

# Hands-On STEM Projects: Building Models and Experiments

Written by **Alpa Nigam**,  
Fulbright DAI Fellow 2023, National ICT Awardee Teacher 2016



## Introduction: Ananya's STEM Adventure

Ananya, a seventh-grader from a government school in Dehradun, loved solving puzzles and building small models using paper and cardboard. One day, while returning from school, she noticed her neighborhood had a recurring problem—after heavy rains, water would collect in the narrow lanes, making it difficult for people to walk.



The next day, during her science class, her teacher, Mr. Singh, introduced the concept of **STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics)**. He explained, “**STEM is about using knowledge to solve problems by building models, conducting experiments, and thinking creatively.**”

Ananya thought, “**If I can use STEM to solve puzzles, why not use it to solve the waterlogging problem in my area?**” Inspired by the idea, she decided to create a hands-on STEM project to design a simple drainage model.

## What is STEM?

Mr. Singh explained the importance of STEM to the class:

- **Science:** Understanding how things work (like gravity or water flow).
- **Technology:** Using tools to make work easier.
- **Engineering:** Designing and building structures or systems.
- **Mathematics:** Measuring, calculating, and solving problems.

## Why is STEM Important?

1. Encourages creativity and problem-solving.
2. Helps us understand real-life issues and create solutions.
3. Teaches teamwork and critical thinking.

## The Problem: Waterlogging in Ananya’s Neighborhood

Ananya identified the challenges faced by her community:

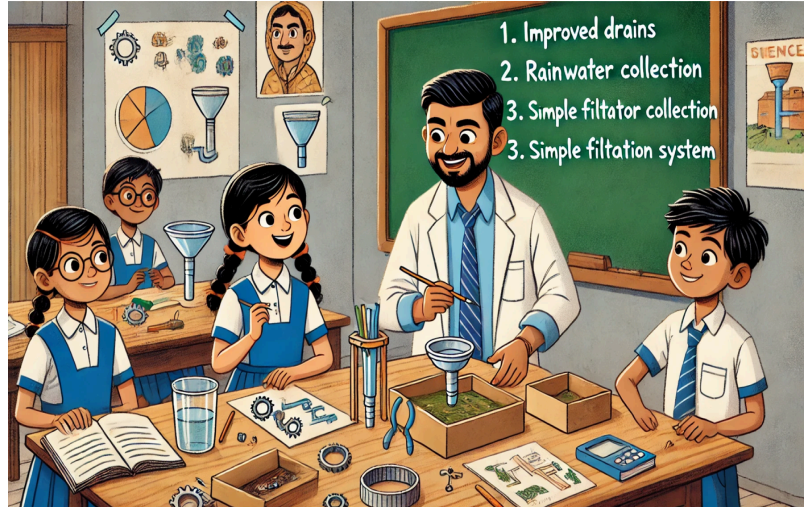
1. **Blocked Streets:** Water collected in lanes after rains, making it hard to walk or cycle.
2. **Unhygienic Conditions:** Stagnant water attracted mosquitoes, causing health concerns.
3. **No Simple Solution:** The existing drains were either clogged or not designed to handle heavy rains.

Ananya decided to design a model drainage system to show how water could flow away efficiently.

## Brainstorming Solutions

Ananya and her classmates brainstormed ideas with Mr. Singh:

1. **Improved Drains:** Build wider or slanted drains to allow water to flow easily.
2. **Rainwater Collection:** Design a system to collect and reuse rainwater.
3. **Simple Filtration System:** Add a filter to drains to prevent blockages.



The class decided to create a

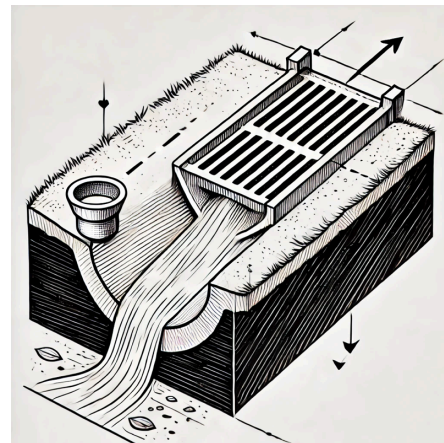
**working model of a slanted drainage system** because it was easy to build and demonstrated the solution effectively.

## Designing the Prototype: A Simple Drainage Model

What Will It Do?

The model will:

- Show how slanted drains help water flow faster.
- Include a small filter to prevent blockages from leaves and debris.



Materials Needed:

1. A plastic tray or large cardboard box (to represent the ground).
2. Flexible pipes or straws (to act as drains).
3. Small pebbles or sand (to show blockages).

4. A fine mesh or net (for the filter).
5. Water (to test the model).
6. Tape, glue, and scissors.

### Building the Prototype

#### 1. Prepare the Base:

- Use the plastic tray or cardboard box as the base of your model.
- Tilt the base slightly by placing a book or block under one end to create a slope.

#### 2. Set Up the Drains:

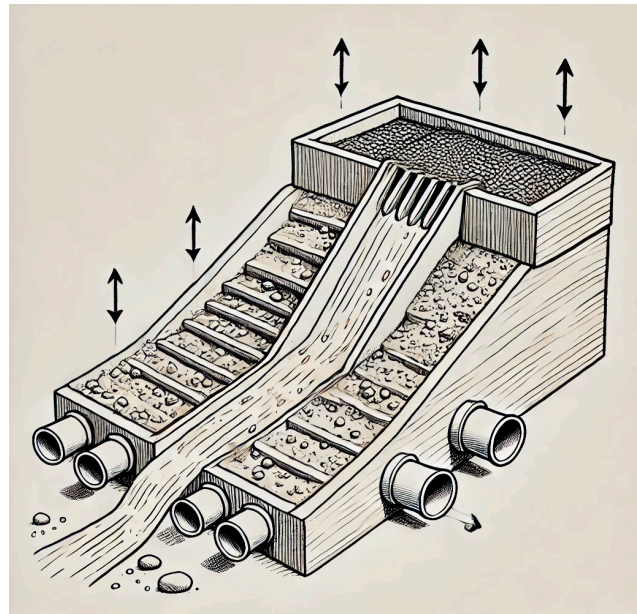
- Attach the pipes or straws along the slope to act as drains.
- Ensure the pipes lead to one end where the water can flow out.

#### 3. Add a Filter:

- Place a small piece of mesh or net at the opening of each pipe to act as a filter.
- This will prevent leaves and debris from entering the pipes.

#### 4. Simulate Water Flow:

- Sprinkle pebbles or sand on the base to represent debris.
- Pour water from the top end and observe how it flows through the drains.



### Testing the Model

#### 1. Start with Clear Drains:

- Pour water down the sloped base and observe how it flows through the pipes.

#### 2. Add Debris:

- Sprinkle pebbles or sand to block the drains and pour water again.
- Show how the filter prevents the debris from clogging the pipes.

#### 3. Test Different Slopes:

- Adjust the slope of the base and observe how the water flow changes.

## Explain How It Works

### 1. Science Behind the Model:

- Water flows faster on a slope due to gravity.
- Filters prevent debris from blocking the flow.

### 2. How It Solves the Problem:

- Properly designed sloped drains and filters can prevent waterlogging and keep streets clean.

## Implementing the Idea

After building the model, Ananya presented it to her classmates and neighbors:

### 1. Demonstration:

- She showed how sloped drains and filters could improve water flow.

### 2. Community

#### Awareness:

- She explained how simple changes, like cleaning drains and using filters, could solve water logging issues.



### 3. Future Ideas:

- Ananya encouraged others to think about how rainwater could be collected and reused.

## Effect and Importance of the Project

### 1. Cleaner Streets:

- Improved drainage systems reduce waterlogging and make walking safer.
- 2. Healthier Environment:**
    - Preventing stagnant water helps reduce mosquito-borne diseases.
  - 3. Practical Learning:**
    - The project taught students how to use STEM concepts to solve real-world problems.

## Conclusion: Building and Solving with STEM

Through her project, Ananya learned that STEM isn't just about books and theories—it's about using knowledge to solve everyday problems. Her drainage model showed how simple designs could improve life in her community.

STEM encourages creativity, teamwork, and practical problem-solving. Like Ananya, you too can explore STEM by building models, experimenting, and making your ideas a reality. Start small, think big, and use your creativity to make a difference!