

Vaigai River Restoration Pageant & Project: The Vaigai River Restoration Project completed phase one from January 2014 – May 2015

A social action art initiative and an international collaborative effort to restore the sacred Vaigai River in Madurai, South India that is in a severe environmental crisis due to pollution, waste dumping, and the drying effects of climate change. The project utilizes the inspirational power of the arts to mobilize community action and build partnerships among diverse groups and people throughout the city to work together developing and implementing solutions to restore the Vaigai River. Mobilizing this effort and engaging thousands of people from throughout the Madurai area including: academic institutions, local organizations, schools, government officials, local folk artisans, students, farmers, and women's empowerment groups to collaborate on the creative social action art project which culminated in a spectacular procession along the Vaigai River highlighting the issues of pollution, waste dumping, and climate change and mobilizing continuing efforts for its restoration.

The Vaigai River Restoration Pageant Project is an educational ecological art project that engages the local community, raises public environmental awareness, and mobilizes direct action and support to restore the water quality, species, habitats and health of India's famous Vaigai River in the ancient temple city of Madurai, Tamil Nadu, South India. The project raises awareness to mitigate the severe crisis of pollution and contamination of a major natural water resource by waste dumping, toxic chemical pollution, poor water flow, and promotes ecologically sustainable solutions for agricultural irrigation, safe drinking water, and restoration plans of this vital natural resource that the community depends on for their survival.

The project engages the community to address, raise public awareness, and participate in direct action solutions to restore the Vaigai River through an innovative and creative strategy utilizing community-based art and the theatrical pageant indigenous art-form to impact the issue and effect positive change. The pageant features a procession of giant mobile sculptures, spectacular costumes, and musical bands with performances at significant sites along the route following the river bank in Madurai. Performances by local artists and community groups include theater, dance, songs, music, poetry, and ceremony celebrating the history, current issues, and future restoration of the river. The project has come at a critical moment to have an impact on the future

of the Vaigai River and to serve as a global model for ecological and social change through creative and artistic community action.

