanbul gathered politicians, water specialists, corporation representatives, professionals in the field of development as well as environmentally responsible citizens from 192 countries. The Forum, which takes three years of “gestation”, has become the focal point for everybody contributing to the resolution of the tremendous, most important problem of today and tomorrow: water sufficiency. The question is how to manage water, so that the ever increasing world population, its economy and the surrounding environment receive enough of what we already commonly call “blue gold” for their sustainable survival and development.

The UN agencies immensely participated, almost giving the impression that this major event was a UN conference. Fortunately, the NGOs and the CSOs had a larger role to play in the parallel events and programme which were being held in the exhibition hall. This is how they were able to show that their common engagement and the proximity to the needs of local populations are giving as a result the implementation of innovative and interesting solutions.

As an example of the NGO’s activities, the Watershed Development Trust (WOTR) and its two leaders, Mrs Marcella de Suza (a member of the IRHA Advisory Board) and Mr. Crispino Lobo (an IRHA founding member, and presently a member of the Advisory Board), received from the organizers the precious Kyoto Prize. With this satisfaction and admiration, Rainwater Harvesting, which is in the heart of the watershed development method implemented by this successful Indian NGO, received its official reward.

I heard superlative expressions as well as criticisms concerning the 5<sup>th</sup> WWF. When leaving the Forum, many of the participants were disappointed to see that, despite the recognition in previous drafts of the Ministerial Declaration, that water and sanitation were a human right, the final declaration defined them instead as a ‘basic human need’. But probably none of the over 33’000 participants can deny that this international meeting enriched the knowledge and catalysed, generated or favoured the creation of new contacts. As for the burning or thorny problem for everybody working in the water sector, the funding, this is another point...

Vessela Monta

## Some news from the 5<sup>th</sup> WORLD WATER FORUM - ISTANBUL

The 5th World Water Forum, which was organized by the World Water Council, was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 16 to 22 March 2009. The aim of this meeting was to find solutions to resolve the problem of water scarcity and the consequences of the dramatic climate changes to which the world population is presently confronted.

Among the representatives of Switzerland at the Forum, the Direction of Development and of Co-operation (DDC) held an information stand named "[The Swiss Fountain of Experience](#)". At this stand it promoted the sustainable use of water resources and the implementation of the principle of the integrated water management. Within this context, where professionals in this field were devoted to establish links among the North and the South, the rich and the poor, and between modern and traditional technologies of irrigation, the rainwater harvesting representatives had their say in the matter. For the installation of a network of rainwater harvesting is one of the simplest gestures which could easily help reduce scarcity of water, in the rich countries as well as in the developing ones.

It is in this direction that among other collaborators of the DDC, the IRHA made its presentations.

### The IRHA participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum

#### Blue Schools

The "Blue Schools" programme was presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> March. A project just implemented in Mali was introduced as an example of the advantage of providing access to water by means of rainwater harvesting. This, in combination with various other activities such as sanitation, re-forestation, creation of a vegetable garden in the school yard and a long run training of the young Malians and their parents on environmental matters, are giving as a result the improvement of their everyday life. [See animation photos](#)

#### Rainwater Harvesting for Climate Changes Adaptation

Under this title, our Executive Director, Ms Vessela Monta, emphasized the fact that Rainwater Harvesting has played an important role in the adaptation of human beings whenever they have been confronted with climate changes in their history, and prevented them from opting to migrate. Similarly, nowadays, the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Changes (IPCC) considers the expansion of Rainwater Harvesting as one of the main tools in the adaptation policy in the sector of Water<sup>1</sup>.

The very interesting presentations of a selection of high level panellists contributed to the interest of the public, shown in the subsequent debates.

Mr. Avinash Tyagi, Director of Climate and Water Department in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), started with his "Climate Changes: How Can Rainwater Harvesting Improve the Hydrological Balance".

Ms. Barbara van Koppen, Principal Researcher in the Southern Africa Regional Program of the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), presented "Rainwater Harvesting, a Powerful Pro-poor and Gender-equitable Tool for Adaptation to Climate Changes".

Mr. Mark Overmars, Adviser in Water & Hydrogeology in the Pacific Islands Applied Geosciences Commission, SOPAC, presented the highly important subject, "Rainwater Harvesting for Adaptation to Climate Changes in Pacific Island Countries".

All the subjects were perfectly well interrelated and complementary to each other. They were completed by an impromptu guest-speaker: Mr. Crispino Lobo, from the "WOTR" NGO, who has been practicing Rainwater Harvesting for the last 20 years in the semi-arid lands of the Indian state of Maharashtra. This region has been and still suffers from the clearly pronounced climate changes these past few years.

The IRHA is most grateful to all of these distinguished professionals who proved in a very clear way the importance of Rainwater Harvesting as a tool for Climate Changes adaptation.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, Climate Changes 2007 Synthesis Report, Topic 4: Adaptation and mitigation options and responses; inter-relationship with sustainable development at global and regional levels; Table 4.2.

## Citizen's House for Water



The Citizen's House for Water was the only harbor where participants as well as visitors of the 5<sup>th</sup> WWF could find peace and calm, away from the tumult caused by the permanent succession of sessions. That was a large space in a beautiful, ancient but well restored building, designed for a contest by Architecture students from the Istanbul University.

Furthermore, this highly interesting place organized by the [International Secretariat of Water \(ISW\)](#), an important Canadian NGO, did not only offer a quiet space for discussion. Behind the curved walls, its members presented well selected topics and gave their opinions on water, this most burning problem on the earth nowadays.

« **Climate Changes and Water: When the victims generate solutions** » was one of the numerous panels organized by the ISW. The moderator, Mr. Max Campos Ortiz, Executive Director of the *Comité Regional de Recursos Hidráulicos del Istmo Centroamericano* led the discussion with ability and presence, stressing the efforts of the NGOs to generate the local populations' capacity for adaptation to Climate Changes. Representatives from *Protos* (well-known Belgian NGO) addressed the audience about their experience in Mali, and an US based organization did the same about theirs in Bolivia. Our Executive Director, Vessela Monta, (photo), spoke about the Blue Schools project in the Himalayas, where children are trained to face the dramatic climate and social changes which will touch these remote regions of India.



## Our members



The IRHA finds it difficult to hide its pride that its member [WOTR](#) was awarded the Kyoto World Water Prize at the closing ceremony of the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum.

This award was presented to Dr. Marcella D'Souza, Executive Director of WOTR, in recognition of the outstanding contribution made towards organizing rural communities for watershed development and rainwater harvesting in an inclusive, equitable, sustainable and gender sensitive manner.

## TRAINING

### THE IRHA IS HEADED TO KENYA!



A training session on Rainwater Harvesting will be held in July 2009.

Partner: The Nairobi based company, ASAL (Arid and Semi-arid Lands) Consultants Ltd.

Dates: From 15 July to 25 July 2009.

Objective: To train a group of practitioners and NGO leaders in the rainwater rock catchments and water retention via sandy riverbeds.

Locations: The training will be held in the Kenyan town of Kitui, about 200 km from Nairobi.

If you are interested in taking part in the training, please [click here](#)

## RAIN AND ART - *The power of art contributes to create a better world*

A poem on Rain by Octavio Paz, Mexican poet, Nobel price on Literature in 1990.



### RELIEFS

( fragment from *A Uxmal*, 1966 )

The rain, dancing foot and long hair,  
the ankle bitten by the sunbeam,  
descends with drums:  
the corn opens its eyes and grows.

## Geneva Raindrops Award: **WARNING!!**

### The Geneva Raindrops Award 2009 Contest has been extended!



#### *Art and development: In search of creative minds!*

We remind you that the IRHA has extended its competition deadline for the final submission of the Video Films to the **17<sup>th</sup> November, 2009**.

We encourage you to participate! By doing so, you can contribute to save the planet and ensure a better future for humanity. Please visit our website, where you will find the [Rules of the Competition](#)

## The IRHA Secretariat Projects



### In the pipeline

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

### Helping build a new generation of environmentalists



A conference was held by the IRHA in its premises about rainwater as a resource to be rediscovered. It was intended to offer information related to this subject to adolescent students from the programme Pro Hygiene and Environment at the *Lycée professionnel Marie Curie* in Clermont Ferrand, France. Apart from remembering the basic aspects and advantages of rainwater harvesting, the Blue Schools programme and the roof rainwater harvesting techniques were presented to them.

Further collaborations with this school are not to be excluded, since they showed their interest in associating our Alliance to their own projects. They intend to install a system of rainwater harvesting in their school for sanitation and cleansing and would like to have our sponsorship. They also mentioned the possibility of associating us to a rainwater project they would like to develop in Mali.

## Upcoming newsletter

The next issue of the IRHA "bRAINstorming" e-newsletter will be devoted to our Honorary Member, Doctor Pathak, and his work in Sulabh International Social Service Organisation and its technical arm, the Sulabh International Academy of Environment.

## Become an IRHA member

We draw your attention to the fact that our charter for membership was amended. The new system has incorporated a one time entrance fee that replaces the annual fee for all the categories of members but the private sector. To read the new conditions of membership and become a member, please, [click here](#).

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