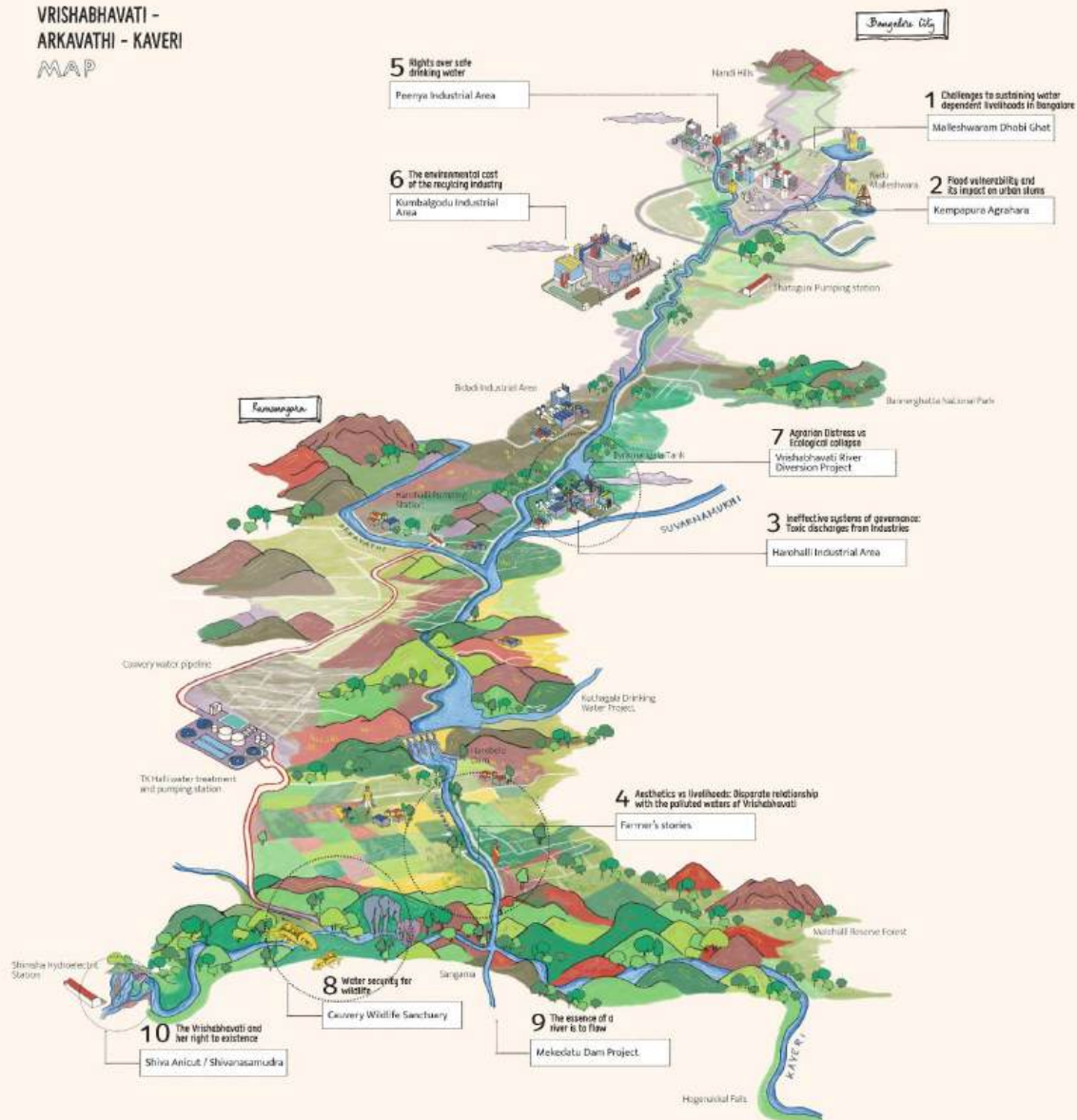


VRISHABHAVATI -  
ARKAVATHI - KAVERI  
MAP



## Progress Report 1

# Vrishabhavati Story Project

A collective storytelling project : documenting memories of an urban river

Supported by Bengaluru Sustainability Forum

Team: Kadambari Komandur and Namrata Narendra

With

Nirmala and Madhuri (Paani.Earth) and Megha Kashyap

## Overview

The project officially began from our end in June 2023, since we didn't receive confirmation of the fund receipt at BET until then.

### Theme: Livelihood

In the months of June and July, we prepped for our field visit phase of the project, beginning with the Bangalore story on the Dhobi Ghat. Over four months, we wrote the outline, made multiple visits to speak to people at the Ghat and understand what it is that they wanted to convey and began drawing the illustrations for this story.

We also conducted a small informal group discussion after printing out the first draft of the story with the women of the Dhobi Ghat union. The challenge we faced however, was receiving any comments on the work by the male members on the board since they felt that this didn't portray them and their role as much as it did the women we spoke to during our multiple visits. This is one of the many obstacles of field engagement and we are continuing to have conversations with them to make sure we include all perspectives.

### Theme: Pollution and toxic water

Following the completion of the draft version of the Dhobi Ghat Story, we started the leg work for our next visit to Harohalli and Byramangala. Nirmala and Madhuri (Paani.Earth) guided us on this visit since they had prior contacts in this area. Here, we spoke to farmers, teachers of the Annedoddi school (near Harohalli) and a librarian at a government library for children to discuss multiple aspects of the impact of the polluted water of the Vrishabhavati river. We have since created an outline for the story and the visualisation for this is underway.

### Theme: Biodiversity

We were connected with Naren Srinivasan from Wildlife Association of South India, and we had multiple conversations with him since 2021, to understand the habitat and life cycle of the Mahseer fish which is indigenous to the Cauvery River and is threatened due to the pollution in the rivers and the rising climate. In our field visit, he took us along the route where the Mekedatu dam (drinking water project for Bengaluru) will be constructed and the massive impact it will have on the ecosystem there. We also interacted with a few residents of the area to understand their perspectives as well.

### Theme: Urban Flooding

Over the past year, we have received a few requests on collaborations for this book and decided to take on one person to co-write and illustrate a story with us. Megha has been working on the Urban Flooding story and illustrating it over the past few months.

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## Story 1: Livelihoods

### Dhobi Ghat, Malleshwaram

1. **4 Field visits** over 4 months
2. **Discussions** with the labour union, communities living there
3. **Outline** of the story created based on field visits
4. **Visualisation** based on conversations
5. One **community engagement** workshop organised, the book was shared with everyone for feedback. However, this was semi-successful since the male leaders of the union felt offended that the story focus was on the women working in the Ghat.
6. Text for the story is yet to be added to the visualised pages.



## Photos from our visits and engagements



Left: Waste outflow into the river; Right: Community engagement



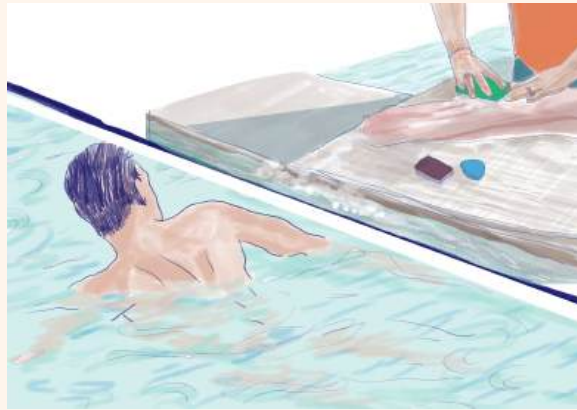
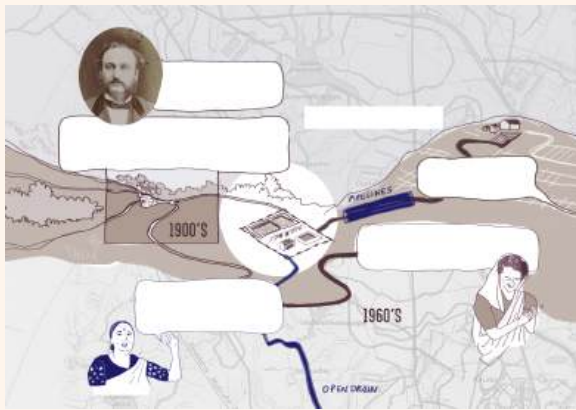
Left: Assumed origin of the river at Kadu Malleshwara temple ; Right: Small ironing industry based out of the Dhobi Ghat

## Visualised pages from Story 1

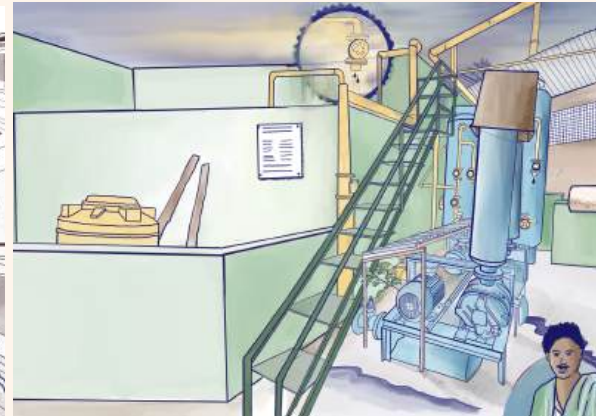
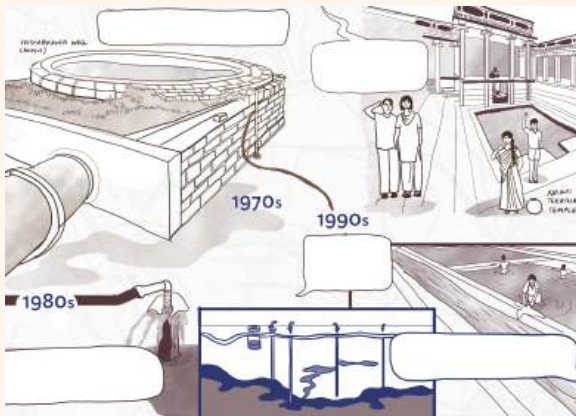


1: Cover; 2: Depicting the context and narrators of the story





3: Evolution of the Ghat over time wrt Vrishabhavati; 4: Swimming pool to Dhobi Ghat



5: Contestations for water access; 6: Current status of water treatment plant in the Ghat



7, 8: Amenities and challenges faced by the employees and the river in the Dhobi Ghat



9,10: Processes and workings of the labour union in the Dhobi Ghat and the current memory of the river





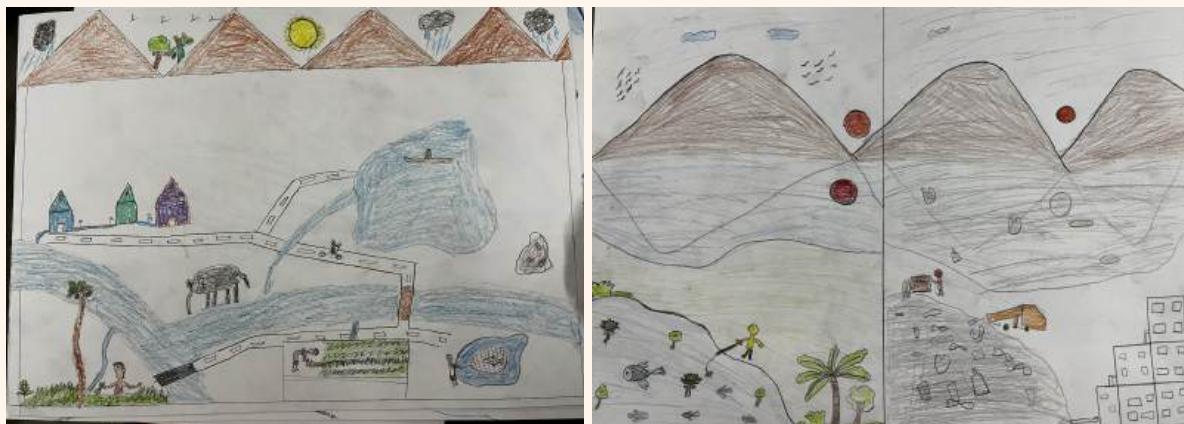
## Story 2: Pollution and toxic water

### Harohalli- Byramangala

1. **Field visit** to Harohalli Industrial Area, Byramangala reservoir, Annedoddi School, local children's library, fields and farms to observe the pollution infow, the impact of it on the farmers and their produce
2. **Discussions** with residents, teachers, students, librarian and farmers
3. **Outline** of the story along four broad themes: Benefits of the polluted water for farmers, water testing and governance, impact on animals and extended ecosystem, Pubic health
4. Art based workshop conducted with school children at the Annedoddi School on what the river means to them.



## Photos from our visits and engagements



Drawings made by the students of Annedoddi School during the workshop on 'What the Vrishabhavati river means to me'



The students explaining their work during the workshop



The farmers grow baby corn with the wastewater of the Vrishabhavati river and make huge profits from the rapid turnover of this crop using this water.



Top: Excessive frothing in the irrigation canals and the river near Byramangala

Right: Discussion with the librarian in a local library on the public health in the area







## Story 3: Biodiversity

### Mahseer and the Cauvery Reserve Forest

1. **Field visit** to the Cauvery Reserve Forest, guided by Naren Srinivasan (WASI)
2. **Conversations with locals** about their views on the dam and other water concerns
3. **Conversation with Naren** (Mahseer researcher and angler) on the impacts of pollution and climate on the Mahseer fish in the Cauvery ecosystem
4. Rough **outline** has been created for the story
5. **Visualisations** are in the process of being made



## Photos from our visits and engagements



Context of the Cauvery reserve forest and its ecological value within this 117 km stretch  
The first image shows the habitat for the Mahseer fish species



Left: Engagement with the locals and understanding their perspectives; Right: Location of the Mekedatu dam, which has been marked out after survey

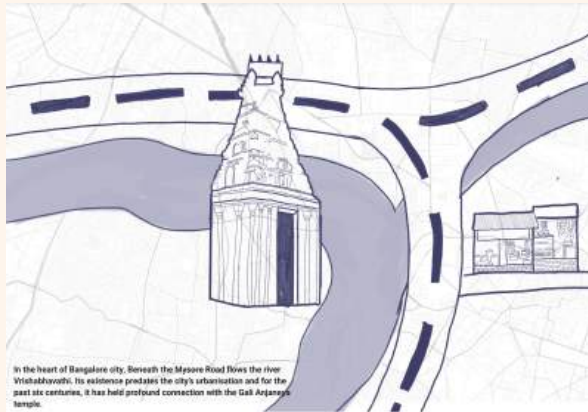


## Story 4: Urban Flooding

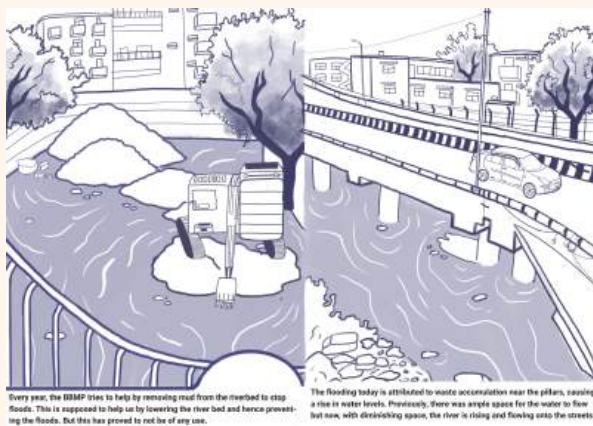
### Byatarayanapura - Nayandahalli

1. Multiple **field visits** to understand the reasons and consequences of Vrishbhavati flooding in the Byatarayanapura and Nayandahalli areas
2. **Interviews** with residents and shop owners
3. **First draft** of story and illustrations are ready

## Glimpses of visualised pages from Story 4



### Context and location setting for the story

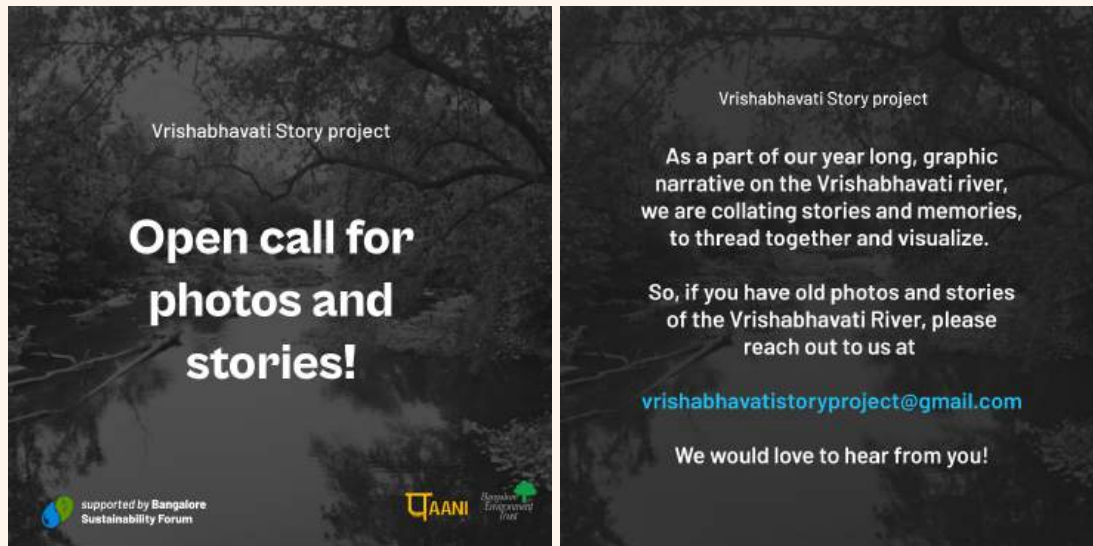


### II Government actions and reasons for flooding

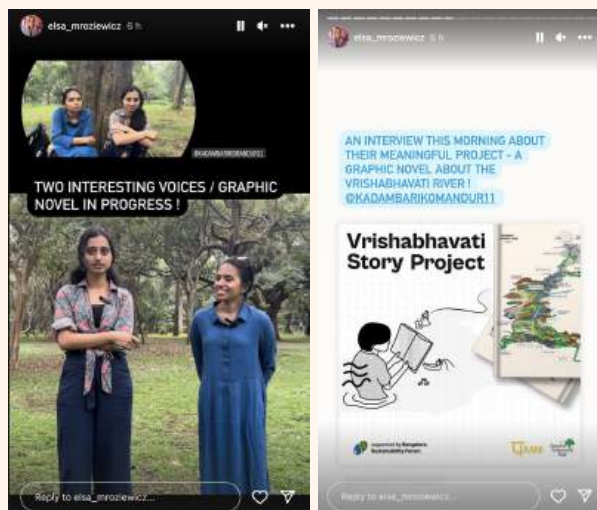


## Outreach

We have reached out on our social media channels to see if people have photos of the river in its yesteryears. We haven't so far received any that we could use as archival photos. We are looking to get in touch with Bengawalk to help us on this front.



We had the opportunity to talk about our work with a French illustrator: Elsa Mrozievicz. We spoke regarding the intent for the project and the hope we can place in stories and the medium of illustration to get the message across.



We also started a wordpress site to document the entire process which is not yet live. We will be sharing updates when it is published.

## Challenges

1. We haven't received our first tranche amount despite constant follow up with BET and despite multiple meetings with Nirmala (Paani.Earth) as well. All of the field work and time that we put in have all been voluntary and we haven't been monetarily supported for any of this so far.
2. Field visit scheduling also caused some delays since we had to depend on availability of those that we needed to interact with.

## Next steps

We will continue to finish the remaining two stories and work towards finding publishers, while also adding the text to the graphic book. The projected timeline for completion of the book and pitching it to publishers, is October 2024. We will reach out with a detailed timeline and a request for extension due to the above mentioned challenges.