

# APPLICATION OF UNSATURATED SHEAR STRENGTH PROPERTIES IN SLOPE STABILITY ANALYSIS

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*Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Science*

University of Moratuwa



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**December 2003**

UM Thesis coll.

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## DECLARATION

The work included in this thesis in part or whole has not been submitted for any other academic qualification at any institution.



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## ABSTRACT

Unsaturated soil mechanics is becoming increasingly popular in the world of Geotechnical Engineering due to the additional shear strength that unsaturated soils possess compared to saturated soils and specific problems that are associated with unsaturated soils. In this thesis, unsaturated shear strength properties of a selected residual soil are derived and their effects on the stability of slopes are investigated.

The shear strength function and the Soil Water Characteristic Curve (SWCC) of the soil found at Pussallawa landslide are developed through a laboratory testing programme. Thereafter, the Pussallawa landslide is analysed under saturated and unsaturated conditions depending on the location of the water table, using shear strength parameters obtained from the laboratory testing programme. In addition, the Kahagalla landslide and a hypothetical cut slope are analysed similarly assuming different locations of water table. An EXCEL spreadsheet is developed to analyse stability of slopes using saturated and unsaturated shear strength of soils.



Results obtained for the hypothetical cut slope by the spreadsheet application developed here are compared with those given by the SLOPE/W software, using different methods available to analyse stability of slopes. This yields a comparison among the different methods of slope stability analysis. Results are presented in graphical and tabular form.

As it is difficult to measure insitu suction values in local slopes at present, the parametric study done here gives an insight into the problem of landslides. This method can be refined to find a reliable factor of safety for slopes once methods are developed locally for insitu measurement of suction.

The analysis shows that there is a significant improvement in the factor of safety when the slopes are unsaturated, compared to that when they are saturated and the factor of safety under unsaturated conditions increases as the depth to water table from the failure surface increases. It also shows how slopes can fail upon saturation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Among those who deserve credit for the assistance extended during the research programme, Dr. U.G. A. Puswewala, who proved an excellent supervisor to work with, has given me encouragement and inspiration throughout the process. Dr. Puswewala has been thorough and supportive as a supervisor and has been an excellent guide as well. His devotion in the subject of unsaturated soil mechanics is also acknowledged. I wish to acknowledge and express my gratitude to Dr. T. A. Peiris, who found time to supervise me throughout the study period notwithstanding the duties he is performing as the head of the Department of Computer Science and Engineering in the University of Moratuwa. My gratitude is extended to Professor B.L. Tennakoon and Dr. S.A.S. Kulathilaka from whom I garnered insights and suggestions during the progress reviews and in some specific areas.

The assistance received from Mr. K.R. Pitipanaarachchi, technical officer, Mr. D.G.S. Vithanage, technical officer and Mr. D. Bandulasena, lab assistant, of the Soil Mechanics Laboratory of the University of Moratuwa, during the laboratory-testing programme is acknowledged. I would like to acknowledge the assistance extended by Mr. D.C. Karunarathna and Mr. R. Kugan, research assistants and Mr. H.A.A.Gunawardane, lab assistant of the Surveying Laboratory for performing the field survey at Pussallawa landslide.



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Credits need to go to Mr. D.L.C. Welikala, Director, Geotechnical Engineering Division, in the National Building Research Organization (NBRO) for allowing and facilitating the performance of consolidated undrained triaxial tests in NBRO. Thanks are also due to Mr. Asiri Karunawardhana, engineer Mr. Chandima Ahangama, lab assistant, Mrs. Gayani Samaradiwakara, scientist, and all the staff in the soil mechanics laboratory in NBRO for the assistance extended during the testing programme.

During the field visits to see the landslides and remedial measures that have been adopted to stabilize them, Mr. Amarasekara, the Provincial director of RDA for the Uva province did an excellent job by providing transport and giving all the necessary data.

Many thanks are due to University of Moratuwa for the services provided during the research and to the Asian Development Bank and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Sri Lanka for funding this research through the Science and Technology Personal Development project.

Ranukkandage Mahinda Rathnasiri

06/01/2004

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