



## The Addis Ababa Declaration Unlocking the Potential of Rainwater

July 2015

The participants and supporting organisations of the International Rainwater Harvesting Symposium 2015 (click [here](#) to read the full proceedings, including presentations) call on policy makers, donors and practitioners to acknowledge the huge positive impact that rainwater harvesting at landscape level can exert on climate resilience, food security, and WASH. This declaration is based on the premise that rainfall is an important manageable resource that is available for wider use. Rainwater harvesting should be scaled up and integrated into broader policies, strategies and plans to increase its potential impact. We urge the immediate development of effective policy actions at local, national, and regional level in order to support the mobilization and use of rainwater for food security and rural livelihood improvement.

### Rainwater harvesting has multiple benefits

Limited and unreliable rainfall is a huge challenge for livelihoods in Africa's tropical and sub-tropical drylands. It is associated with land degradation, soil erosion, poor social and physical infrastructure, water scarcity, poor agricultural yields, low animal productivity, poverty, poor health, and malnutrition. Rainwater harvesting, the collection and management of rainfall for storage and reuse, is an underexploited means to improve this situation. Particularly when linked to landscape, watershed and soil management, rainwater harvesting has the potential to improve water supply and increase resilience, food security, and well-being by providing affordable, renewable sources of water during dry periods.

### Rainwater harvesting requires collaboration

Current actors in rainwater harvesting—government ministries and departments, academia, international and non-profit organisations—can expand its reach and effectiveness by collaborating, capitalizing on existing experiences, and working across sectors. The private sector also has an important role to play in the implementation and promotion of rainwater harvesting through the provision of technologies for water storage, distribution and treatment, and in the development of the entire value chain and market linkages. Better connections with applied research are needed to quantify and consolidate evidence of costs and benefits of rainwater harvesting, addressing questions such as: Who pays what? How are benefits distributed? What are the impacts on communities and ecosystems at landscape scale? What about long term financial, institutional, environmental, technological, and social sustainability?

## **Rainwater harvesting is ready for scaling-up**

Effective water harvesting technologies are available that are high performance, require modest investments, are robust, and have low operational costs. Rainwater harvesting thus adds to the continuum of physical water storage. Scaling-up can be achieved by expanding collaborations to include donors and exploring innovative funding mechanisms, such as micro-credit, tax reductions and benefit sharing. By building on current successes, learning from champions, and applying clever targeting, projects aimed at quick wins can be implemented right away to harvest 'low hanging fruit' and showcase the benefits of rainwater harvesting.

### **To make this a reality, we need capacity building:**

- That targets various stakeholders and their institutions along the value chain, such as rainwater harvesting associations, private sector, knowledge institutions, government, and end users
- That is carried out before, during and after implementation

### **For effective scaling-up of rainwater harvesting, we call on policy makers:**

- To develop effective policy mechanisms that facilitate the promotion and scaling-up of rainwater harvesting based on its proven potential, costs and benefits, as well as the impacts on implementers, beneficiaries, and potential users
- To incorporate rainwater harvesting and management into broader approaches such as Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), Natural Resource Management (NRM), and Sustainable Land and soil Management (SLM)
- To foster inter-sectoral collaboration by setting up coordination platforms to share knowledge, contacts, opportunities, experiences, innovation, and good practices on rainwater harvesting and management and its scaling-up
- To stimulate private sector involvement along the value chain, e.g., by allowing for more flexibility in regulations and taxes, facilitating access to financial services, and by investing in good infrastructure
- To support communities and individuals by facilitating ownership

### **We also call on practitioners:**

- To use cost-effective and simple rainwater harvesting solutions that are resilient in the face of local climate variability and are highly replicable
- To assess the suitability of various rainwater harvesting options based on the socio-economic context, intended use and users (considering communities, households, gender, and traditional knowledge)
- To implement rainwater harvesting as part of an integrated system approach operating at landscape, catchment, and household level, such as IWRM, NRM, or SLM, taking into account the 3Rs (recharge, retention and reuse)
- To recognize that harvested rainwater will be used for multiple purposes; this means that water quality should be taken into account as well as water quantity
- To take advantage of social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn) and many-to-many communications platforms (e.g., blogs, wikis) to share experiences, questions and answers, and inform the wider public of the high potential of rainwater harvesting and management

**And we call on scientists:**

- To provide evidence on the potential, performance, technical constraints, costs, and benefits of rainwater harvesting
- To expand and make publicly accessible a database on rainwater harvesting and other soil and water innovations in different areas of the world at the landscape, catchment, and household levels
- To develop methods for quality control and replicability of rainwater harvesting products (standardisation and certification)

**WE BELIEVE THAT THESE RECOMMENDATIONS HELP TO  
UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF RAINWATER HARVESTING,  
PROVIDING MULTIPLE BENEFITS TO PEOPLE DEPENDANT ON UNRELIABLE RAINFALL**

endorsed by

