



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 N° 42 – DECEMBER 2011

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Contact

International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance
International Environment House 2,
Chemin de Balexert,
1st Floor,
1219 Châtelaine,
Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 797 4157

Editor
Hannah Price
hannah@irha-h2o.org

French Translator
Mafalda Tudal

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This month's topic:

2011 at the IRHA An overview of the year

Editorial

Dear Rainwater Harvesters, Readers, IRHA Members and Friends,

The time has come for me to take the lead from Hannah, our excellent Communications Officer, and to address my last message of the year to you.

We are wrapping up 2011 convinced that we are on the right path. Rainwater Harvesting is becoming a real political issue; it is finally reaching the top of some development agendas and it is among the topics and conclusions of keynote speeches made during high-level forums. It is recognised as THE tool for adaptation to climate change in the Water Sector, and is pointed out as one of the most successful means in the "Nexus" policy to unify the sectors of Water, Energy and Food production.

Thinking about the inevitable balance of the passing year, we can proudly say that the IRHA succeeded in all its enterprises. Please think about the number of the Blue Schools achieved, under implementation or planned for next year! Think also about the "Raindrops Geneva Award", held for the third time since 2007, which in a few days will reward the best artists who have put their art in service of our cause!

Finally, let us say that our job will become even more important during the new year. Even in Switzerland, the 'water tower of Europe', slowly but surely water scarcity is taking root, and every year newspapers burst with the titles "*Let us not mince our words: it is drought*" and "*The drought breaks records*". In the future we may be more likely to organise competitions for the highest number of days without rainwater rather a Raindrops Award... Meanwhile, we hide behind our abundant and good quality tap water, avoiding the explanation that this is temporary and due to the Alpine glaciers melting like the butter on your toast this morning.

These challenges have put the bar higher and we must work better, faster and in a higher number of projects: as you see, almost an Olympic programme!

I am closing this last editorial of the year thanking you for being so supportive and active in the practice of the fascinating job of Rainwater Harvesters.

On behalf of IRHA, I wish you a rainy, happy, successful and peaceful 2012!



Vessela Monta
Executive Director



First pillar - Project implementation

Our **First Pillar** focuses on project implementation in the field. All our projects are from the Blue Schools programme where we use rainwater harvesting to introduce a clean and sustainable water supply along with decent sanitation and many other activities such as reforestation and training.

2011 was an extremely successful year for our Blue Schools programme as we started projects in seven schools located in four Sub-Sahara African countries; Togo, Benin, Senegal and Nigeria. In total these projects will improve the lives of 6,100 children and teachers. We also have two projects in Nepal and Ghana (described below) funded and ready to start in 2012, and two in Burundi and Kenya currently in the fundraising process.

Blue Schools figures for 2011:

- The construction of **15 tanks** is almost complete
- **151 toilets** and urinals are ready or being built
- Reforestation of school grounds with **4,388 trees** will soon be finished
- The creation of **4 vegetable gardens** has begun
- **6 PACT Committees** have been created
- **4,503 children, teachers and local masons** have started their training

For details and descriptions of all the individual Blue Schools projects, visit our [website](#) or read the [IRHA Blue Schools Programme](#) newsletter from July.

Blue Schools in mountainous regions

This year, the IRHA worked on an extension to the Blue Schools programme, focused on regions in mountains. The "Blue Schools Plus" was accepted by the Global Mountain Issues Programme of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) as an important approach for sustainable development in these regions. In the public - private partnership initiative organised by SDC, a project in Nepal - the first element of the package of proposals prepared by IRHA for Blue Schools Plus in 11 different mountainous regions - found the support of the Municipality of Bagne (a beautiful area of the Swiss Alps). The IRHA is now preparing to start its work in this fascinating country.

Even in more developed countries, mountainous areas are often the last to see development, making them important regions to concentrate our efforts on. Due to the inaccessible nature of these regions, infrastructure, such as piped water supplies, can be difficult and expensive. This makes mountainous areas ideal for our Blue Schools projects, as it will provide these remote schools with sustainable access to water and improve their sanitation, nutrition and development.

Blue Schools in Tamale, Ghana

In 2011, IRHA decided to share with the community of Swiss NGOs its ideas and experience accumulated during 6 years of work on its Blue Schools programme. Now, many other Swiss organisations are starting to work on this programme, supported by the SDC. We are proud that our programme was appreciated and taken as a model for work on development in schools and that we can contribute to enlarging the number of Blue Schools projects in the world. SDC is funding and carefully following up this implementation.

In the frame of this action, the SDC funded the work of IRHA in 12 schools in Tamale, Ghana. This will have more than 6,000 direct beneficiaries and will affect the lives of many tens of thousands of people living in the communities.

[Read about Blue Schools in Tamale, Ghana...](#)

Blue Schools site visit

In November, our Project Manager, Pierrick Imhof, visited Senegal, Togo, Benin and Ghana to assess the current and completed Blue Schools projects in these countries:

"My site visit to West Africa started in Senegal. A project of two Blue Schools is currently underway in the commune of Kahone, located not far from Kaolack, in the central region. These two schools, Kahone 1 and Fass Kahone, have a total of 1,150 children and 30 teachers. The team of the local partner, Caritas Kaolack, and I visited the school of Kahone 1 where the project began in April 2011..."

[Read more...](#)

Blue Schools activities in 2011



New rainwater tank in Togo



Construction of the toilets in Benin



The new toilets in Senegal: boys (above) and girls (left)



Rainwater tanks under construction in Nigeria

[Visit our website for more Blue Schools photographs](#)



Second Pillar - Capacity building and awareness raising

There were two stand-out activities under our **Second Pillar** in 2011: the Rainwater Harvesting Joint Statement and Raindrops Geneva Award.

Rainwater Harvesting Joint Statement

The Rainwater Harvesting Joint Statement was issued with two other organisations, ARCSA and IRCSA, in order to meet World Water Day 2011. The Statement's goal was to bring the attention of many to the benefits of rainwater harvesting, and involved local, national and international NGOs, media, local and national authorities, universities and technical schools and private companies.

By World Water Day, 45 organisations from 19 nations had signed the Joint Statement and it had been translated into nine languages. Many signatories went further, organising activities around the Statement and distributing it throughout their own networks.



Kenya Rainwater Association and RainWater Cambodia distributing the Joint Statement



On Tuesday 22nd March 2011, World Water Day, the IRHA organised a Press Conference to release the Rainwater Harvesting Joint Statement. Ms Adèle Thorens Goumaz, a National Councillor for the Canton of Vaud and a member of the Swiss Green Party, along with Ms Vessela Monta, IRHA Executive Director, and Mr Alain Dick, IRHA President, spoke at the conference.

[Read more...](#)

Raindrops Geneva Award 2011

2011 also saw the completion of our third, and most successful, Raindrops Geneva Award. After awarding posters and short films in the previous two competitions, this year we were looking for photographs. In collaboration with [Photojournale](#), we asked photographers, both professional and amateur, to enter their photographs that best showed the practical uses and benefits of rainwater harvesting.



Raindrops Award

Geneva 2011

We had an amazing response, with almost 500 photographs entered from more than 50 countries. The standard was very high, with many stunning photographs that beautifully illustrate the use and benefits of rainwater harvesting. It has made our job of choosing a winner very hard, however...

We are pleased to announce that the winners of Raindrops Geneva Award 2011 will be revealed next week - keep an eye on our website and Facebook page to see who the winners are!

[Read more...](#)

Other awareness raising activities

Other activities under the Second Pillar include a presentation by Ms Vessela Monta at the Certificate for Advanced Studies (CAS) on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) of the University of Bern in August, and provision of short films at the Green Film Festival.

All these activities have helped us raise the profile of rainwater harvesting throughout the world and we aim to continue this good work into 2012.

Third Pillar - Federating the RWH movement

Our **Third Pillar** works towards the federation and unification of the global rainwater harvesting movement. The principle activity in this area is attaching members to the Alliance; members include organisations, individuals, institutions and private sector companies.

We highlight the work of our members and they help us spread the word about rainwater harvesting. In 2011 we produced two newsletters dedicated to our members: the first, about [Private Sector Members](#), in April and the second, on the [Organisation Members](#), in November. Many of our members also participated in the Rainwater Harvesting Joint Statement as well as contributed their expertise in the various other IRHA newsletters released during the year.

By the end of 2011, we have 91 members from 39 countries.

Why I became an IRHA Individual Member

By Elaine Coles

Managing Editor of WaterBriefing

"In my capacity as Managing Editor of WaterBriefing, membership of the association has provided me invaluable information and contacts.

"The UK water companies are increasingly interested in these issues and monitor the development of rainwater harvesting and grey water systems. Both of these have potential to make a significant contribution to water conservation, which is of growing importance to an increasingly water-stressed UK.

"The IRHA's considerable expertise in this field enables me to keep up with latest developments in both the UK and overseas and stay up to speed with the latest technologies, systems and equipment.

"I expect to make increasing use of IRHA's resources in the future."



Fourth pillar - Political positioning of RWH

Our **Fourth Pillar** includes work to influence policy at local, national, regional and international levels, thereby raising Rainwater Harvesting to the top of the political agenda.

“A Glass of Rainwater?”

Meeting with Heads of Missions to the UN of the countries where the IRHA has implemented its “Blue Schools” Programme

On Monday 5th December 2011, representatives from the Missions of Burundi, Nepal, Senegal, Switzerland and Togo attended this meeting. Except Switzerland, all these countries either have a Blue Schools project underway or have project planned to start in 2012.



The meeting included an interesting discussion, with many of the diplomats showing their support and enthusiasm about using rain as a water resource in the schools of their countries. The meeting finished with promises of closer collaboration, including ideas to improve links with the relevant local and national authorities in the countries of implementation.

[Read more...](#)

Verbier Green Pioneering Summit

From 9th to 11th December 2011, Verbier, one of the most prestigious Swiss Alps stations and a famous ski resort, was the host of the third **VerbierGPS**. Launched in 2009, it aims to present models of sustainable development of mountainous regions, linking high social values with technical innovations and experiences.

During these three days, scientists, sponsors and Chief Officers from the SDC, business representatives engaged in the Green Economy, economists and NGO leaders exchanged their knowledge and achievements.

Vessela Monta, the IRHA Executive Director, had the chance and the privilege to take part in the Forum, enjoying the dynamism of the participants, the generosity of the hosts and the possibility to introduce the IRHA to this high forum.



[Read more...](#)



IRHA news and activities

Blue Schools downloads

There is a new page on our website where you can download a variety of booklets, leaflets and flyers about our Blue Schools programme. From a general overview of the programme to detailed factsheets about each individual project; you can find out all about the Blue Schools programme [here](#).

Journalists for RWH

We are looking for journalists with an interest in rainwater harvesting to join our newly created group: “Journalists for RWH”. We will dedicate a page on our website to all articles written by journalists who are part of this group, as well as publishing them in the newsletter and on Facebook and Twitter. If you are interested in joining, email secretariat@irha-h2o.org

[See the flyer...](#)

[Read more...](#)



Rainwater Harvesting news

The 3rd IWA-RWHM International Conference

The Seoul National University Rainwater Research Center (RRC), in collaboration with Goseong-Gun, is organising the 3rd IWA Rainwater Harvesting Management International conference between 20 and 24 May, 2012 during the World Dinosaur Expo 2012 at Goseong, South Korea.

IRHA Video Corner

The IRHA Video Corner showcases interesting and informative short films on several different aspects of rainwater harvesting.



Join us online and get involved!

If you have any ideas, examples or questions about rainwater harvesting, please share them with us on our **Facebook** and **Twitter** pages.



Upcoming Newsletter

The next edition of bRAINstorming will look at our Private-Sector Members. If you have any ideas, articles or pictures that you would like to contribute, please send them to us at:

newsletter@irha-h2o.org

Subscribe to the Newsletter

To subscribe or unsubscribe, please email us at:

newsletter@irha-h2o.org

Become a Member

The IRHA Members benefit from our extensive network and contribute to increasing the global use of rainwater harvesting. Visit our **website** for more information.