

World Water Day (WWD) 2023 – Agra, India

Summary Report

World Water Day was celebrated in Agra, the city of Taj Mahal. Scores of river activists gathered at the Yamuna arti sthal (place for Yamuna River prayers), Etmauddaula view point.



The Rivers of the World (ROW) Foundation have been closely working with the Agra team for over two decades.



The green activists expressed deep concern over the sad state of rivers and water bodies in India. River Connect Campaign convener Brij Khandelwal said there was an urgent need for a comprehensive national rivers policy. Those who attended the program included environmentalist Dr Devashish Bhattacharya, pandit Jugal Kishore, Padmini Iyer, Chaturbhuj Tiwari and others.

As a follow up, Subijoy Dutta, ROW Foundation, Maryland, USA visited on the Yamuna Aarti Sthal and met with the Agra team on May 21st.



Considering the deep concern of the Agra team, we discussed some of the issues there - people lost their lives by drinking the Yamuna water while performing their daily rituals (Achman) on the bank of the river Yamuna. These and other impacts due to high levels of pollution in the Yamuna water led to a stop of all potable use of the Yamuna river water by the local people. Several efforts were made in the 90s and the first decade of 2000 in collaboration with the Agra team. The Agra team, specifically, Mr. Brij Khandelwal, Mr. Raman Balla, late Shравan Kumar, and a few others are truly dedicated and determined. The team made a number of efforts and initiatives to make some changes.

Two such efforts yielded some improvement to the Yamuna water quality -

1. A collaborative effort of our team and the Agra Forest Department helped in creating one wetland-based treatment system, which has been working effectively since 2015 in removing a significant level of contaminants from the Kakhretta drain before it discharges to the Yamuna river. A detail report of this system can be seen at this [link](#)
2. In another instance, with the help of the team, we spotted a source of Petroleum hydrocarbon, leaking into the river, while crossing the river by a boat at a place, known as Gau Ghat to the local people. This site is at about 4 Kms southeast of the refinery, where 10,000 fish-kill took place in late 2006 and with the active support of the team and the local authorities, the refinery waste were mandated to be placed in sealed containers only.

As a result the ‘Gau Ghat’, which was once devoid of any aquatic life, returned to a vibrant ecology in November 2007.

We hope to continue more efforts The ROW Foundation have been looking the Yamuna River in Agra area during our visits to the site and working with the dedicated Agra team to find a few innovative options to improve the Yamuna water quality and seek support and assistance for implementation to help local people there.

The Agra team is also working on planting trees as a part of their effort to help with the reduction of greenhouse gas emission and reduce the impact of climate change.



Thanks to all of the participants and local people for their enthusiasm and interest in protecting the rivers.

Please visit the ROW website <https://rowfoundation.org> for further information. You can send your questions or comments to rowfoundation@gmail.com.