Improving lives through Emergency Rain Project

Marc Sylvestre, Program Manager at International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) visited Emergency Rain Project sites in his recent visit to Nepal. He closely witnessed the progress and challenges of Viswa Niketan Higher Secondary School, Tripureshwor and Liwali IDP Camp, Bhaktapur. Emergency Rain Project is being implemented between GUTHI and IRHA with the support of Republic and State of Geneva and City of Geneva.

Publisher's Note

In the month of May, Marc Sylvestre, Program Manager at International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) visited to Nepal for the first time. Sylvestre visited both Emergency Rain Project sites at Viswa Niketan Higher Secondary School and Liwali IDP Camp and interacted with the beneficiaries. He observed the progress of the project and challenges.

In this fifth issue of e-bulletin, we have reported about his visit and included an exclusive interview on how he observed about the project sites. Moreover, we have raised menstrual hygiene issue in Agenda column and other activities of GUTHI. In our regular Voices segment, we have included voices of representatives of various institutions working and advocating about water conservation in Nepal.
Marc observed the earthquake-affected people are struggling to initiate rebuilding process. “I am pleased to see that Emergency Rain Project has positive impact on both sites and assist them to sustain for a couple of years,” he said. He further added that it is a pilot project and they hope to get a bigger form.

Citing that the project has addressed the sanitation issues also, he said, “GUTHI has trained students and staffs with WASH issues in Viswa Niketan which helped them to be more aware of the risk that can be generated.” IRHA is supporting the school for the installation of rainwater harvesting. “We are also looking forward on what can be done more in terms of rainwater and sanitation,” he added. He is of the opinion that besides the technical part, beneficiaries should understand about the project components. For which he stressed on the need of awareness and training sessions.

During the school visit, Helamber Katwal, Principal of Viswa Niketan School, said, “The earthquake was only just a start of problem, the consequences it brought was disastrous for our school.” He further said, “Since the main building with rainwater harvesting system was collapsed totally, the school is facing difficulty to supply water for school. Toilets were also in poor condition.”

Being grateful for the extension of helping hands to help the school from the crisis, Katwal said, “We are thankful to GUTHI and IRHA for approaching us in such crisis.” He further said, “The project assisted us in maintenance of eight toilets for the students. And the work for installing rainwater system is on progress.” He assured that the school administration would take good care about the system and toilets.

Ganga Thapa, Vice-Principal at Viswa Niketan, said, “We are very grateful towards the project team and look forward for the support in future. Training sessions were very fruitful as the staff learned a lot about WASH issues and solutions.”

In a visit to Liwali IDP Camp, Sylvester was warmly welcomed in the project site. In a conversation with him, Narayan Khaito, President of Liwali IDP Camp Development Committee, said, “The camp was intended for two years with no work done for constructing buildings in the core area of Liwali.” In his disappointment, he said, “I think the community people have to live in the camp at least for next five years.” He further said that this is the reason why Emergency Rain Project is vital for the camp to manage water and sanitation issue. “We hope for your continuous assistance to the camp,” he explained to the IRHA representative.
Interview

Happy to See the Smiles

“Infrastructure development in project sites will bring change in terms of water supply, livelihood and improve the living conditions”

Marc Sylvestre, Program Manager at International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA), recently visited the projects sites in Liwali IDP Camp, Bhaktapur and Viswo Niketan Secondary School, Tripureshwor to observe and interact with beneficiaries. Sujata Awale talked with him about his first visit to the project sites, challenges and solutions. Excerpts:

How was your visit to the project sites?

I was very happy to visit sites of intervention of Emergency Rain Project. This is my first time that I got chance to understand closely the complex issues of the people in their daily lives. It was good to understand how GUTHI works on a daily basis with the community, with stakeholders, with local school and local authorities. I am amazed by the job that has been done so far. It was quite challenging and now we see them doing the job well.

What is the progress that you have seen in project sites?

We have done pretty much good work and I want to congratulate GUTHI for that. GUTHI handled the most difficult part to gain confidence with the community and building healthy relationship. We can say that it is a co-developed and co-construct project. It is inclusive project involving school authorities in each level of decision. Infrastructure development in project sites will bring change in terms of water supply, livelihood and improve the living conditions. I have been repeating in the technical visit with GUTHI that the assumption is to gain assurance from the community to make them capable of maintaining infrastructure and keep functioning for the long term.
What are the problems and challenges have you seen in the project sites regarding maintaining water, sanitation and hygiene?

The challenge is of course the fact that we need more space to accommodate with sufficient sanitation facilities as WHO recommends one sanitation facility for 20 children. Often in such a dense and urban area it is difficult to reach that criteria but at least we need to move towards improvement of the sanitation issues of students and teachers. I think we need to take account of the earthquake as well. That brings fragility and such external factor needs to be integrated. So we will try to see the potentiality that exists to go beyond the Viswa Niketan School to keep it as a base. We incubate the knowledge experience-sharing platform for discussion. We can also improve the slum neighborhood as large amount of students come from there.

In Liwali camp, challenges are huge and numerous but what makes me optimistic is that our intervention of installing rainwater-harvesting tank and to restore ground water resources that has been designed for a long-term perspective. At least these infrastructures will allow certain amount of water to supply and based on this infrastructure we will help to cope with reconstruction work and getting back to normal state. It will take time normally but we hope that it can serve this purpose.

What are your suggestions to improve WASH issue in those areas?

I would say that the infrastructure improvement needs to be carried out in terms of constructing new latrines, new sanitation facilities. This should be again inclusive with community to raise awareness on the issues, train them on water, sanitation and hygiene practices and supported to improve the living conditions. It also need to make sure that all the necessary software are in place such as the local users' committee; so that the investments made on infrastructure will run for long time and owned at the community level.

Infrastructure development is one component, which I would say, is the easiest part. The most challenging part of the development sector is to reach this appropriation by the community.

The project integrates components such as disaster risk management; through trainings of trainers that will reproduce their learning at the school and at the communities. The construction of infrastructure embedded to provide the local people with the income generating activities and economic development can also support to create small businesses.
What are your future plans?

Based on this first pilot project there is a room to scale up reaching out to more beneficiaries with the rainwater harvesting system, sanitation services and disaster risk management. And I think we will also try to reach out with donors and present them what have achieved.

Finally;

I would like to congratulate GUTHI for accomplishing very difficult work. There are lots of external factors and constraints that blocks the implementation and progress of the project. But they were capable because of dialogue, communication, link and understanding at community level. Handling the project positively and resolving the issues were praiseworthy.

The project has been possible because of the support of Republic and State of Geneva and the City of Geneva. I am really thankful for their support and hopeful for the continuation to the next level.
Menstrual Hygiene: Going Beyond Sanitary Napkins

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) ‘a need or a luxury’ has been a long-time and most frequently debated issue. Once again, this issue was the limelight for the media coverage with various pictures of successful women depicting how beautiful is it to bleed, how a packet of sanitary pad helps to manage their period days but what is the ground reality?

Is packet of sanitary pad only sufficient for menstrual hygiene management? What about safe disposal? Nutritious diet? Water supply? When it comes to the safe menstruation and hygiene management, it’s only linked with the availability of pads, which of course is important but not sufficient; there again come the issues of disposing them without contamination. It is also essential to understand how they maintain their reproductive hygiene, are they taking nutritious diet or not? Or are they restricting themselves from mobility due to lack of toilet? These things are very essential to be considered when our behavior is still guided by traditional stereotypes.

In a pilot test survey among the adolescent girls regarding MHM in the public school at Morang district it was found that only 33.6 percent had few knowledge hygiene, rest were unknown about it. This lack of awareness is somewhere also related with the lack of effective incorporation and dissemination of menstrual hygiene issues in personal hygiene. For a menstruating girl, managing her flow and concealing it with best possible sanitary napkin may be hygiene management. But again she has also to be aware that she needs to dispose used pads properly, take all the necessary diets. A woman at the remote area who are also victims of social taboos and unknown about the possible cases of hygiene and contamination, there might be high possibility of reproductive morbidity. Hence, the management aspect would not be sufficient rather there is also a need for the social reformation.

Safe menstruation has been recognized as the right and dignity of women. It is necessary to ensure that each woman can enjoy her right. Each individual and the state as a whole should have obligation to facilitate for safeguarding of this right. Hence, there is dire need for the prioritization of MHM in WASH policy, incorporation in school curriculum and making gender friendly toilet a priority. It is important to understand by all of us that MHM is not only about availability of pads; rather it is about considering other aspects of hygiene for better health.
Rainwater Harvesting Improved Lifestyle in Kaski

Uzabi Baidar

Every year Kaski district receives a 517 mm of rainfall. However, in most of the places of Kaski district, including Thumki and Rupakot, people are deprived of adequate water supply. KANCHEEP Nepal, in partnership with International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) supported by Prince Albert II of Monaco Foundation and Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation completed four Blue School Projects benefitting over 1,100 students with access to water and sanitation facilities in the fiscal year 2013/14. Further, the project also enhanced health and hygiene facilities along with environmental protection through plantation and solid waste composting.

“The remote areas of Kaski districts like Thumki, Rupakot and Hansapur, do not have natural water system. This is why these areas are facing water scarcity,” said Nirmal Adhikari, Program Coordinator at KANCHEEP Nepal.

Similar is the situation of schools of the areas. Due to lack of water sources, schools are unable to manage water resulting in poor sanitation and increased students’ absences. In absence of water sources, people in the remote village has no other option but to walk for more than an hour to reach the springs in search of water. However, recently people have come across the better option for meeting their water demand; rainwater harvesting. Since a very long time, people have been collecting rainwater traditionally.

At present schools and communities of the remote areas are provided with a systematic rainwater harvesting system. Under the project, the water is collected in 10,000 liter Ferro-cement tank that has mitigated the water scarcity risk to some extent. “Previously we have to walk for an hour to reach to the nearest stream to wash our clothes.

After the installation of rainwater harvesting system, we can save our time and utilize it on concentrating our studies,” said a local resident at Rupakot.

In the fiscal year 2015/16 further two schools have been approved for Blue School Project informed Nirmal. The project has been recently completed in Ananda Jyoti Higher Secondary School (AJHSS) benefitting 406 students and 24 teachers and staffs.

“The time consumed for fetching water has been reduced significantly. Previously students did not attend the school during the time of menstruation and diarrhea. But, after the installation of rainwater harvesting system and proper management of toilets, the rate of absences have decreased,” said Sarda Adhikari, a non-teaching staff at AJHSS.

Binita Buddhathoki, a student at AJHSS informed that they did not have adequate water facility in their school before installation of water harvesting system, which resulted in unhygienic and dirty toilets. Being grateful to the project, she said, “After installing of the system, we are provided with clean and hygienic toilets.”
Nepal Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (NeRHA) called a stakeholder meeting in May, to discuss the importance of rainwater harvesting system in reconstruction after the earthquake. GUTHI team took the opportunity to take views of stakeholders about it. Here is what they had to say:

Sanjeev Rana, Executive Director, Kathmandu Valley Water Supply Management Board

It is well known fact that there is a huge gap between demand and supply of water. Rainwater harvesting is efficient and proven solution to fill this gap. But it is yet to develop public trust about the rainwater harvesting system. Identifying right approach to promote the technology is required to raise awareness about this technology.

Bimal Kedia, Member of Parliament

Rainwater is a gift of nature. Everyone should preserve and collect it as much as possible. The government should make installation of rainwater harvesting system mandatory while constructing house. Along with that recharging of the groundwater also should be done.

Nirmal Adhikari, Program Coordinator at Kanchan Nepal

Firstly, it is essential to aware people about rainwater harvesting system. Community members are required to enhance skills and capacity with sense of ownership for realizing them about the potential of rainwater harvesting concept.

Laxman Joshi, Executive Director at ENPHO

ENPHO has been working in rainwater harvesting concept since 2002 still there is still long way to go. It is high time that we think deeply on to change the perspective about rainwater and its usage and why to invest in ground water recharge for social benefit.

A.K. Mishra, Former Joint Secretary, Ministry of Urban Development

Unless we advocate the concept to the government body, nothing much is going to change, as ultimately the government needs to take charge and implement the concept. They should be made responsible to reform existing policy to incorporate the rainwater harvesting technology specially focusing on reuse, recharge and restoration of water bodies.
Nepal is considered to be in seismic prone area and riskier in terms of disaster. With a view to give trainers training on disaster risks management, GUTHI organized a two-day training session for internal staffs on Disaster Risk Management on May. Marc Sylvestre, Program Manager, International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IRHA) facilitated the training session to the eight participants.

The objective of the session was to provide insight about various types of disasters and associated risks in urban areas. During the session, Sylvestre oriented the participants with the concept of disaster risk management and highlighted about risk prevalent in urban areas. The training session focused on how to reduce vulnerability of people living in disaster prone areas. Moreover, he provided insights on the prevention and coping mechanisms to be carried during the disaster.

He introduced Disaster Risk Management Cycle enlightening the phase of disaster that includes disaster response, recovery, mitigation, and preparedness. “While carrying out any development activities, it is crucial to identify the risk factors associated with our intervention. It is necessary to understand whether our activities are harmful or beneficial in long term,” said Sylvestre.

On the second day, Sylvestre explained the participants on various tools necessary for indication of vulnerability due to disaster in community. He trained participants about baseline mapping, 3D participatory mapping and transect walk techniques.

“Before the training we were unaware about the vulnerability of project sites and its threat. But now we are conscious about the constant threat of flood in both Liwali and Viswo Niketan School,” said Neha Basnet, Community Mobiliser of Emergency Rain Project. She further added that the training assisted her to understand disaster risk as well as its preparedness. According to Basnet, they will soon conduct disaster risk management training to the project sites to aware locals.

“The training was fruitful to me as it helped me to understand various disasters that may occur in urban areas,” said Manashree Newa, Intern at GUTHI. She further said, “I got chance to learn practical ways of disaster mapping and management in the training,” adding that group work and discussions gave her new ways of analysis.
PACT Committee Formed

With a view to manage water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues PACT Committee was formed in Viswa Niketan Higher Secondary School at Tripureshwor. Ten-member committee was formed under the Emergency Rain Project that included teachers, students and parents.

The main objective of the committee is to identify challenges related to WASH in school, discuss among members, dispatch information and take necessary steps to solve them. Each member has given specific roles and responsibilities in order to maintain the WASH status of the school.

The committee will be responsible to plan and implement activities regarding WASH in the school. Members of the PACT Committee will be responsible for the maintenance of newly installed rainwater harvesting system and sanitation facilities. The committee will facilitate maintenance cost of both installed rainwater-harvesting system and toilets. It also will keep the record regarding water facilities and their supply.

It will be responsible for the administrative and financial support for the project. Monitoring sanitation status of the school such as cleanliness of the vessel used to store and fetch drinking water, record the numbers of dustbin in each class, toilets and other necessary areas will be done by the committee.