

Status of Rainwater Harvesting in Nepal

In recent years collection of rainwater for domestic use has been promoted in Nepal by various agencies. The Department for Water Supply and Sewerage has produced some technical guidance on application and construction of rainwater systems, and several other sector agencies and NGO partners have followed suit (RWSSP-Finnida, Helvetas, NEWAH, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Board, Biogas Support Programme and the NGO Forum for Urban Water Supply and Sanitation). In the process, experience has been gained in suitable technical, social and financial aspects of rainwater harvesting.

Currently it is estimated that over 11000 systems are in use in the hill districts of Nepal. A recent survey reported that around 78% of the users were satisfied with the service (Laia Domenech, MPPW & WHO-Nepal, November 2008). It can be concluded therefore that some 47'000 people are getting a satisfactory service out of rainwater harvesting, often in water stress areas (uphill areas in Kaski, Tanhu, Doti, etc).

The Department of Urban Development and Construction has been working since early 2006 on promotion of rainwater harvesting in the urban areas. This effort is supported by UN-Habitat, NGO Forum for Urban Water Supply and Sanitation, ENPHO, Lumanti, etc. DUDBC has just produced a final draft of the RWH Guidelines which are to be used to guide municipal authorities and those engaged in the building trade. The focus of the guidelines is on collecting safe water for domestic purposes, conservation of water in the urban setting and management of drainage and flooding.

Government policy

The policies of the Government of Nepal aim to provide an adequate basic supply of safe drinking water to all its citizens. The methodologies of ensuring such access have been laid down in various government documents which guide the water supply development activities of government and NGOs.

In some instances coverage is not possible or sustainable using groundwater or surface water as households may be situated at an elevation that makes the supply of water within a reasonable distance from the household impossible, or because the quality of the water is compromised by chemicals such as arsenic. In such instances, project authorities may consider supporting a domestic or institutional rainwater harvesting system.

Rainwater is a valuable resource, which should be exploited in the most efficient way to protect the people's health and livelihood. To ensure good utilization and conservation of water resources, the Government of Nepal has prepared a policy on rainwater harvesting to promote suitable developments in rainwater harvesting for human consumption and domestic use, and facilitate guidance and capacity building.

The policy aims to

- foster optimum utilization of rainwater to cater for the needs of rural and urban households that face shortages of water for daily use;
- stimulate development of technical and financial solutions to effective rainwater harvesting in domestic and institutional settings;
- provide an enabling framework for local government and ngos to encourage and facilitate application of rainwater harvesting in all suitable situations.

Thus, the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works, with its departments; and in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government, will promote the application of rainwater harvesting through support for research, piloting and evaluation of all relevant aspects of the rainwater harvesting chain. To that end the Ministry will encourage its departments, NGOs, universities and the private sector to develop and test suitable technologies and approaches.

Rainwater Harvesting has gradually been gaining interest in both the urban and rural areas. To further raise the capacity in Nepal, the Ministry of Physical Planning and Works has consulted stakeholders and has drafted a concept for a Policy on Rain Water Harvesting.

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