Isla Urbana
Rainwater for resilience

ORGANIZATION / INITIATIVE LEAD

Isla Urbana — Mexican organisation founded in 2009, advancing rainwater harvesting through technology, community participation, environmental education and collaboration with public authorities.

TECHNICAL SOLUTION NAME

Decentralised Rainwater Harvesting for Water Security and Climate Resilience

HIGHLIGHT TITLE

From rain to resilience: turning rooftops into local water sources through decentralised infrastructure, community participation and public policy.

SHORT DESCRIPTION

Isla Urbana develops rainwater harvesting systems for homes, schools and community facilities, combining accessible technology with training, environmental education and public policy collaboration. Its systems capture, filter and store rooftop rainfall, providing six to nine months of household water autonomy under suitable conditions. More than 46,000 installations have benefited over one million people.

EXTENDED DESCRIPTION

Water insecurity in Mexico is intensified by climate change, groundwater depletion, urban growth and ageing infrastructure. In Mexico City, substantial rainfall is channelled into drainage systems while many residents face unreliable water supplies. Founded in 2009, Isla Urbana addresses this contradiction by treating rain as a local resource that can complement conventional water infrastructure.

Its systems collect rooftop rainfall, divert the contaminated first flush, filter sediments and store water in cisterns, with treatment adapted to the intended domestic use. Proprietary components, including the Tlaloque and Tlaloquito first-flush devices, remove initial runoff carrying accumulated dust and debris. Depending on rainfall, storage capacity and household demand, installations can provide six to nine months of water autonomy annually.

Technology is combined with user training, maintenance guidance and environmental education to support lasting adoption. Through Escuelas de Lluvia (Rain Schools), installations also become practical learning tools, connecting students, teachers and families with the water cycle, aquifer conservation and climate adaptation.

Isla Urbana's field experience and technical expertise have informed public initiatives, including Mexico City's Cosecha de Lluvia programme. With more than 46,000 systems installed, its model demonstrates how decentralised infrastructure, community involvement and institutional collaboration can expand rainwater harvesting across households, schools and public facilities.



TERRA50

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DEMONSTRATED METRICS

- 46,000+ rainwater harvesting systems installed
- 1 million+ people benefited
- Approximately 456.5 million litres of rainwater captured annually
- 6–9 months of household water autonomy, depending on rainfall, storage capacity and demand
- Operating since 2009

REAL IMPACT

Isla Urbana increases access to locally harvested water in communities facing unreliable supplies. Its installations can reduce dependence on municipal networks and water truck deliveries, while easing demand on overstressed groundwater resources.

Its contribution extends beyond individual systems. Collaboration with public authorities has helped integrate rainwater harvesting into urban water strategies, demonstrating how distributed infrastructure can complement centralised supply and strengthen climate adaptation.

Training and educational programmes support local ownership and maintenance. By connecting infrastructure with everyday practices, Isla Urbana also encourages a cultural shift: recognising rainfall as a valuable resource that communities can capture and manage.

IMPLEMENTATION LOCATION & DATE

Mexico, since 2009, with installations across multiple states and additional projects in other Latin American countries. A key application is Mexico City, including collaboration with the Cosecha de Lluvia programme.

TECH LEVEL

Low Tech

COST OF THE SOLUTION

LOW. As classified in the supplied information. Costs vary according to system size, storage capacity, treatment requirements and installation conditions. No specific cost figures provided.

MITIGATION / ADAPTATION

Adaptation

MAIN CATEGORY

Primary: Living & Inclusion

BASE INFORMATION SOURCES

- Isla Urbana — Official website