

IMPACT OF WATERSHED MANAGEMENT

The impact of watershed management on checking soil erosion and harvesting of water can be seen in each and every water harvesting structure, from the ridge to the valley.

1. Loose boulder check dams: Loose boulder check dams that were constructed with a view to check the velocity of water flowing in small and big *nalas*, have checked soil erosion considerably. Loose boulder check dams constructed in 1996-97 are now completely filled with eroded soil, and vegetation has started growing on them.

2. Contour trenches: Contour trenches were dug from ridge to valley. The trenches collect rainwater during the monsoon. This rainwater percolates into the soil, raising the water level and enhancing moisture content. The impact of contour trenches can be seen clearly from the growth and development of transplanted trees.

3. Earthen *nala bunds* and ponds: 1,195 farmers have benefited with the construction of earthen *nala bunds* and ponds. These farmers are now harvesting good crops as water for irrigation is available from these ponds. About 1,504 ha of land is now being irrigated with water from these ponds. However, the major impact of these water harvesting structures can be seen in wells and hand pumps that were dry during summer, and now have enough drinking water all year long.

4. Watershed management projects have also generated employment for the rural people by increasing the land under cultivation, intensity of cultivation, and the formation of SHGs. This has checked their migration towards towns and cities.

5. Watershed management has achieved a major breakthrough by making 287 rural youths self-reliant. The watershed committees of the 17 micro watershed projects have formulated 78 self help groups (SHGs), and after imparting vocational training to them, 245 men and 42 women are now engaged in different occupations. These rural youth are now earning Rs.1,000-2,500 per month for their families.