

Rain Water Harvesting – A Measure to Climate Change Adaptation

By Mary Mwendwa

Rain water harvesting, may be just another coping mechanism for communities struggling with unpredicted weather patterns, a humanitarian organization has suggested. The impacts of climate change are already visible, in the sense that temperatures and rainfall variability have increased in the past decades. A lot of water goes to waste when heavy rains are experienced in Kenya. Many communities have not fully invested in rain water harvesting techniques which could supply them with water for several months before the dry spells sink in. Rain water harvesting has been listed among specific measures that the water sector in Africa need to undertake to cope with the changing harsh climatic conditions.

According to Malik Adan, Project Officer, Kenya RedCross, Isiolo Branch: "Apart from other humanitarian work we do, we saw a need of clean water supply to the people of Isiolo, as an organization we have intervened by building tanks in places like Gasarsa, we set up six tanks with a capacity of 10,000 liters', the tanks are used to store rain water that is harvested when it rains."

Khadija Jillo, a mother of seven from Martaba, Isiolo County: "I have decided to invest in tanks so that when rain water is in plenty I harvest water, as you know here it is very dry, we rarely get rains, so any time it rains by chance, iam assured of clean water from the heavens." Isiolo County is among the dry regions in Kenya which have experienced the harsh effects of climate change in the recent past many have lost livestock and children heavily burdened by malnutrition."

Isiolo town experiences water shortages regularly, Khadija Ramah, Director of Pepo La Tumaini Jangwani Children's Home, confirms on how as a facility taking care of orphaned and neglected children, they have been forced to harvest water and invest in home base gardens."We were taught the hard way

by the weather here, we can no longer sit and watch as our lives are put in danger, we have tanks and small gardens in this facility, the harvested water supplements our needs in a very big way.”She says. Khadija notes how her orphanage takes care of children who are infected with the HIV/AIDS.” These children have very special needs and at times when there is less funding I rely on our own resources for their nutrition support, these gardens help a lot and the clean water harvested is just a savior.”

Rainwater harvesting provides an independent water supply during regional water restrictions and in developed countries is often used to supplement the main supply. It provides water when there is a drought, prevents flooding of low-lying areas, replenishes the ground water level, and enables dug wells and bore wells to yield in a sustained manner. It also helps in the availability of clean water by reducing the salinity and the presence of iron salt.

Similarly, rain water harvesting makes use of natural resources and reduces flooding, storm water, erosion and contamination of surface water with pesticides, sediment, metals and fertilizers. The water has no chemicals such as fluoride and chlorine, hence very safe for domestic use.

As Kenya struggles to find ways of helping its community cope with climate change, Rainwater harvesting is a readily available measure utilized.

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