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Cost Effective Soil and Water Conservation – Establishment of a Demonstration Area with People's Participation



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"Water is a powerful indicator of sustainability. It also is an indicator of the level of social development in a particular community. It is an indicator of poverty and social tensions. Water is also an issue that is linked with health, nutrition and many other factors that affect our society including the condition of nature itself. It is not an exaggeration to say that water is life itself"

Klaus Topfer, Executive Director, UNEP, 1998

CONTENTS

Chapter	Title	Page No
	Acknowledgments	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Objective	2
	Methodology, Study area and People	3
3.		12
4.	Treatments	16
5.	Results	22
6.	Creation of an information system	25
7.	Deliverables	
8.	Conclusion	26
9.	Recommendations	26
10.	Reference	27
11.	Appendix	28

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INTRODUCTION

Water is a vital natural resource which is indispensable for the existence of all living matter: plant, animal and man (Ullah et al., 1972). From the very beginning of the history of mankind the need for water has attracted man to settle near riverbanks. All ancient civilizations of the world developed on the banks of rivers (Das, 1964). Today also, the availability of water influences to a considerable extent the pattern of landuse and the social and economic well being of the people. Since water is a vital resource, the necessity for its conservation needs emphasis. To control the water yield and to improve the water resources, the proper approach is sound watershed management. Watershed integrates all the hydrological phenomena pertaining to its boundaries and as such is a logical unit for planning optimal development of soil and water resources (Holton, 1969).

The State of Kerala, although receives an annual rainfall of ca. 3000 mm is affected either by floods or droughts. This is due nature of the terrain with steep slope, absence of vegetative cover and intensive downpours of short duration. Conventional methods of creating reservoirs, dams, inter-basin transfers have failed to achieve the desired results on the one hand and cost the exchequer dearly on the other. In this context cost effective localised methods to control the flow of water and also to enhance infiltration gather importance. Although, such methods have been tested and tried at various places throughout the state, a demonstration area for experimenting and learning is visibly absent.

Thus a project was proposed to establish a demonstration area with soil and water conservation measures with emphasis on vegetative control practices and people's participation.

OBJECTIVE

To establish a demonstration area with soil and water conservation measures with emphasis on vegetative control practices and people's participation

METHODOLOGY, STUDY AREA AND PEOPLE

Methodology

In situ soil and water conservation practices were applied such as contour bunding, bunding along hedges with vegetation, under planting and vegetative strengthening of banks. Soil pits, trenches and drainage channel treatments were undertaken. All efforts were with active participation of stakeholders. A monitoring system was created using GIS for measuring hydrological parameters and impacts during and after the project.

Study Area

The area for the model watershed was identified at the Field research Centre (FRC) of the Institute at Velupadam. A small stream flowing out into the main road and facing St. Joseph church and the area draining into it was chosen. In the upstream of this watershed, the devotees had collected water from a perennial spring in the past and this water was found holy. But during the past few years, the spring had dried up and no water was available after the rainy season. Further, during heavy rains, the water from the stream used to overflow, waters cross the road and enter church premises. The interests behind choosing this watershed was bifold:

- 1. To rejuvenate the spring
- 2. To prevent overflow of water across the road and to the premises of the church.

The chosen watershed in situated in Palappilly Range of Chalakudy Forest Division (Fig.1).

The Model Watershed is a part of the micro-watershed (51.91 ha) draining into Kurumali Puzha (Fig. 2) The model watershed covering an area of 7.591 ha is situated in

the western end of the FRC campus and drains into the Chimmoney dam -Amballur road. The watershed is laminar in shape having a length of 435 m and an average width of 184 m (Fig. 3). The soils belong to eroded oxisols with boulders, rocks and coarse gravel. The soils are well drained, medium deep, acidic in reaction and low in nutrients. A small stream drains out of the watershed and is joined by three streams above the outlet. The slope changes from medium to steep as one moves upstream.

In the lower portions there are two experimental plots of mahogany planted during 2003 (1.080ha) and 2004 (1.115 ha). In the upstream it is a degraded moist deciduous forest (5.395 ha), which was a failed teak plantation earlier, felled due to borer attack (Fig. 4).

Biodiversity

The watershed is a dynamic and unique area. It is a complex web of natural resources – soil, water, air, plants and animals.

The model watershed, being a part of the Palappilly Forests of Chalakudy Forest Division, is rich in biodiversity. A list of tree species (23) found in the watershed is given in Table 1. The density of trees was only 102 trees/ ha, which indicates severe degradation. The area is diverse in butterflies, other entomofauna, snakes and birds. The mammalian diversity comprises porcupine, wild pigs, sambar deer, spotted deer, monkeys (bonnet macaque), toddy cat, malabar giant squirrel and mongoose.

Table 1.Tree species in the watershed

No	Name
1	Acacia intsia
2	Albizia odoratissima
3	Alstonia scholaris
4	Atlantia racemosa
5	Bombax ceiba
6	Calycopteris floribunda
7	Careya arborea
8	Cassia fistula

9	Cordia wallichii
10	Dalbergia latifolia
11	Grewia tillifolia
12	Helicteres isora
13	Holarrhena pubescence
14	Macaranga peltata
15	Melia dubia
16	Santalum album
17	Sterculia guttata
18	Streblus asper
19	Strychnos nuxvomica
20	Tectona grandis (Teak)
21	Terminalia bellarica
22	Wrightia tinctoria
23	Xylia xylocarpa

People

Forty-one households belong to the micro watershed of which our model watershed is a part (see appendix for more details).

The population is predominantly Christians followed by Hindus and Muslims. Of the total number of 172, 95 are male and 77 females. Age-wise, the dominant age group is 20-40 followed by 40-60.

Nearly 20% of the population is illiterate and belongs to the age group above 60. Most have studied up to 10th standard. A few are degree holders.

Percentage of unemployed youth is high. Nearly 30% of the population is unemployed. Only 11% practices agriculture as a profession.

Most people reside here for the past 25 years. New settlers are few. Most have purchased the land, while others have inherited. Homegarden type of cropping dominates (58.5%) followed by coconut and areca nut.

Most draw water from one's own well (78%) and the rest from neighbour's well. Access to drinking water is more or less similar.

Most respondents were keen in the protection of the stream although majority do not use it directly. Most have little or no knowledge about water conservation and hence are eager to learn.

Watershed partners, Sensitising and Training

Effective watershed management planning relies on an effective partnership that includes representatives of all stakeholders and works cooperatively toward a common goal. The stream running out of the selected watershed is joined by yet another stream and flows into Kurumalipuzha. There are over 40 households on the way, and the members of the same were identified as the primary stakeholders.

Table 8. List of Trainees

No	Name
1	Babu Nerinjappally
2	Beeran Thevarkattil
3	Chakkalakal Kochuvareed
4	George Kannampathapul
5	Govindan K.R.
6	Jolly K.K
7	Jose Attokkaran
8	Joseph A.A.
9	Kalathingalthodi Thomas
10	Kunju Kunju
11	Moideen N.
12	Paul Punnari
13	Puthenpeedika Sabu
14	Sukumaran Panikaveetil
15	Vareed Thommana

We organised a meeting of all stakeholders (Table 8), communities living with in the watershed, Forest Department officials, and representatives of Panchayathi Raj Institutions (Grama Panchayath and Block Panchayath) on 11-05-2005. This pre-launch meet was conducted in the premises of the St. Joseph's church. Dr. S. Sankar detailed on the aims, objectives and draft action plan for creating a model watershed. As we proceeded we found many people who want to be involved in developing a plan to protect the watershed. The stakeholders contributed to developing a plan of action and a steering committee was constituted to coordinate and monitor the work with Fr. Jose Maliekkal, the Vicar of the St. Joseph's Church as convener (Table 9). The committee met on four occasions (Table 10)

Table 9. Project steering committee

No	Name
1	Fr. Jose Maliekkal (Convener)
2.	Babu Njerinjampally
3	George K.T.
4	Govindan K.R.
5	Jose Attokkaran
6	Joseph Arukakkal
7	Kunju Kunju
8	Thoman Valliyil

Table 10. The meeting schedule of the steering committee

No	Date, Month, Year
1	11-05-2005
2	12-07-2005
3	30-08-2005
4	12-12-2005

Training in watershed design, development, implementation and management was accorded (Table 8) and local people participated in building the model watershed.

CHALAKUDY FOREST DIVISION

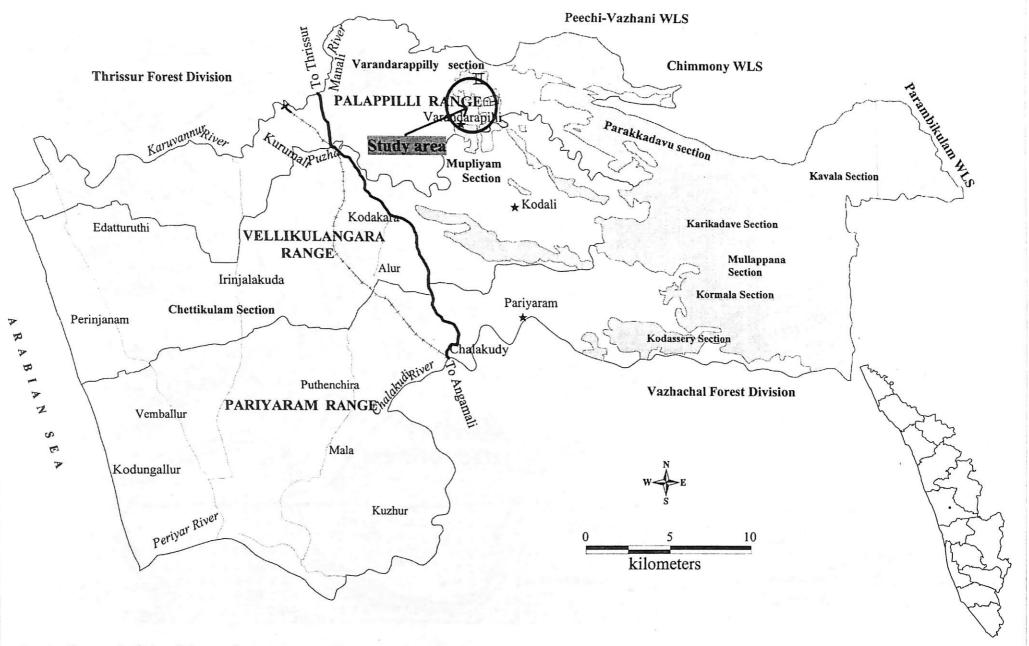


Fig. 1. General view of the study area

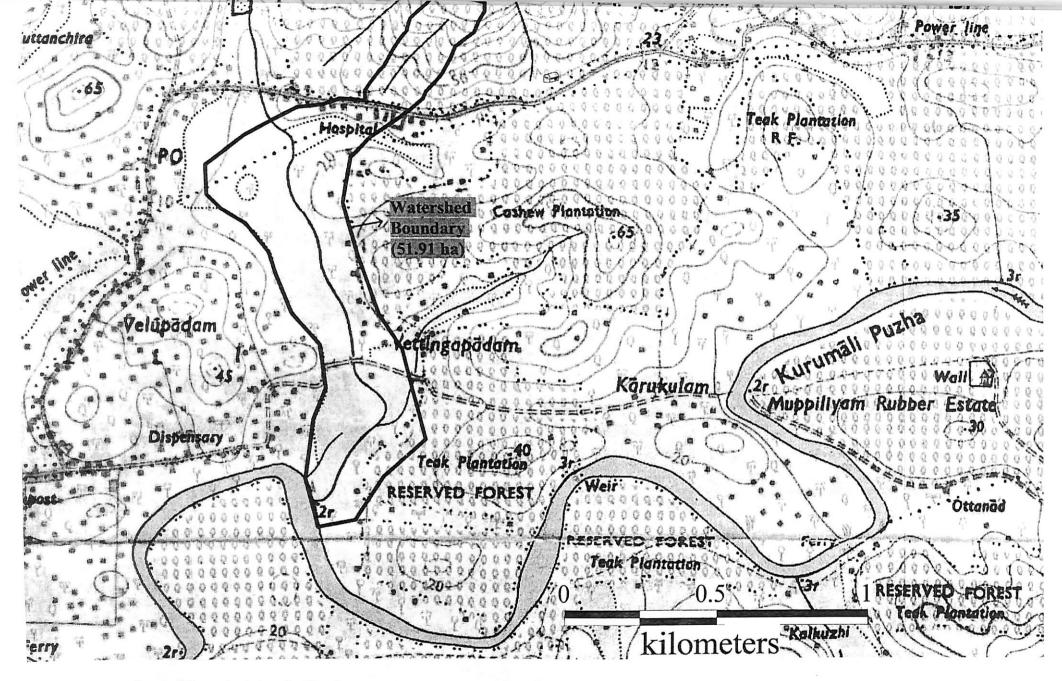


Fig. 2. Overview of the sub-watershed

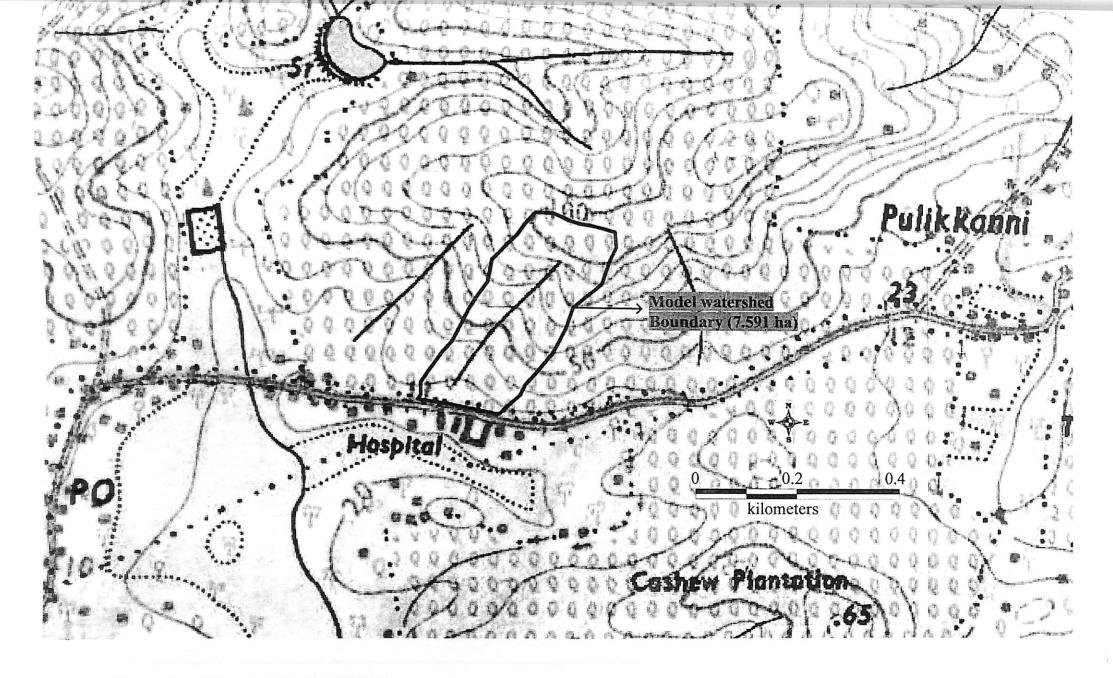


Fig. 3. Close view of the model watershed

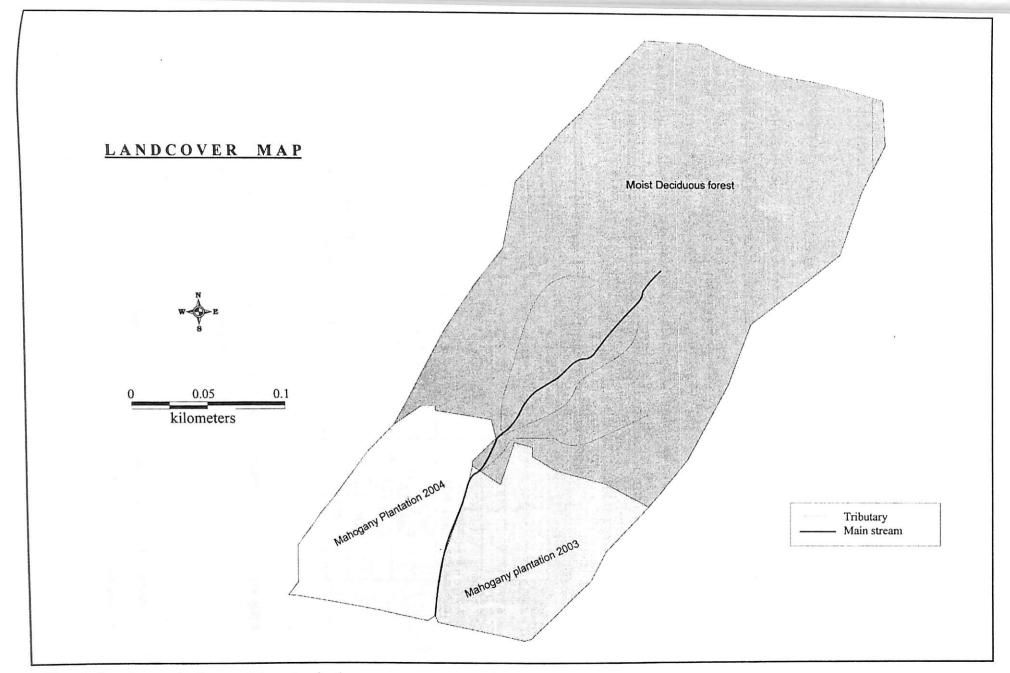


Fig. 4. Landcover in the model watershed

TREATMENTS TO ESTABLISH A MODEL WATERSHED

Mechanical and vegetative restorative actions were implemented within the model watershed during March-December 2005. The activities were as follows:

1. Mechanical

Mechanical practices for soil and water conservation were carried out. The area was surveyed and contours marked on the ground. The sub streams and the major stream were perambulated and locations of structures were fixed. Contour bunds, contour trenches, moisture conservation pits, etc were taken. The streams were packed at specific locations using rubble, thus creating a number of check dams (Plates 1-6). At few locations live checkdams using bamboos were made to see the efficacy. A list (Table 2) of the mechanical structures established in the study area is provided below.

Table 2. List of mechanical structures

No	Structures	Number/ volume
1	Check dam	1
2	Cross-checks	3
3	Bamboo check dam	2
4	Dry log check dam	1
5	Dry rubble rock pack	104.48m ³
6	Dry rubble (local stone) pack work	39.87m ³
7	Contour bunds with packing in between	43.03m ³
8	Contour bunds	122.11 m ³
9	Contour trenches	630.50m
10	Moisture conservation pits	448

2. Vegetative

An enumeration of the existing biodiversity was carried out and canopy gaps were identified. The gaps were planted with tree saplings.

2.1. Planting of trees

Through the watershed development programme saplings of 33 species of trees (over 400 saplings) were planted (Table 3 and Plates 11-12). The species choice was dictated by preference to indigenous, moist deciduous and evergreen ones. The

banks of the watercourse were stabilised by planting *Ochlandra* and *Melocanna* (bamboos) The survival is nearly 80% (as on 31st December, 2005).

Table 3. Species planted in the study area

No	Name
1	Aglaia lawii
2	Aglaia malabarica
3	Albizia odoratissima
4	Aporusa lindleyana
5	Bauhinia malabarica
6	Calamus sp
7	Calophyllum inophyllum
8	Chukrasia tabularis
9	Cinnamomum zeylanica
10	Dimocarpus longan
11	Diospyros sp.
12	Elaeocarpus glandulosus
13	Flacourtia montana
14	Garcinia gummi-gutta
15	Gmelina arborea
16	Grewia tiliifolia
17	Hopea parviflora
18	Hopea racophloea

No	Name
19	Hydnocarpus pentandra
20	Ixora brachiata
21	Lagerstreomia microphylla
22	Melia dubia
23	Melocanna baccifera
24	Memecylon deccanense
25	Myristica dactyloides
26	Myristica sp.
27	Ochlandra travancorica
28	Olea dioica
29	Polyalthia fragrans
30	Samanea saman
31	Sapindus trifoliata
32	Syzygium cumini
33	Terminalia bellerica
34	Terminalia crenulata
35	Vitex altissima

2.2. Planting of grass along contour bunds

Grass slips were planted on contour bunds to strengthen them. The roots of grass have capability of binding soil and preventing erosion. Two species of local grass were used viz., *Vetiver* and *Cympapogon* (Plates 7-8).

PLATES



Plate 1. Cross check



Plate 2. Crosscheck



Plate 3. Check dam



Plate 4. Bamboo check dam



Plate 5. Dry log check dam



Plate 6. Dry rubble rock pack



Plate 7. Contour bund with Vetiver



Plate 8. Contour bund with Cympapogon



Plate 9. Contour trench



Plate 10. Moisture conservation pit



Plate 11. Cinnamomum zeylanica



Plate 12. Syzygium cumini

RESULTS

Impacts

The impact of the watershed was evaluated using parameters like water quality, runoff and soil moisture.

Evaluation of water quality

When a watershed is managed effectively, the runoff is controlled and infiltration is enhanced. This will reflect in the quality of water. The following two parameters were adopted for testing water quality:

- 1. Turbidity
- 2. Chemical content (N and P)

Our results reveal (Table 4) that the quality of water flowing out of the model watershed has zero turbidity and lower content of N and P. The low level of nutrients and the absence of turbidity can be related to the enhanced rates of infiltration and reduced runoff (Santhosh Kumar, 2000). In other words there has been a significant reduction in soil loss.

Table 4. Turbidity and chemical content

Parameter	Model watershed	Adjacent area
Turbidity	Nil	2.26 g/l
N	0.251 ppm	0.886 ppm
P	0.154 ppm	0.424 ppm

Rainfall and run-off

The most important criterion for characterising any watershed is the incident rainfall and the subsequent runoff from the watershed. The rainfall-runoff relationship indicates the health of the watershed. In degraded watersheds runoff is increased and floods and gullies are imminent during the rainy season. Rainfall in the watershed was measured at 8 AM daily using a FRP raingauge (Plate 13). At the outlet of the watershed a gauging station (Plate 14) was constructed. The structure was 4 x 1.5 x 1 m in size (length, breadth, height). It was constructed using country bricks and

plastered with cement. A metallic measuring scale with 2 cm graduation was fixed to measure the height of the flow of water. Days when flow of water was observed, the height and speed of the water (using float and stopwatch) was recorded six times daily.

Table 5. Rainfall

	June	July	August	September	October	November
Date	Rainfall (mm)					
1	18.60	57.11	54.12	9.35	0	5.87
2	2.40	39.70	45.97	0	0	2.99
3	61.40	28.35	35.72	95.22	0	0
4	1.79	40.79	8.75	33.73	0	0
5	4.88	45.57	11.54	86.36	22.09	6.02
6	13.93	22.38	1.39	18.80	0	8.56
7	0	14.12	0	42.08	0	0
8	0	6.86	0	32.23	3.38	0
9	8.76	60.39	0	26.16	0	0
10	12.54	38.30	8.45	9.55	35.02	0
11	2.49	12.13	6.56	67.16	0.50	2.79
12	0	5.57	4.57	35.12	1.69	22.59
13	1.79	5.47	11.14	27.46	22.09	11.24
14	45.27	3.78	4.67	17.51	17.31	2.79
15	2.79	13.63	23.68	0	0	0
16	33.13	8.05	53.83	17.21	0	0
17	89.35	19.40	19.50	0	0	0
18	30.35	63.78	7.16	0	0	0
19	54.73	34.32	0	10.84	0	0
20	92.04	0	0	5.97	0	0
21	52.84	9.95	0	30.34	0	0
22	47.76	0	0	6.46	36.07	0
23	9.35	11.74	0	0	31.64	0
24	2.59	30.44	0	0	5.47	0
25	48.76	22.48	0	0	0	0
26	17.31	17.81	0	0	5.67	0
27	14.43	13.83	0	0	0	0
28	20.10	65.07	0	0	0	0
29	15.97	57.41	0	0	17.51	0
30	18.31	56.71	0	0	0.50	0
31	0	89.45	0	0	0	0
Total	723.66	894.59	297.05	571.55	198.94	62.85

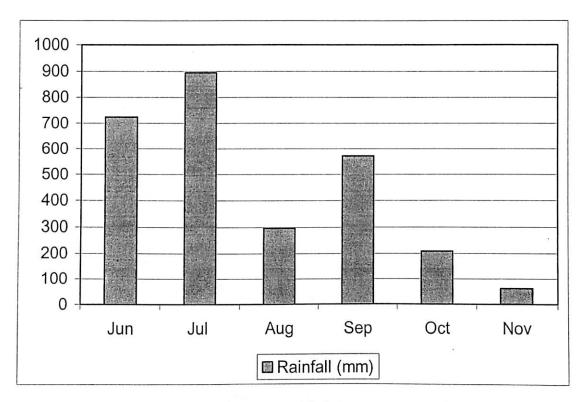


Fig 5. Rainfall

The rainfall during the period from 1st June to 30th November is provided in Table 5 and Figure 5. The total rainfall during the period was 2758.6 mm. This rainfall provided an input of 220698.4 m³ of water within an area 7.591 ha. The total outflow from the watershed was 23220.78 m³ (Table 6).

Table 6. Rainfall and runoff

Month	Rainfall (mm)	Total amount of water (m ³)	Total runoff (m ³)	% of flow
Jun	723.66	57903.2	0	0
Jul	894.59	71567.2	8486.81	11.86
Aug	297.05	23764.0	5244.32	22.07
Sep	571.55	45724.0	9489.65	20.75
Oct	208.91	16712.8	0	0
Nov	62.84	5027.2	0	0
Total	2758.6	220698.4	23220.78	10.06

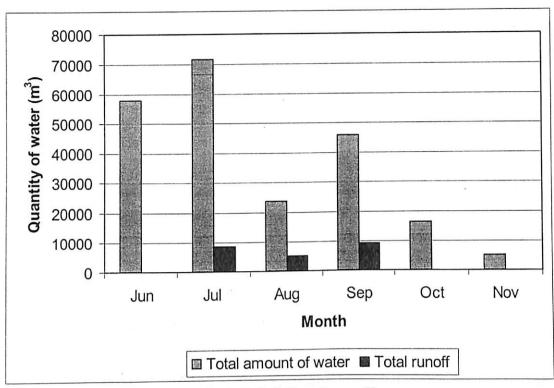


Fig 6. Rainfall and runoff

The relationship between run-off and rainfall (Table 6 and Fig. 6) indicates that run-off has been controlled to nearly 10.06% of the rainfall. It is interesting to note that during June 2005, when the rainfall was 723.66 mm, there was no run-off. This clearly proves that the water is being stored within the watershed by enhanced infiltration.

Soil Moisture

The level of soil moisture was measured using gravimetry in the soil column 10-20 cm periodically after rains both in the model and adjacent untreated area. The results are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Percentage of Soil moisture (n=20)

Area	Soil moisture (%)			
Alta	October	November	December	
Model watershed	38	34	28	
Adjacent area	26	20	18	

The data show that in the treated watershed, the level of soil moisture is higher than untreated. This trend indicates that conservation and infiltration of water has been enhanced by the measures implemented.

Rejuvenation of springs

A few springs in the upstream were rejuvenated (Plates 15 and 16) due to soil and water conservation efforts in the watershed. The enhancement of availability of surface water (streams, springs, etc) has drastically increased the biodiversity status of the model watershed (Plate 17) in comparison with control. A dramatic increase in the presence of the following groups has been observed: birds, snakes, deer (ungulates) etc.

The news about the success of the watershed management initiative has spread and many groups visit the area:

Table 11. Agencies which visited the watershed

No	Name
1	Block Panchayath, Kodakara
2	INFACT, Palai
3	Jalanidhi, Thrissur
4	Oxfam-Svaraj, Bangalore

Many Panchayaths have expressed keen interest in the 'model' and requested means and ways of replicating this experience.

PLATES



Plate 13. Rain gauge



Plate 14. Gauge station



Plate 15. Water stored at check dam



Plate 16. Water flow at upstream





Plates 17 & 18. Enhanced biodiversity

CREATION OF AN INFORMATION SYSTEM TO MONITOR AND ANALYSE THE IMPACTS

A Geographic Information System (Figs. 7 and 8) was created through the following steps. On a digitised map of the watershed the following overlays were created:

- 1. Landuse
- 2. Slope
- 3. Civil works
- 4. Vegetative structures
- 5. Bench marks for monitoring impact (soil moisture, water availability etc)

It is aimed at integrating attribute data (soil moisture, runoff, infiltration, etc) collected from fixed locations over time to develop time series data necessary for trend analyses.

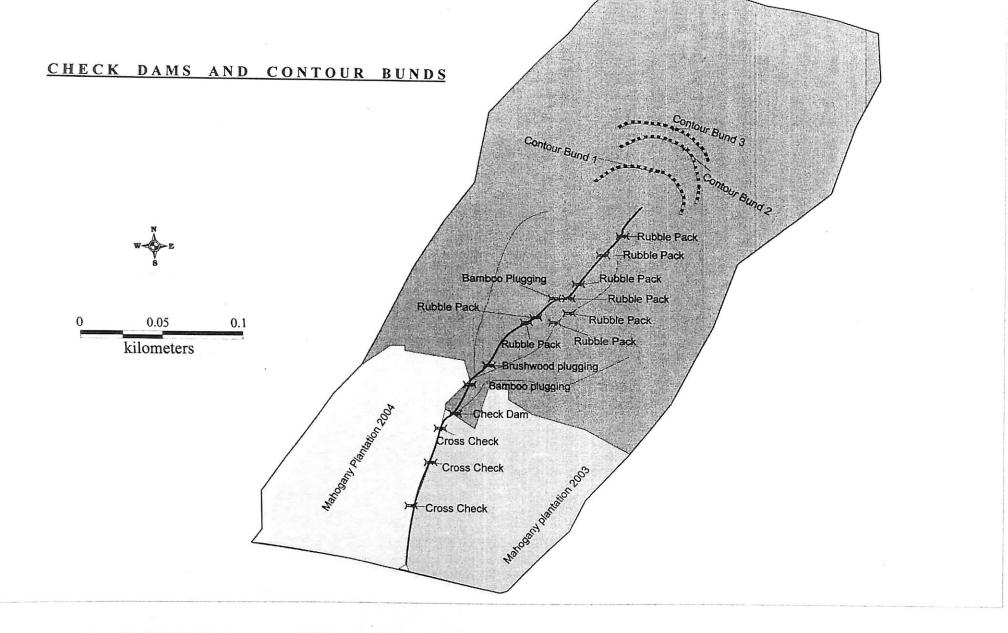


Fig. 7. Interventions in the model watershed - a

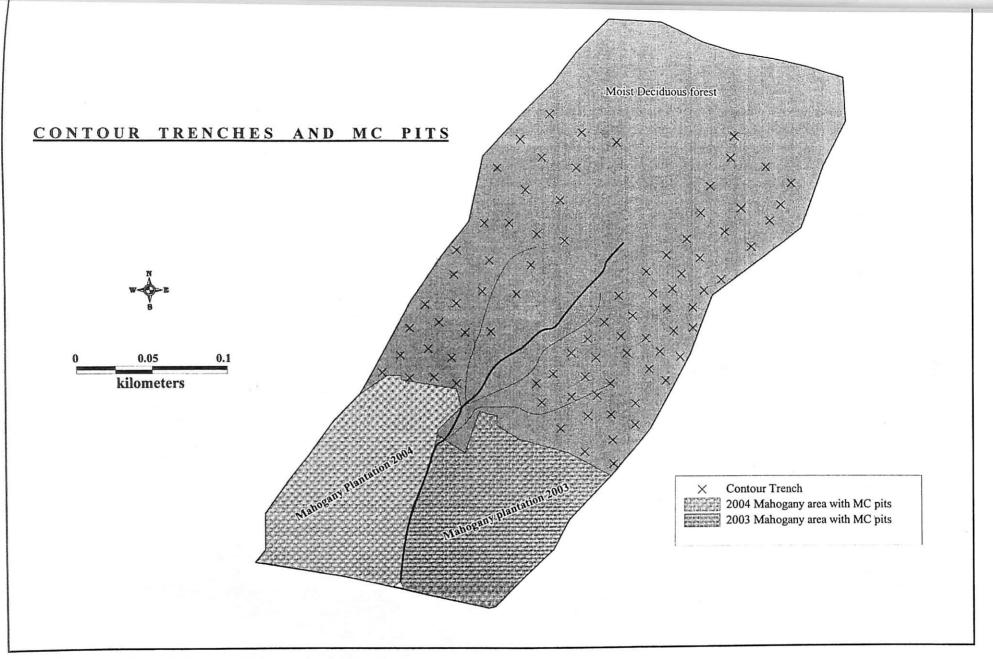


Fig. 8.Interventions in the model watershed - b

DELIVERABLES

The following deliverables viz., Cover cropping under cropping and Mixed cropping were not achieved as the area was not under agricultural landuse and the steering committee was not favourable to incorporate them.

The following deliverables were achieved:

Model watershed of 7.591 ha was established resulting in reduction in runoff by 90%, enhanced soil moisture and water quality, increase in spring out put.

Stakeholders (20) were sensitised and trained in good land ethics of watershed management

A GIS based monitoring system for watersheds has been created.

CONCLUSION

- A model watershed has been successfully established, which has delivered the
 cherished goals of soil and water conservation by increasing the rates of
 infiltration, reducing runoff and enhancing water availability in (soil moisture)
 and above soil level (springs). The watershed can demonstrate all possible
 methods of soil and water conservation to interested parties.
- The project has sensitised and trained the local community and also the neighbourhood Panchayaths in watershed design, development and management.
- 3. The GIS based monitoring system was developed to monitor the watershed benefits over time.

RECOMMENDATION

It is hoped that this experience in a small area will be replicated in watersheds of larger size with more number of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

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APPENDIX

Details of the community residing with in the watershed

1. Religion

No	Religion	No. of families	Percentage
1	Hindu	15	36.59
2	Christian	19	46.34
3	Muslim	7	17.07
	Total	41	100

2. Demography - Gender

No	Gender	No. of	Percentage
1	Male	95	55.23
2	Female	77	44.77
	Total	172	100

3. Demography - Age

No	Age	No. of	Percentage
1	Below 10	9	5.23
2	10 - 20	15	8.72
3	20 - 40	78	45.35
4	40 - 60	42	24.41
5	Above 60	28	16.28
	Total	172	100

4. Educational Status

No	Educational status	No. of Male (Percentage)	No. of female (Percentage)	No. of People	Percentage
1	Primary	10 (10.52)	8 (10.38)	18	10.47
2	5 to 10	48 (50.52)	28 (36.36)	76	44.19
3	10 to +2	17 (17.89)	12 (15.58)	29	16.86
4	Degree and above	6 (6.31)	10 (12.98)	16	9.30
5	Illiterate	14 (14.73)	19 (24.67)	33	19.19
	Total	95 (100)	77 (100)	172	100

5. Occupation

No	Occupation	No. of Male (Percentage)	No. of Female (Percentage)	No. of People	Percentage
1	Agri & AH	18 (18.94)	2 (2.59)	20	11.62791
2	Labour	18 (18.94)	1 (1.29)	19	11.04651
3	Govt. Service	1 (1.05)	2 (2.59)	3	1.744186
4	Private	6 (6.31)	4 (5.19)	10	5.813953
5	Trade/Shop	10 (10.52)	0	10	5.813953
6	Unemployed	3 (3.15)	50 (64.93)	53	30.81395
7	Other (Gulf)	18 (18.94)	0	18	10.46512
8	Students	12 (12.63)	9 (11.68)	21	12.2093
9	Aged	9 (9.47)	9 (11.68)	18	10.46512
 	Total	95 (100)	77 (100)	172	100

6. Residence

No	Residing	No. of families	Percentage
1	Near by the stream	25	60.98
2	In other land away from the stream	16	39.02
	Total	41	100

7. Length of Occupancy

No	Length	No. of	Percentage
1	0 - 5 years	6	14.63
2	5 - 15 years	13	31.71
3	15 - 25 years	7	17.07
4	Above 25 years	15	36.59
	Total	41	100

8. Ownership

No	Ownership	No. of	Percentage
1	Bought by them	25	60.98
2	Acquired	16	39.02
	Total	41	100

9. Land ownership.

No.	Land area	No. of	Percentage
1	Below 10 cent	4	9.76
2	10 - 25	9	21.95
3	25 - 50	7	17.07
4	50 - 1 acre	13	31.71
5	1 acre and above	8	19.51
	Total	41	100

9. Agriculture

No	Agriculture	No. of	Percentage
1	Paddy/Plantain/Tapioca	2	4.88
2	Home garden	24	58.54
3	Fallow field	0	0
4	Rubber	1	2.44
5	Coconut/Arecanut	14	34.15
	Total	. 41	100

10. Drinking water facilities

No	Drinking water facility	No. of	Percentage
1	Own well	32	78.05
2	Neighbours well	8	19.51
3	Public Tap	0	0
4	Others	1	2.44
· +3×1.5	Total	41	100

10a. Drinking water facilities for those residing near the stream

No	Drinking water facility	No. of	Percentage
1	Own well	18	72
2	Neighbours well	7	28
$\frac{2}{3}$	Public Tap	0	0
<u> </u>	Others	0	0
	Total	25	100

11. Availability of water for Agriculture

No.	Facility	No. of	Percentage
1	Well/ Pond	25	60.98
2	River	2	4.88
3	Not irrigated	14	34.15
	Total	41	100

12. Nature of stream use

No.		No. of	Percentage
1	Little use	4	9.76
2	Very useful	0	0
3	No use	37	90.24
	Total	41	100

13. People interested in the protection of stream

No.		No.	Percentage
1	Interested	40	97.56
2	Not interested	1	2.44
	Total	41	100

14. Knowledge about water conservation

No.	Nature of knowledge	No. of	Percentage
1	Little knowledge	18	43.90
2	Know very well	2	4.88
3	Do not know	21	51.21
	Total	41	100