

Rainwater Harvesting – A convenient solution to an inconvenient problem

How the Gender-responsive Coastal Adaptation (GCA) Project is strengthening access to safe and reliable drinking water solutions that are climate-resilient and available round the year.

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Imagine having to walk nearly 3,000 steps to access drinking water for you and your family. That was the reality for 35-year-old widow Panna Begum of Khulna's Dacope Upazila. Located in the south-west coast of Bangladesh, Panna's village is among some of the worst-affected by a growing drinking water crisis in this nation. Come rain or shine, like many other coastal women in her area, Panna had to walk more than two kilometres, which is a journey of an hour each day, to fetch water for her family. Her closest source of drinking water was the hand tube-well at the government primary school of her village, which often produces brackish water during dry season and in worst cases, the water dries out completely.

To address the plight for safe drinking water, Gender-responsive Coastal Adaptation (GCA) Project, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), co-financed by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the Government of Bangladesh, has been working in the south-western coast of Bangladesh. As a part of the project's initiatives, in October 2021, Panna Begum received a Household-based Rainwater Harvesting System from the project. She is one of 106 households that have received a Rainwater based Harvesting System at her premise as an answer to the prolonged drinking water crisis the community has been plagued by.



“It feels unbelievable, but the tank really has a capacity of 2000 litres. I do not think I could have ever afforded such a tank. You know, those of us who live in the coastal areas, we contend with many hardships. Still, the biggest of them all is poor access to drinking water,” says Panna Begum, now relieved from the worry of painstakingly sourcing drinking water for her family every day.



Panna Begum is one of the beneficiaries who has also been tasked with the role of ‘Pani Apa’, meaning she goes from house to house and spreads awareness on the use of the Rainwater Harvesting System, shows families how to maintain the whole system and essentially use the system without a hitch. Thanks to this job, she now makes

adaptive capacities of coastal communities, particularly those of women such as Panna, in dealing with the impacts of climate change-induced salinity on water security and livelihood. Nearly 1,40,000 people from 39 unions of Khulna & Satkhira districts are getting year round safe drinking water supply continuously from these initiatives.



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