

***An Integrated Mission Approach to Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) in Omdurman, South Sudan (March 2009)***

The church can play a tremendous role in community cohesion because it is accessible to everyone, and not dependent on race, tribe and sex amongst most communities. It is a congregation that comes together around a common vision- to worship God- and is therefore an appropriate vessel to share new innovations and ideas and advocate against inequalities and injustices in society.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) are important in achieving all the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in one way or another, and the church can act as a 'water well' -a point of meeting- to ensure this happens.

In Omdurman in South Sudan, Tearfund is working closely with the local church committees, community market committees and Parent Teachers' Association for primary schools to ensure clean drinking water within the household and public places becomes a reality. The benefits of clean safe drinking water will lead to better health in the community, a decrease in child mortality and greater productivity among the community due to better health. Water is indeed key to life. The Word of God refers to water as being core to life:

*'Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life'*  
*John 4:13 (Jesus talks with a Samaritan woman)*

The Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) approach in Omdurman seeks to continuously work with the local church to sensitise the village community on methods of using new innovations to harvest rain water. In Omdurman, two household level RWH approaches are being piloted. Firstly, RWH using plastic sheeting and RWH using iron roofing. Following various church services, Tearfund has taken time to demonstrate the purity of rain water and has provided rain water harvested using the above techniques to the congregation and the community at large. This has given the congregation, the community members and the school children a chance to taste it at the same time as hearing about its benefits. The response from the congregation has been good and the community is keen on the new idea:

*'I tasted the water at the church, it was good, it is the kind of water that does not make one sick' (Nyibol Ngor, 17 yr old girl)*

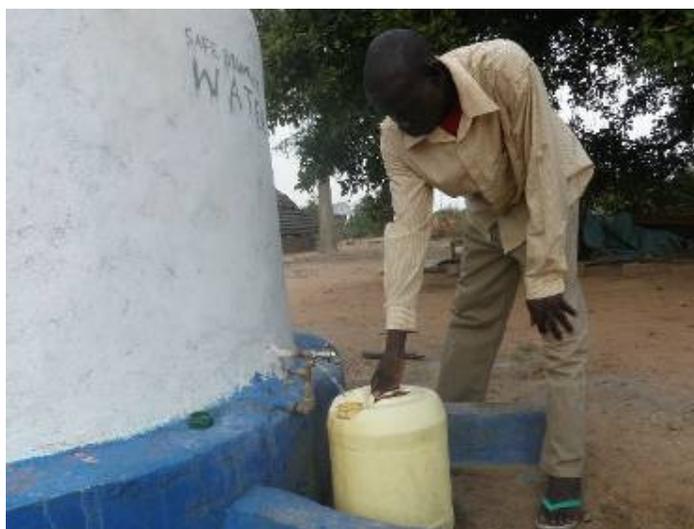
*Children in Runyin primary school lining collect rain water for drinking. One of the school girls ( Awut Rebecca) said the rain from the tank tastes good and it is cool most of the times*



**Photo:** A ferrocement tank constructed at a school in Omdurman

In addition, Tearfund is encouraging the congregation to sensitise their neighbours on the technique and spread the concept of RWH. This approach is well understood owing to similarities of discipleship drawn from the Bible. The mentoring of the community on skills as well as Training of Trainer sessions of RWH through identified members of the community has been core in Tearfund's approach to enable sustainability of the project as well as empowerment of the community in the building of rooftop gutters and ferro-cement tank construction.

*'The community is happy about RWH as they now will have more water to use especially during the dry season' (Daniel Alev, 25 yrs builder of gutter system)*



**Above David is collecting rain water for domestic uses from one of the ferro-cement tanks**

An integrated mission approach in the WASH sector in Omdurman is indeed helpful in assisting Tearfund reach its ten year vision to see *'50 million people released from material and spiritual poverty through a worldwide network of 100,000 local churches'*.