

waterpoints

Video thrills and spills

If you want to know more about rainwater harvesting, you'll want to snap up this offer. For a limited period only, FAKT, the German Association for Appropriate Technologies, is giving away copies of its video '*Mvua ni Maji — Rain is Water*'.

Now available in French, Swahili and German — as well as the original English — *Mvua ni Maji* shows Kenyan women's groups practising different rainwater harvesting techniques, and sharing experiences with rural women from Uganda.

Produced in collaboration with the Kenya Rainwater Association, and funded by Bread for the World and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, State of Baden-Wuerttemberg, the film has been broadcast on Kenyan TV and screened at a Zimbabwe film festival where it was well-received. As we go to press, it is being watched by an international audience at Rome's Medfilm Festival.

The film's producers report that *Mvua ni Maji* is provoking

interesting discussions in the South about gender issues and, in particular, about how work is distributed between women and men.

FAKT is currently researching how water tanks and underground reservoirs are affecting the lives of families in Kenya; look out for a booklet soon.

To qualify for a free video, you must be working for an NGO based in the South. Contact FAKT, indicating your preferred language, at: Gansheidstr. 43, D-70184 Stuttgart, Germany. Tel: +49 711 21095 0. Fax: +49 711 21095 55. The ordinary retail price is US\$20.00.

Water-Watch Asia

Regular readers of *Waterlines* will not need reminding that water scarcity is a potential source of social and political conflict. And nowhere is this more serious than in the growing cities of Asia. A multitude of problems require both new and integrated approaches to water resource management to overcome failures, reduce

poverty and conserve the environment all within the framework of sustainable development.

An essential and under-supported area is advocacy and networking initiatives among 'civil society' groups. A coalition of environmental and development health groups is calling for a concerted initiative — one already in action is Water-Watch Asia, formed in the follow-up to a regional consultation of NGO networks, supported by Asia Pacific 2000, a programme of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Water-Watch Asia is working on a resource book which aims to help NGOs to correct policies, as well as undertake specific activities such as rapid mapping, and 'Quick and Clean' tests on the quality of water. Also in the pipeline: a Discussion List, NGO Bulletin Board, and World Wide Web (WWW) homepage on water issues.

Water-Watch Asia is also

developing a three-year action-plan for implementation by NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) in the region. It will link CBO/NGOs with United Nations efforts in this area, particularly those of the Global Water Partnership.

For more information, contact: Abdul Razak Lubis, Co-ordinator, Water-Watch Asia, APPEN, c/o Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM), 27 Lorong Maktab, 10250 Penang, Malaysia. Fax: +60 4 2633970/2275705. E-mail: lubisksn@tm.net.my

Desert bloom

Iran's long tradition of rainwater utilization made it an ideal venue for the 8th International Rainwater Catchment Systems Conference, held in Tehran in April 1997. The theme, 'Rainwater Catchment for Survival' was highly appropriate since the scarcity of water resources and inability at present to fully exploit rainwater utilization opportunities are hindering and even under-mining development in vital sectors such as agriculture and health.

The conference was attended by more than 1000 delegates, including more than 130 from 30 countries outside Iran. 166 papers were presented on a

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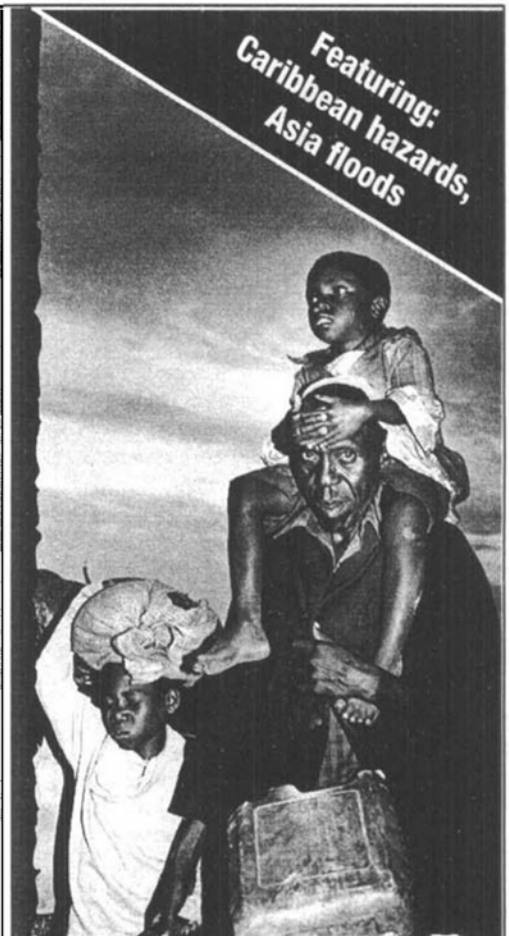
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Backed by the expertise and resources of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the world's most extensive and experienced humanitarian network, the annual *World Disasters Report* was praised as "compelling reading ... hard-hitting accounts of critical situations ... destined to become a classic and a fundamental reference work" by *Disasters journal*.

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wide range of topics including the practical and applied aspects of construction and project implementation. A significant number related to floodwater spreading and its applications for flood control, irrigation and artificial recharge which are widely practised in Iran; and methods of evaluating and monitoring these systems were discussed, based on a variety of computer modelling and simulation techniques. Water quality and pollution issues were also popular topics, as were those linking soil and water management with agriculture. Many presentations also explored the direct utilization of rainwater for water supply in both urban and rural contexts.

The geographical coverage was broad, and while naturally there were a high proportion of papers from Iran and the surrounding arid regions of central Asia, there were also many papers from the rest of Asia, especially from India, China and Japan. There were also several contributions from Africa — especially the eastern and southern parts. Europe, North and South America and Australasia and the Pacific were also represented.

The conference was preceded by a two-day field excursion which included a visit to the 190m-high Amir-Kabir dam and reservoir, and the Sirachal research station where a long-term watershed management



The plastic bucket — it's simple, essential and continues to be modified.

Mikkel Ostergaard/Still Pictures

project is ongoing. By applying some basic but highly effective soil- and water-conservation measures including check dams, micro-catchments and rainwater reservoirs, the catchment above the station from 1780m to 2910m has gradually been revegetated. This work was representative of similar applied research projects going on throughout Iran, where rehabilitation of the environment is a pressing priority.

During six five-day post-conference excursions, partici-

pants were able to observe at first hand a range of water systems, some with long historical traditions, including the famous *qanat* systems which carry groundwater via subsurface channels from mountain slopes far out into the desert. These ancient systems, some of which have been in use for centuries, are found throughout Iran. There are 85 000 in total, of which about half are still active, and recently many old ones have been rehabilitated. The *qanats* are used for both water supply and irrigation, and the longest, near Mashad, stretches for over 70km. Many examples of floodwater spreading for both irrigation (for dates, pistachios and citrus orchards) and for flood control and artificial recharge were also observed.

The Iranian landscape — with its mountains and deserts — provides many opportunities to transfer rainwater runoff, floodwaters and snowmelt by gravity. This can be put to good use on the arid plains adjacent to the mountains. Although technologies exploiting these possibilities have been used for many centuries, some had been forgotten and fallen into disrepair. Since the late 1970s the Islamic government has been very active in trying to revitalize and develop some of these ancient yet highly appropriate water management systems and bring about a 'green revolution to make the desert bloom'.

The 9th IRWCS Conference, in 1999, will be in Brazil.

For further information on the 8th IRWCS Conference or copies of the proceedings contact: J. Ghoddousi, SCWMRC, P.O.Box 13445-116, Tehran, Iran. Fax: +98 21 6407214; for information about the International Rainwater Catchment Systems Association write to: Dr G. K. Bambrah, Secretary-General, IRCSA, Melili Rd, South 'B', PO Box 38638, Nairobi, Kenya. Fax: +254 2 605909. E-mail: awn@elci.gn.apc.org

Pails into significance

Are you an ethical consumer, who's anxious to keep up to date with the latest in product design? For those who want to be hip and happening — but also caring and compassionate, the only thing to be seen with this season is Oxfam's plastic bucket.

The bucket has seen service in the refugee camps of Kisan-gani, is made in London, and was hailed by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair as a good example of the 'pre-eminence of British design and creativity'. The £3.50 water-carrier is a rethink of a jerrycan. It is stackable and so takes up less space when being transported in emergencies.

Let us know about any other technological innovations that could have good commercial spin-offs. And, to find out more about one of Oxfam's latest W&S developments, turn to page 30.

Water and Environmental Health at London and Loughborough (WELL) is a resource centre promoting environmental health and well-being in developing and transitional countries. The centre is funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).

The core activities of WELL include:

- **Technical support to DFID and its partners** in solving problems related to water and environmental health. These often involve overseas consultancy.
 - **Development of technical manuals and guidance notes.**
 - **Immediate technical assistance** (of limited scope) to DFID staff, developing countries' representatives, UN agencies, and UK NGOs.
- WELL is seeking to expand its base of consultants in all W&S-related fields, and would be pleased to hear from people with international experience. Relevant areas of expertise include (but are not limited to) environmental monitoring and impact assessment, economics and finance, social development, institutional development, participatory assessment, public and environmental health, and W&S technology and engineering.

If you have previous experience in these fields and are interested in working with WELL, please contact:

Sue Sherry or Pete Kolsky
WELL
LSHTM, Keppel Street
London, WC1E 7HT, UK
Fax: +44 171 636 7843
E-mail: WELL@lshtm.ac.uk

Ian Smout or Andy Cotton
WEDC, Loughborough
University, Loughborough
Leics LE11 3TU, UK
Fax: +44 1509 211079
E-mail: WEDC@lboro.ac.uk