1	A study of the bacteriological quality of roof-harvested rainwater and an evaluation of SODIS		
2	as a suitable treatment technology in rural Sub-Saharan Africa		
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15	SHORT TITLE – The use of SODIS to treat roof- harvested rainwater		
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1 Abstract

2 Harvested rainwater (HRW) is of great socio-economic importance particularly in areas where water 3 sources are scarce or polluted. This case study was carried out in a rural area of Southern Uganda 4 where the community has limited access to safe drinking water. The aims of the project were to 5 investigate the quality of harvested rainwater over a year long period covering wet and dry seasons 6 and to investigate the use of solar waterdisinfection (SODIS) as a water treatment technology. Fifty 7 households using roof HRW were selected. The systems used included catchment ponds, metallic, 8 concrete and plastic tanks. All households used the HRW for drinking. The raw HRW was analysed 9 for temperature, pH and total dissolved solids (TDS) and for the presence of the bacterial indicators of 10 faecal pollution - Escherichia coli, faecal enterococci and Clostridium perfringens. Results indicated 11 that while the HRW met the required physiochemical drinking water standards, the majority of 12 samples from all types of system showed levels of microbiological contamination indicating that the 13 water was unsafe for drinking without treatment. The use of SODIS to treat the water was investigated 14 using 2 liter PET bottles and was shown to be an effective treatment technology. 15 16 KEYWORDS: Drinking water; Harvested Rainwater; SODIS 17 18 **ABBREVIATIONS:** 19 ATCC American Type Culture Collection 20 DWD Directorate of Water Development 21 HRW Harvested rainwater 22 JMP Joint Monitoring Programme 23 MDG Millennium Development Goal 24 NGO Non-governmental organization 25 PET Polyethylene-terephthalate 26 **SODIS Solar disinfection**

- 27 TDS total dissolved solids
- 28 UNBS Uganda National Bureau of Standards
- 29 UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
- 30 WHO World Health Organisation

1 **1. INTRODUCTION:**

2 As the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is reached it is reassuring to know 3 that Target 7.C, which aimed to halve by 2015 the proportion of the population without sustainable 4 access to safe drinking water, has been achieved [1]. This global success is not shared by many Sub-5 Saharan countries and while Uganda has met the MDG target [2] as predicted by Salami et al. in 6 2014, poor communities in rural Uganda still do not have access to safe drinking water [3]. Safe 7 drinking water is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as drinking water which 'does not 8 represent any significant risk to health over a lifetime of consumption, including different sensitivities 9 that may occur between life stages' [4]. The World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations 10 Children's Fund (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation 11 considers access to safe drinking water as water collected from improved sources. Improved sources 12 of drinking water include piped water, public taps or standpipes, boreholes, protected wells, protected 13 springs and harvested rainwater [5].

The population of Uganda exceeds 36 million and over 80% of the population lives in rural areas. While 71% of the rural population has access to an improved water source, only 1% has access to piped drinking water while 70% use other improved sources [2]. In Uganda, access to an improved water source implies that the water source is within a walking distance of 1.5 kilometers. The provision of safe drinking water is one of the major challenges facing African governments [3]. In developing countries about 80% of diseases are water originated [6] including diarrheal disease, a

20 major cause of death among children [7].

21

Solar water disinfection (SODIS) is an effective point of use water treatment process. In using this method, transparent bottles are filled with microbially contaminated water and exposed to sunlight for a specific period of time thus inactivating the waterborne pathogens and ensuring the safety of the water for drinking [8]. Usually the bottles are polyethylene terephthalate (PET) plastic, but other plastic or glass containers can be used. SODIS is a simple, green and low-cost technology [9] which is suitable for availing of safe drinking water for rural communities in developing countries, most of whom are known to have high levels of solar radiation [10-13].

1 The technology uses easily accessible local materials and low cost tools [13]. Amin and co-workers 2 [14] viewed the coupling of harvested rainwater and SODIS as an easy approach for poor 3 communities living in the developing world in accessing potable water using efficient and cost 4 effective point of use treatment methods. However, while SODIS and HRW technologies are suitable 5 in a Ugandan setting, little has been done to evaluate their efficacy in Ugandan rural conditions. 6 The aim of this study was to investigate the quality of HRW in the rural area of Makondo and the 7 effectiveness of using SODIS with 2L PET bottles for treating roof HRW under field conditions over a 8 twelve month period.

9

10 **2. METHODS**:

11 2.1 Study area: The study was carried out in the sub-parish of Makondo which is located west of 12 Masaka in the recently established administrative District of Lwengo in South Eastern Uganda along 13 the Western shores of Lake Victoria (Figure 1). The area lies at over 1,100 meters above sea level 14 and just south of the equator. Fifty households took part in the year- long study. Each household had 15 one harvested rainwater tank. The types of system varied and included 8 catchment ponds, 11 16 concrete tanks, 20 metallic tanks and 11 plastic tanks. The location of each household and the type of 17 tank used are described in Figure 1. The harvested rainwater systems used included catchment 18 ponds, concrete tanks, metallic tanks and plastic tanks.

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20 All the tanks were sited above ground with a tap at the base through which the water samples were 21 collected. The catchment ponds were ditches constructed behind a ground dam lined with a 22 polythene sheeting to contain the water. A wall surrounding the entire ditch was built above the 23 ground with an opening through which water was drawn using a small container tied on a rope or rod. 24 All the systems were enclosed and the rainwater in the tanks was not exposed to natural sunlight. The 25 water was sampled from each household once a month. The households were randomly allocated 26 into three clusters of 15–17 households for sampling. Sampling was carried out during the first three 27 weeks of each month. A different cluster was sampled each week.

28

29 2.2 Rainfall measurement: Daily total precipitation was recorded using three tipping bucket storage
 30 rain gauges (ONSET -HOBO Rain gauge data logger RG3- Version 2.7.3) with a fully self-contained,

battery-powered rainfall data collection and recording system. These were used at three locations
within the project catchment area: the villages Kiyumbakimu, Kiteredde and Michunda (Figure 1).
HOBOware graphing and analysis Pro software for Windows (Version 2.7.3 ONSET) and a water
proof data shuttle were used for data processing, readouts and re-launch of the loggers. To obtain
average rainfall for the study catchment area, precipitation computed at the three different rain gauge
locations within the catchment area were averaged on a daily and monthly basis using the weighted
averages (Thiessen) method [15].

2.3 Physico-chemical measurements: The temperature, pH and total dissolved solids (TDS) of
HRW samples were measured on site using a calibrated field pH/TDS meter (model HI 9813-6N,
Hanna Instruments, S.L. Eibar, Spain). The tap on the HRW systems was opened and water was
allowed to flow for 5 seconds before sampling the water in a beaker. The probe was dipped into the
water and the values for temperature, pH and TDS were recorded following the manufacturer's
instructions. Temperature was recorded in degrees Celsius (°C) and TDS in parts per million (ppm).
The probe was then rinsed with distilled water.

15

16 2.4 SODIS treatment of water: Polyethylene-terephthalate (PET) bottles (2L), with caps were 17 purchased locally. Each household was provided with four 2 liter PET bottles at the beginning of the 18 study and these were replaced after 6 months. Participants in the study were initially informed and 19 trained in the use of SODIS. They were instructed how to clean and prepare the PET bottles and how 20 to sample the water. Bottles were washed with soapy water for disinfection and then rinsed with 21 distilled water. The harvested rainwater was allowed to run from the tap for 5 seconds before 22 sampling. The PET bottle was half filled with water, then shaken and filled to the top before tightening 23 the cap. The bottles were exposed to the sun horizontally on a raised platform for a minimum of 6 24 hours if the day was bright and for two days if cloudy.

25

26 2.5 Microbiological analysis: For *Escherichia coli* and faecal enterococci, water for microbiological
27 analysis was sampled aseptically from the harvested rainwater tanks and the PET bottles into sterile
28 containers and transported on ice, within 6 hours, to the laboratory at Makerere University, Kampala.
29 The presence of *E. coli* and faecal enterococci was determined using the membrane filtration
30 technique [16]. Briefly, 100mL of water was filtered through 0.45-µm-pore-size and 47-mm-diameter

1 Whatman cellulose nitrate membrane filters (GN-6 Metricel Grid, Gelman Sciences Inc. USA). For the 2 detection of E. coli the filters were placed onto ChromoCult Coliform agar (CCA-Merck Ltd) and 3 incubated at 37°C for 24 hours. All deep blue colonies were counted as presumptive E. coli colonies. 4 A random sample of 5 colonies from ChromoCult coliform agar was plated onto Les Endo agar 5 (HiMedia Ltd) for confirmation. Red colonies with a golden yellow sheen were confirmed as E. coli. 6 Escherichia coli ATCC 25922 was used as a positive control. To detect faecal enterococci, filters were 7 placed on membrane enterococcus agar (Slanetz and Bartley Agar, HiMedia Ltd) and the plates were 8 pre-incubated at 35°C for 4 hours to aid bacterial resuscitation. The plates were then incubated at 9 44±0.5°C for a further 44 hours. After incubation all red and maroon colonies were counted and 10 recorded as presumptive faecal enterococci. For confirmation, a filter was aseptically lifted from 11 Slanetz and Bartley Agar and transferred to Bile Esculin Azide Agar (HiMedia Ltd). Plates were then 12 incubated at $44 \pm 0.5^{\circ}$ C for 2 hours and a brown black colour around colonies confirmed faecal 13 enterococci. Enterococcus faecalis ATCC 2921 was used as a positive control. The detection limit of 14 the method was one colony forming unit (CFU) of E. coli or faecal enterococcus per 100-mL of 15 sample. 16 The presence of *Clostridium perfringens* (C. perfringens) was determined by heating a sample of 17 water (100mL) at 80°C for 15 min in a water bath to kill all non-spore forming bacteria. The 18 pasteurized water was then filtered through 0.45-µm-pore-size and 47-mm-diameter Whatman 19 cellulose nitrate membrane filters (GN-6 Metricel Grid, Gelman Sciences Inc.) and the filter was 20 transferred to tryptose sulfite-cycloserin (TSC) agar plates (Oxoid CM0587, London-UK) with the 21 addition of TSC supplement (Oxoid-SR0088, London-UK) and egg yolk (Oxoid-SR004, London-UK). 22 The plates were incubated in an anaerobic jar, containing an aerocultA anaerobic System (Merck, 23 Germany), at 35°C for 24 hours. Black colonies were counted as C. perfringens colonies. C. 24 perfringens (UG-MUKVET 1.04) isolated from soil and obtained from the School of Veterinary

25 Medicine, Department of Biotechnology and Bio-safety Engineering, Makerere University, Uganda

was used as a positive control in all tests.

27

28 2.6 Data Analysis: All samples were analysed in triplicate. Mean and median values were calculated
 29 in MS Excel 2010 (Microsoft Excel 2010 32-Bit Edition) and Pearson Chi-square using SPSS PASW

Statistics for Windows, Version 18.0. Chicago: SPSS Inc. USA. Graphs were created using Sigmaplot
 version 11.0 from Systat Software, Inc., San Jose California USA .

3

4 **3. RESULTS**

3.1 Rainfall: The daily rainfall range and the total monthly rainfall values for each month of the study
are presented in Table 1. The total monthly rainfall varied from month to month and ranged from
2.9mm to 135.9mm. The values reflected the bimodal rainfall pattern of two rainy seasons and two dry
seasons in the year. October 2011 had the highest monthly total rainfall of 135.9mm followed by
November 2011. January, February, June and July were typically dry months with very low amounts
of rainfall.

11

3.2 Harvested rainwater systems studied: The total number of systems sampled varied depending
on the availability of members of the household and the availability of rainwater in the tanks. The
maximum number of systems sampled in any month was 48 in December 2011 and the minimum
number of systems sampled was 19 in February 2012 (Figure 2).

16

There were noticeably fewer systems sampled during the dry season months of February, March and July 2012. This was because most systems especially catchment ponds had no water during the dry season mostly towards the end of dry seasons. This is clearly visible by the reduced number of samples in February and July, by which time many of the tanks had run dry.

21

The mean monthly temperature recorded for the HRW ranged from $22.5^{\circ}C - 27.5^{\circ}C$. The minimum temperature recorded was $19.5^{\circ}C$ and the maximum temperature was $33.6^{\circ}C$. There was no significant difference in temperature between the wet and dry months (p=0.07) and among the different systems (p=0.09). The average pH of the water was 6.9 ± 0.7 and did not show a significant association (p=0.08) with the different types of system. The levels of TDS in all the systems ranged from a minimum value of 0ppmin November 2011 to a maximum value of 287 ppm in March 2012. No correlation was found between levels of TDS and wet or dry season.

1 3.3 The bacteriological quality of the water before and after SODIS: The bacteriological quality of 2 the harvested rainwater was evaluated by monitoring the presence of E. coli, faecal enterococci and 3 C. perfringens. None of the water samples showed the presence of C. perfringens. The percentage of 4 non-compliant systems that is systems that showed the presence of E. coli or faecal enterococci in 5 100mL of water is described in Fig. 3(a) for *E. coli* and in Fig. 4(a) for faecal enterococci. The results 6 show that the water from the majority of the systems was not compliant. The average number of 7 indicator organisms varied with system type and with time. The level of contamination was highest in 8 the catchment ponds and faecal enterococci were more prevalent than E. coli. Following SODIS 9 treatment, the percentage of non-compliant samples decreased significantly (Fig. 3(b) and 4(b)) and 10 the majority of the water samples were found to be safe to drink. Average numbers of any indicator 11 organisms remaining were generally less than 10 org/100mL. When the SODIS treated water is 12 compared for the two indicator organisms, the percentage of samples containing faecal enterocooci 13 are generally lower than those containing E. coli, suggesting that these organisms were more 14 sensitive to solar disinfection than the E. coli strains. No correlation was found between the levels of 15 contamination and the type of system or the season.

16

3.4 Rainfall and microbiological parameters of raw HRW: The median numbers of each indicator organism (cfu/100mL) were correlated with total rainfall values for each month (Fig 5). There was a wide range in the numbers of each organism detected which in many cases exceeded 400cfu/100mL. The range varied from month to month and did not correlate with total rainfall values. When the median numbers of indicator organisms for a given month were correlated with the total levels of rainfall for the month there was no significant correlation for either *E. coli* (R² =0.15; p=0.86) or for faecal enterococci (R² =0.27; p=0.389).

24

25 4. DISCUSSION

The sub-parish of Makondo where the study took place is located in a remote region of South Eastern Uganda. There is no centralized water supply system. The four main types of water source used in rural areas were all represented in the study area and included traditional water sources (ponds, unimproved shallow wells and unprotected springs) and improved water sources (shallow wells and protected springs, boreholes and rainwater harvesting). Uganda is particularly suited to using

1 harvested rainwater as it has a plentiful supply of rain. The rainfall pattern in the region followed the 2 bimodal pattern of rainfall previously reported by Ssegawa & Kasenene [17] and Kiwanuka et al. [18] 3 where the peak rain periods were the months of March through May and October through November 4 and the dry seasons occurred from December through February and June through July. The 5 community in the Makondo area are poor and the majority of the households earn less than 50,000 6 Ugandan shillings in a month [19]. While the cost of installing tanks has been described as a 7 challenge by Gould [20] two thirds of these households had incomes in the range 100,000 – 200,000 8 Ugandan shillings per month [21] which was above the average income of households in the region. 9 Furthermore the type of tank most frequently used in this study, the metallic tanks, had been donated 10 by a local NGO.

11

12 The main objective of this study was to investigate the microbiological quality of the harvested 13 rainwater. All the households in the study used the water for drinking and indeed perceived the water 14 to be of better quality than water from any other source. However the quality of the harvested 15 rainwater had never been tested. Water quality in rural areas is monitored by the Ministry of Water and 16 Environment - National Water and Sewerage Cooperation (MWE-NWSC) but HRW systems are 17 normally privately owned and no proper structure is in place to monitor the water from these 18 systems. The most significant issue in relation to water for drinking is the health risks associated with 19 the presence of pathogens of faecal origin. To ensure that water is safe to drink, water is routinely 20 tested for the presence of bacteria which are indicators of faecal pollution including E. coli and faecal 21 enterococci. In Uganda, water for drinking should comply with UNBS [22] and WHO-UNICEF[4] 22 standards which state *E. coli* and faecal enterococci should be absent from 100mL of water. 23 However, the majority of the water samples tested showed that these bacteria were present in 100mL 24 of water. The quality of roof harvested rainwater can be influenced by many factors including the 25 location of the roof and its proximity to sources of pollution [23]. Many of the harvested rainwater 26 tanks in the study were surrounded by vegetation, mostly banana plantations, trees and other types of 27 vegetation which provided suitable environments for a variety of avian, mammal and reptile fauna. E. 28 coli and faecal enterococci indicate faecal contamination from human or animal origin. As the 29 numbers of faecal enterococci in the water samples were consistently higher than the numbers of E. 30 coli. This suggests that the source of faecal pollution was of animal origin [24].

2 E. coli is widely used as an indicator of water quality and while it has been described as the best 3 microbial indicator available to date to inform public health risks associated with the consumption of 4 contaminated drinking water [25-26], faecal enterococci are also useful indicators of the 5 microbiological quality of drinking water. They are always present in the faeces of warm blooded 6 animals. Their die-off rate is slower than that of coliforms in water as well as their persistence pattern 7 being similar to that of potential waterborne bacterial pathogens [27-28]. The dominance of faecal 8 enterococci in the harvested rainwater was in agreement with the findings of Ahmed et al. [29] and 9 others who suggested that enterococci species may be a better indicator for assessing faecal 10 contamination in rainwater than E. coli. Indeed the value of E. coli as the most suitable indicator of 11 water quality was also questioned by Sorlini et al. [30] who carried out a study of water quality on the 12 border between Chad and Cameroon and concluded that the JMP water source classification and E. 13 coli measurements are not sufficient to state how safe the water is.

14

15 The response of the two indicator organisms to SODIS was found to vary and the faecal enterococci 16 were in general found to be more sensitive to solar disinfection. There have been differing reports on 17 the response of these indicator organisms to sunlight. The greater resistance of E. coli to the 18 bactericidal effects of sunlight compared to faecal enterococci has been reported by Evison and 19 others [31-33] while Keogh et al. [34] noted that Enterococcus spp. had increased resistance to 20 SODIS compared to E. coli. The difference in response of the organisms to sunlight could be 21 attributed to strain differences among the organisms investigated including differences between 22 laboratory strains and strains in the environment.

23

Nguyen *et al.*, [35] found that the presence of pigmented enterococci in non-disinfected secondary effluent increased the resistance of the total enterococci community to sunlight inactivation. The finding suggests that both organisms should be used as indicators when evaluating the safety of water following solar disinfection. In addition to microbiological guidelines, drinking water standards also recommend that certain physicochemical characteristics are within limits including the recommendation that the pH be in the range 6.5 – 8.5 and that the total dissolved solids (TDS) be less than 600mg/L. The pH of harvested rainwater can be influenced by a number of factors including

1 the material of the roof and the material of the harvested rainwater tank. All the catchment roofs in this 2 study were made of iron sheets. The material in the tanks varied and included metal, plastic and 3 concrete and while Handia [36] and others have shown that water sampled from ferro-cement tanks 4 was significantly more likely to be alkaline, this was not the case in this study where there was no 5 significant difference in the pH of the water collected from the different systems. All systems were 6 covered and only had a small opening for the gutter. The majority (98%) of systems did not have 7 filters to prevent debris from entering the tank and while flushing of systems after the first rains is 8 recommended [37] this was not generally carried out. Nevertheless, the levels of solids in the water 9 was found to be well within the 600mg/L value stipulated in drinking water regulations.

10

11 The lack of compliance with the microbiological guidelines for drinking water suggested that the water 12 should be disinfected before drinking. A variety of methods have been recommended to treat 13 rainwater for drinking [29]. Treatment methods recommended in the region included boiling and the 14 use of chlorine tablets. However, households considered these methods too expensive to use, a 15 finding also reported by Baguma et al. [38] who carried out a study in the Luwero District, north of the 16 Ugandan capital Kampala. McGuigan et al. [39] have shown that solar water disinfection is a cheap, 17 accessible and effective water treatment technology in particular for developing countries like Uganda 18 where there is plenty of sunshine. The results obtained following treatment of the water using SODIS 19 were very encouraging. The results obtained in the majority of the water samples tested following 20 SODIS demonstrated the effectiveness of the method. Although the participants were trained at the 21 beginning of the project in the use of SODIS, the lack of success in using SODIS in some instances is 22 attributed to the need for ongoing training. Information leaflets describing best practice in using 23 harvested rainwater tanks and in carrying out SODIS have now been distributed to the households to 24 help improve their management of the roof harvested rainwater.

25

Although the current study did not investigate the presence or absence of specific pathogens, several studies have reported the presence of pathogens in HRW Simmons *et al.* (2008) [40] reported detecting *Legionella pneumophila in* rainwater storage systems in suburbs of Auckland, New Zeland using molecular-based techniques. In Victoria, Australia, Franklin *et al.* (2009) [41] reported detecting *Salmonella typhimurium* phage type 9 (DT9) in rainwater samples using binary PCR and quantitative

1 PCR (qPCR). Ahmed et al., (2010) [42] reported the presence of genes from a number of pathogens 2 including Salmonella invA (10.7%), Giardia lamblia β-giardin (9.8%), Legionella pneumophila mip 3 (5.6%), and Campylobacter jejuni mapA (0.4%) in 214 samples of HRW from urban Southeast 4 Queensland (SEQ) in Australia. Dobrowsky et al (2014) [43] carried out a study on HRW used in 5 households in Kleinmond, South Africa and a diversity of pathogens was detected using PCR assays 6 including Aeromonas spp., Klebsiella spp, Legionella spp, Pseudomonas spp., Salmonella spp., 7 Shigella spp., Yersinia spp. and Giardia spp. The findings suggest that future studies on HRW should 8 include the study of specific pathogens

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Previous studies have examined risks associated with the photodegradation of the plastic container material after prolonged use [39, 44]. These studies reported no genotoxic risks associated with SODIS bottle use over periods of up to 6 months. In the absence of data extending beyond this period, it is recommended that SODIS containers are replaced after 6 months.

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15 **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Roof harvested rainwater used for drinking by a rural community in South Eastern Uganda did not 16 17 comply with national and international microbiological drinking water standards. The presence of E. 18 coli and faecal enterococci in the majority of the water samples tested indicated the presence of 19 faecal pollution. Numbers of enterococci were consistently higher than numbers of E. coli which 20 suggested that the contamination was of animal origin. The presence of faecal contamination in the 21 harvested rainwater indicated that the water should be treated before drinking. Communities should 22 be made aware of the need to treat the water for drinking and in the proper use of treatment 23 technologies including SODIS, which was shown to significantly improve the water quality in the 24 majority of harvested rainwater samples studied.

25

26 6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors have no proprietary, professional, financial, or other personal interest of any nature or
kind in any product, service, and/or company that could be construed as influencing the position
presented in, or the review of, this work. This work was funded by the Irish Government through the

- 1 Irish Aid Water is Life project. The authors gratefully acknowledge supply of the rainfall data by Sam
- 2 Kagisagye.
- 3

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1	TABLE CAPTION
2	Table 1 : Daily range and total monthly rainfall values for Makondo, Masaka-Uganda during the study
3	period (August 2011 to August 2012)
4	
5	FIGURE CAPTIONS
6	Figure 1: Map showing Makondo sub-parish (study area) and the distribution of HRW systems
7	studied.
8	
9	Figure 2: Number and type of HRW system sampled during the 12 month study.
10	
11	Figure 3: E. coli in harvested rainwater systems: (a) raw HRW and (b) SODIS treated HRW(note: no
12	data collected in May).
13	
14	Figure 4. Faecal enterococci in harvested rainwater systems: (a) raw HRW and (b) SODIS treated
15	HRW (note: no data collected in May).
16	
17	Figure 5 (a): Relationship between the numbers of indicator organisms in each month and the total
18	rainfall mm/month (a) E. coli and (b) faecal enterococci.

1 Table 1

Month/Year	Daily Range [mm]	Total monthly rainfall [mm]
Aug. 2011	0.0-27.8	43.3
Sept. 2011	0.0-12.4	64.7
Oct. 2011	0.0-36.5	135.9
Nov. 2011	0.0-29.4	81.6
Dec. 2011	0.0-8.2	32.1
Jan. 2012	0.0-1.9	5.3
Feb. 2012	0.0-2.3	12.9
Mar. 2012	0.0-10.9	44.2
April. 2012	0.0-13.3	64.4
Jun. 2012	0.0-0.8	2.9
July. 2012	0.0-3.0	4.2
Aug. 2012	0.0-7.8	24.2







Figure 2.







1 Figure 3.



1 Figure 4.



