

GROUNDWATER IS OUR LIFELINE!



2024

Conservation Awareness Campaign
at the Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival



An Initiative of WASPAR and the Young Water Professionals of Northern Sri Lanka

Impact Report: Ground Water Conservation Awareness Campaign at the Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival

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INTRODUCTION

Water Security through Participatory Action Research (WASPAR) in the Northern Province of Sri Lanka is a collaborative initiative led by the University of Jaffna under the World Bank-funded AHEAD program. Originally a research project, WASPAR has evolved into a platform for community-based action, empowering local communities to protect their water resources.

Through the Northern Water Forum, it facilitates dialogue on water challenges, promoting sustainable management practices and bridging the gap between communities, policymakers, and researchers to ensure equitable water futures for the region.

The Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival, the Northern Sri Lanka's largest cultural event, provided an ideal opportunity for WASPAR to raise awareness about groundwater conservation. The Groundwater Conservation Awareness Stall, organized by the WASPAR and the Young Water Professionals of the Northern Sri Lanka in collaboration with other stakeholders, featured interactive exhibits, posters, educational materials, quiz competitions, and dialogue forums.

The Campaign emphasized the significance of groundwater, the challenges it faces, and the importance of sustainable management to address critical knowledge gaps.

The Chief Secretary of the Province, Mr. Elankovan declared the Campaign and Exhibition open, with the Acting Vice Chancellor, Professor Raguram, representing the University of Jaffna. The Provincial Director of Irrigation, Eng. N. Suthakar, led the unveiling and presentation of the model of River for Jaffna Plan, assisted by the other distinguished guests.

"I never realized how dangerous it is to construct unnecessary tubewells in Jaffna or how irresponsible I've been by sealing the soil with tiling at home. This has been a great opportunity to learn about groundwater, and I will definitely share this knowledge with my neighbours."

— A Visitor

INTRODUCTION

OUR STRENGTH

Leveraging Collaboration

1000 Visitors

50% Heard Through
Friends & Families


100% reported


- Improved understanding of Groundwater Conservation
- found the exhibits effective


75% reported


- Motivated



 **220** Prize
Winners

 **5** Govt. Institutions

 **31** Volunteers

 **146** Volunteer
Hours

 **2** Water
Dialogues

 **5** Sponsors

The WASPAR Campaign “Groundwater is Our Lifeline” at the Nallur Festival 2024 attracted a total of up to 1,000 visitors, with 220 individuals winning prizes through interactive quiz competition.

The event saw active participation of several key organizations. Four government institutions, University of Jaffna, University of Vavuniya, Water Resources Board, Jaffna Municipal Council and the Provincial Department of Irrigation, participated in the event, contributing their expertise and resources to the initiative. They played significant roles in supporting the Campaign’s activities and fostering public engagement.

The event was made possible through the support of five sponsors including Oru Thuli, the Institute for Development Research and Training (Pvt) Ltd in Poonakary, and Javana Graphics and well wishers who provided 81% of the necessary funding. This collaboration underscored the importance of multi-sector partnerships in raising awareness and promoting sustainable groundwater management practices in the Northern Province.

Two significant dialogue sessions were held on August 29th and 31st, creating platforms for meaningful discussions on groundwater conservation. A total of 50 participants—22 women and 28 men—engaged in these dialogues, which emphasized the critical importance of groundwater management.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

Volunteers, including students from Jaffna Hindu College, the University of Jaffna, and other interested individuals (a total of 31), played a crucial role in engaging the public and providing valuable insights. Here's a summary of what they believe worked well and areas for improvement:

- 56.7% of volunteers believe that visitors found the interactive discussions or quiz competitions interesting.
- 87% believe that visitors found the posters engaging.
- 70% think that only some visitors had basic knowledge about ground water, while only 10% believe most visitors had no knowledge.
- 100% believe that all visitors left with a better understanding of groundwater conservation.
- 50% of volunteers believe the information shared might influence the future behaviour of visitors regarding groundwater usage.
- All volunteers expressed their interest in being part of future WASPAR initiatives.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

The Campaign's success can be attributed to several key factors highlighted by the volunteers:

1. Exhibits and Models:

The models were praised for their simplicity and effectiveness in conveying complex concepts.

2. Quiz Competition:

This was a popular element that kept visitors engaged and served as a valuable learning tool.

3. Interactive Engagement:

Volunteers felt the discussions with visitors created a dynamic environment, allowing them to share knowledge effectively.

4. Setup and Organization:

Overall, the layout and arrangement were positively received, facilitating smooth interaction between volunteers and visitors.

VOLUNTEER REFLECTIONS

Volunteers provided constructive feedback to enhance future stalls:



Multimedia Enhancements: Volunteers suggested incorporating videos, sound systems, and LED displays to make the experience more engaging.



Hands-On Experiences: Practical demonstrations like water filtration and real-time testing of water samples were recommended to involve visitors more deeply.



Visitor Attraction: The stall's visibility could be improved by positioning it in high-traffic areas and using more colorful designs to draw in the crowd.



Posters and Models: Simplifying posters with concise language and increasing the use of models were suggested to better communicate messages.

SENTIMENT ANALYSIS: VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

The sentiment analysis shows that the **event was largely successful**, with **volunteers feeling positive about their participation**.

Most volunteers reflected positively on the learning and engagement opportunities the event provided, particularly in deepening their knowledge of water conservation and related technologies.

**Positive Learning
& Engagement**

A few volunteers shared reflective insights on how the event helped them grow, emphasizing the importance of adaptability, curiosity, and knowledge sharing.

**Reflective
Thoughts**

Some volunteers suggested making the stall more attractive and providing follow-up materials like pamphlets or social media links to maintain engagement with visitors.

**Suggestions for
Improvement**

All volunteers expressed their interest in participating in future events organized by WASPAR. **Their enthusiasm highlights the value of engaging the community in groundwater conservation efforts.**

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

Interactive elements were the heart of the Groundwater Conservation Awareness Campaign at the Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival 2024. By combining educational content with engaging activities, the Campaign **successfully conveyed important messages about groundwater conservation**. These activities catered to a diverse audience, making groundwater management/conservation concepts accessible and encouraging active participation.

Top Interest: The volunteers believe that the interactive discussions were by far the most engaging part of the Campaign, indicating that visitors valued the opportunity to actively participate and ask questions.

Supporting Interest: They also believe that the models, the quiz competition, and posters were also important in engaging visitors, each serving as different but complementary tools to facilitate learning about groundwater conservation.

Other Insights: The variety of volunteer responses shows that the stall successfully appealed to different learning styles, whether through discussions, hands-on interaction with models, or visual aids like posters. The balance of interactive and educational elements clearly contributed to the overall success of the exhibits.



INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

A. POSTERS

A series of Informative Posters were displayed throughout the stall, each focusing on different aspects of groundwater conservation, such as the impacts of over-extraction, the benefits of rainwater harvesting, and the role of community engagement in sustainable water management.

Volunteers **guided visitors** through these posters, **explaining complex concepts** in the **language preferred** by the visitors, in simple terms and answering questions. The posters served as both visual aids and educational tools, offering a clear and concise overview of groundwater issues and the way forward.



Simplifying Complex Concepts

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

B. MODELS

The physical models displayed at the stall by the Water Resources Board and the Provincial Irrigation Department were key educational tools that effectively conveyed important concepts about water management and conservation.

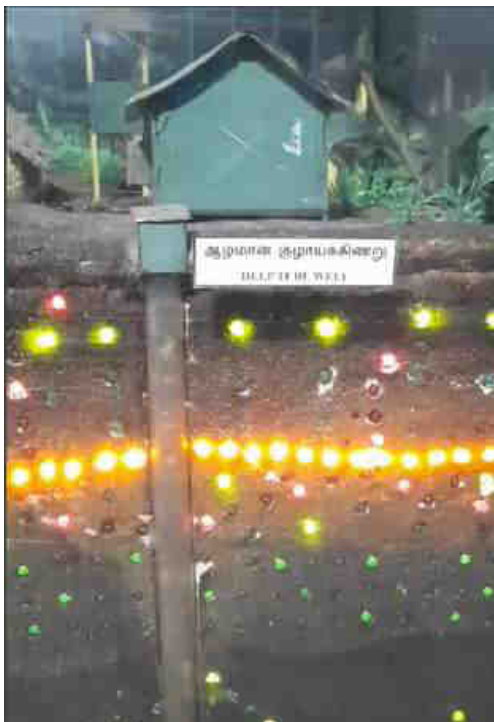
Water Infiltration Model

The Water Resources Board explained the process of **how rainwater and surface water permeate the soil to replenish groundwater levels**. The officers of the board explained how various factors, such as soil type and land cover, influence infiltration, emphasizing the need to maintain permeable surfaces for sustainable groundwater recharge in the Jaffna region.



Salt Water Intrusion Model

The Water Resources Board also showcased the **critical balance between groundwater extraction and the risk of saltwater intrusion**. The dangers of over-extracting groundwater, which can lead to saltwater contaminating freshwater aquifers, a significant issue in coastal regions like Jaffna was explained by the officers. Visitors could see how excessive extraction lowers the water table, allowing saltwater to seep in.



Visualizing Concepts Through Models

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

River For Jaffna Model

The Provincial Department of Irrigation introduced this model, as the latest modification of the decades-old Arumugam Proposal, **to divert water from the spill of the Iranaimadu tank as a way forward to address the peninsula's water scarcity.** As an enhancement of the previous Dutch proposal, this model came through the hard work of a team of Senior Engineers from Sydney, Australia, and added value to the exhibition.

Groundwater Monitoring Unit

The stall also featured a Groundwater Monitoring Unit displayed by the Water Resource Board, demonstrating how groundwater levels are tracked in real-time. It showcased the technology used to measure water table depths and assess the state of aquifers, emphasizing the importance of data-driven monitoring to manage groundwater resources effectively.



The distinguished guests officially inaugurated the groundwater models on August 26th, 2024, during the opening event, which was followed by a dialogue forum.

"The models and monitoring equipment gave me a clear understanding of how vital it is to manage and protect our groundwater resources."

— A Visitor

Visualizing Concepts Through Models

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

C. QUIZ COMPETITION

One of the most popular and engaging elements at the Groundwater Conservation Awareness Campaign was the Quiz Competition. This interactive activity captivated visitors by combining education with fun, reinforcing key messages about groundwater conservation. The quiz format provided an enjoyable and competitive way to test visitors' knowledge, making it a memorable part of the Campaign. Over 220 participants were awarded prizes for their correct answers, further motivating engagement.

Quiz Format

The quiz featured a variety of question types, including one-word answers, yes/no questions, and multiple-choice questions (MCQs), all focused on groundwater conservation and the exhibition content. This mix of question formats helped engage visitors while reinforcing key educational concepts in a fun and interactive way.

Rewarding System

Participants who answered **5 out of 6** questions correctly received a **customized Snake and Ladder board game on groundwater conservation** and **cloth bag with an awareness message**, while those with **3 correct answers** were awarded a **pencil case, featuring an awareness message**.



Engaging and Educating Through Fun

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS



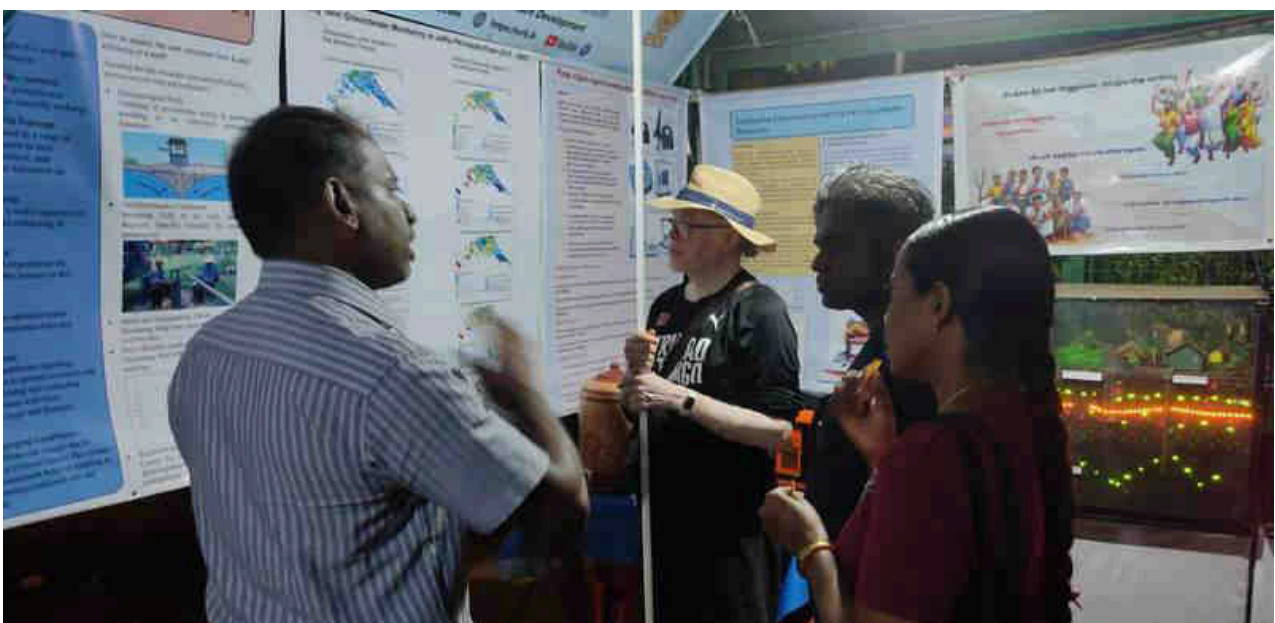
INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

D. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSIONS

One of the **most appreciated aspects** of the stall was the interactive discussions, where visitors could actively engage in meaningful dialogue about groundwater conservation. These discussions were centered around the posters and physical models, which effectively conveyed key concepts like groundwater recharge and over extraction, groundwater sustainability nexus and sustainable water management practices. Visitors had the opportunity **to ask questions, share their thoughts, and explore these topics** in detail, making the learning experience both interactive and insightful.

The success of these sessions was largely due to the **dedicated WASPAR team members, volunteers and the officers of the Water Resources Board**, who played a crucial role in facilitating the discussions. They took turns explaining the materials and tirelessly engaged with visitors, ensuring that everyone understood the content.

To make the Campaign **more accessible, they communicated in the visitors' preferred languages**, creating an inclusive environment. These well-facilitated discussions not only deepened the visitors' understanding but also encouraged them to think critically about their own role in groundwater conservation.



Inspiring Minds through Interactions

DIALOGUE FORUMS

A. The Citizen-Science Nexus

The first dialogue forum of the Nallur Groundwater Awareness Campaign, held on August 29th, 2024, served as both a platform for discussing water security and the bi-monthly meeting of the Young Water Professionals of Northern Sri Lanka. With 31 participants, including the senior management from the Water Resources Board, academics, undergraduate students, and the WASPAR team, the session began with introductions that highlighted each individual's role in water security for the Northern Province. The forum provided an opportunity for participants to learn about the WASPAR project and the activities of the Young Water Professionals, fostering connections between young professionals and experienced stakeholders in the field of groundwater management.

The dialogue focused on the effectiveness of the Nallur Groundwater Awareness initiative in raising public consciousness in water security issues. Participants discussed the campaign's impact, providing valuable feedback on outreach activities and stall arrangements. The forum underscored the critical role of community engagement and communication dissemination in sustainable water management, with participants agreeing that local involvement is essential for long-term conservation efforts. The session carried a powerful message: **the future of water security depends not only on scientific expertise but also on empowering communities to take an active role in managing their groundwater resources, ensuring that public awareness leads to meaningful action.**



DIALOGUE FORUMS

B. The Heritage-Science Nexus

The second dialogue forum was held on 31st August 2024 and explored the heritage of groundwater resources in the Jaffna Peninsula, acting as a bridge between what science reveals below the ground and what people observe on the surface. Led by Dr. Ahilan Pakkiyanathan and facilitated by Prof. N. Sriskandarajah, the discussion highlighted the deep connections between water resources and the cultural, geographical, and spiritual life of the region.

Participants explored how water has historically symbolized purity, transformation, and sanctity, playing a central role in shaping society from hunter-gatherer communities to agricultural civilizations. The forum emphasized that water is more than a physical resource; it is a bridge between science and tradition, where indigenous knowledge, passed down through generations, offers crucial insights into sustainable water management. Additionally, special guest Nimal Ragavan shared his inspiring efforts to restore traditional pond systems in Tamil Nadu.

The forum concluded with a powerful message: **the study of groundwater is not just a scientific pursuit but a journey into the heart of the northern region's cultural and spiritual identity.** By merging scientific understanding with traditional knowledge, there is hope for reviving sustainable water management practices through participatory governance in the region.



THE WAY FORWARD

The success of the Groundwater Conservation Awareness Stall at the Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival 2024 has opened up exciting new opportunities for collaboration and continued efforts in conserving groundwater resources in the Northern Province. The interactive discussions, educational models, quizzes, and dialogue forums have not only raised public awareness but also created a platform to engage with various stakeholders, from local communities to policy influencers. As we reflect on the impact created, it is evident that **further action is needed** to bridge the knowledge gap and foster pathways for inclusive governance of groundwater resources.

Moving forward, the WASPAR initiative will continue to play a critical role in driving awareness, facilitating research, promoting dialogues and sustainable groundwater practices in the northern region. There are several avenues for potential collaborators, whether donor agencies, research institutions, volunteers, well wishers, societies or private sector partners, to contribute and support this initiative:

A. Expanding Action Oriented Research

B. Influencing Policy and Decision-Making

C. Engaging Volunteers and Communities

D. Funding WASPAR Initiatives

E. Building Public Awareness Campaigns

F. Strengthening Collaboration



THE WAY FORWARD

A. Expanding Action-oriented Research:



B. Influencing Policy and Decision-Making:



C. Engaging Volunteers and Communities:



D. Funding WASPAR Initiatives:



THE WAY FORWARD

E. Building Public Awareness Campaigns



F. Strengthening Collaboration:



BE PART OF WASPAR

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SCAN ME





GROUNDWATER IS OUR LIFELINE!

Impact Report: Groundwater Conservation Awareness Stall at Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival, Jaffna, Sri Lanka

INTRODUCTION

The Groundwater Conservation Awareness Campaign, held during the Nallur Kandasamy Temple Festival, Jaffna, Sri Lanka aimed to raise public awareness about the importance of groundwater management in Northern Sri Lanka. The event, organized by WASPAR in collaboration with local volunteers and several key institutions, featured interactive exhibits, quizzes, and dialogue forums.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Visitor Engagement

Over 1,000 visitors attended the stall, with 220 participants winning prizes through an interactive quiz competition.

Collaboration

The event was supported by four government institutions, universities, and private sponsors, showcasing the strength of multi-sector partnerships.

Volunteer Participation

A total of 31 volunteers, including students from Jaffna Hindu College and the University of Jaffna, contributed 146 hours of volunteer time.

KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

- The simplicity of the models in explaining complex concepts.
- The interactive discussions and quiz competition that kept visitors engaged.
- Effective collaboration between volunteers and institutions in executing the stall's activities.

THE WAY FORWARD

The stall's success demonstrated the value of community engagement and interactive education in promoting sustainable groundwater practices. Future efforts will focus on expanding research, influencing policy, and continuing to engage communities in groundwater conservation initiatives.