

VAROSHA

2014



VAROSHA “Aranyer Alo”, an Aqua-culture project
in S 24 Parganas, W Bengal

*“Let me light my lamp”, says the star, “and never debate if it
will help to remove the darkness”.*

Rabindranath Thakur





Sonar Alo

A mature project, helping the villagers and building the community

Sonar Alo, one of the well-established projects of VAROSHA, is helping and supporting the neglected communities of Kumrokhali and Ukila village in S.24 Pargana. In its fourth year of operation, the project is well managed by HVR for VAROSHA. This is not only a training center but a community center for the local girls and women to meet, and socialize with dignity and respect, which they deserve most.

The new branch of this project in Ukila village along with increased faith in VAROSHA's commitment has been met with great excitement in the area.

Pasta-making is now a sustainable business, managed, operated and maintained by village women. More than 15 village women are working in this trade and are earning a respectable remuneration. They manage and operate their own businesses without any outside assistance.

Needlework along with Mechanized Embroidery and tailoring put Kumrokhali on the map for many boutiques in South and Central Kolkata. These girls are providing an ongoing supply of products to these boutiques per their unique requirement with very reasonable prices.

Their products were displayed in Chicago during last two Durgapuja festivals and made all of us very proud. A larger and more diverse range of products from several VAROSHA centers will be displayed and sold during 2014 Durgapuja in Chicago.

Establishing fabric printing training, along with other fabric related work, has given this center a unique ability of combining many different techniques onto one fabric that most operations can't accomplish.

Several vendors have established ongoing business relations with both Kumrokhali and Ukila centers for many products like ladies' garments, children's garments, designer saris, shawls etc.

In just over three years, 'Sonar Alo' has become one of the proud examples of what VAROSHA is doing to help disadvantaged women and girls in India.

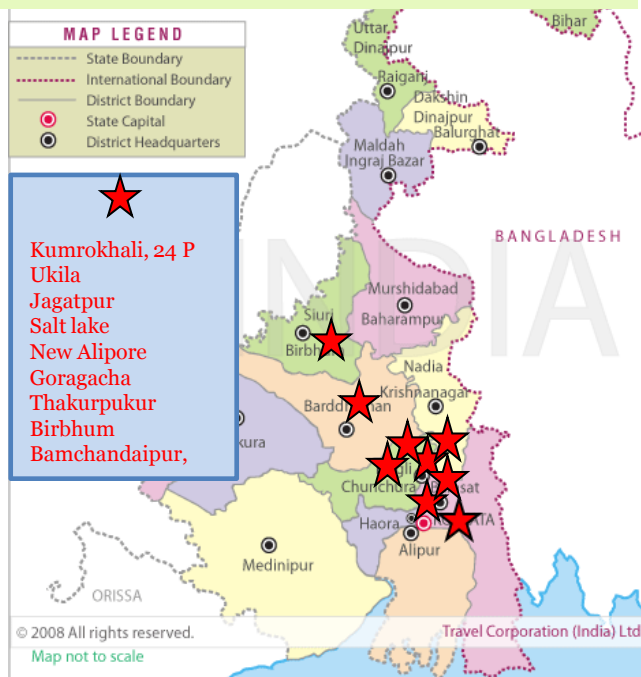
Life is given to us, we earn it by giving it.

Rabindranath Thakur



VAROSHA sites ★

2014



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VAROSHA is focusing on developing the business aspect of these centers. Several contacts have been established with wholesalers in Kolkata to purchase larger quantities of custom-made material from these two centers. Orders have started coming in and it is our hope that the ladies will get enough orders to make them all economically self-sufficient within a very short time.

Jorir Alo

Thakur-pukur

Thakur-pukur, the center of Jorir Alo, stepped into its second year. A dedicated trainer and good marketing support are the reasons that beneficiaries of the program are already making money.

The women of this minority community saw their first glimpse of economic self-sufficiency and economic freedom through this VAROSHA project.

Along with regular Jori work on saris, this center has started preparation in applying Jori work on other fabrics to make other clothes like salwars, kamijis, kurtis etc.

They are experimenting with applying these techniques on other durable items like bags and slippers.

VAROSHA, under its VIJOY program, has begun to provide financial and material help to trained individuals toward starting their own enterprises. Candidates have been selected.



VAROSHA is considering opening another center under this project, further inside rural Bengal in Falta, S. 24 paraganas.

Ashar Alo

Jagatpur/ Salt lake

This was possibly one of VAROSHA's most challenging projects but with utmost delight, VAROSHA can call it one of the most successful projects we have in our hand.

The objective was to bring women who have lost their respect, dignity and honor due to economic hardship and other social exploitation back into the community.

Partnering with HVR, VAROSHA launched two projects under "Ashar Alo" in Jagatpur and Salt Lake.



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Thirty women who were forced into the dark side of the society are proudly learning three major trades: fabrics painting, soft toy making and tailoring, and are able to live with respect and dignity in society.

Soft Toy (stuffed animals) making process was an innovative idea of VAROSHA's that has been initiated in Ashar Alo. It appears that this new initiative might open up an appreciable earning for these women who have suffered a lot.

Forty five women are already out of learning mode and are earning respectable money to stay away from their past mistakes. They have been replaced by new girls.

Earning money through an acceptable way has generated a huge demand for this support. VAROSHA has initiated the VIJOY project that provides "No Interest Funding" for these women to start their own businesses.

Alor Sparsha

Mushroom & Beej Prakalpo of Birbhum

VAROSHA Beej Prakalpo (Mushroom seed initiative) is one of another VAROSHA success stories that has truly made several beneficiaries in Birbhum self-sufficient and economically independent.

Under the leadership of Tapobijoy Mukherjee in Birbhum, VAROSHA initiated this effort by training beneficiaries in the science of complex seed development process of mushrooms. All equipment,

tools, training and location were provided by VAROSHA. Village women joined the project with energy, vigor and dedication. After several painful failures, they achieved success in the process and since then they are on their own.

VAROSHA provided hand holding support to the group and by second quarter of 2014 they are the owners of a fully sustainable business of their own. VAROSHA unconditionally transferred all equipment, infrastructures and tools to the women's group.

Local villagers are farming mushroom and are earning reasonable amount based on their utilization of space and effort. This effort was started in 2011 and is successfully sustaining in Birbhum.



Puber Alo

Dipto Alo, Jibon Alo and Tailoring

A small but dynamic effort of VAROSHA and its valued partner Pub-Paschim, has bloomed into one of the bench-mark examples of what an economically and socially challenged community can do to improve its own economic standard and their own environment with small but dedicated support from outside.

During the last three years, a small tailoring center in Goragacha slum of Kolkata has grown to two child development centers, three women's training centers, one cultural academy and two computer learning centers that covers several slums in the area and in Kulti.

This project is an example that validates the fact that a dramatic change can happen to an economically and socially challenged community through small but committed help and support from outside. 4



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Fifteen young girls were the first beneficiaries of this project. They are still very much part of this movement and are motivating and encouraging the rest.

‘Puber Alo’ training is unifying the girls to struggle together. They have formed an unique bond among themselves. All girls are sticking together even after their successful completion and have formed a unique support system for all old and new girls alike.

Dipto Alo

Future of the nation

VAROSHA is proudly operating these learning centers in Natun-Para (New Alipore Basti) and in Kulti, through the dedicated on-site support of Pub Paschim. This model of learning was first developed and was put into place by VAROSHA in Ajanta.

Seventy children of these slums come to these centers every day after school. In these centers they learn the important aspects to be successful in real life. They learn English, Math and Computer skills.

It is extremely encouraging to see how quickly they grasp the learning and start to do well. Many of them start speaking English in 6 months and are proficient in real-life math. They also learn computer skills to be proficient in this must-know subject.

VAROSHA provides a nutritious meal to every child every day.



Three dedicated teachers along with a lunch mother are provided by VAROSHA for each center.



Recent active participation and generous gift of Tata Consultancy Services of India has significantly improved the computer resources of the center to an enviable level.



Jibon Alo

A children academy



A children's academy was conceived and established in Natun Para, Kolkata, during February 2014.

Basic purpose of this new effort was to initiate the finer thoughts and aspects of life in to the mind of these slum children.

The academy trains and teaches performing art like singing, dancing and acting along with creative art forms like painting, drawing and craft work.

The children are already showing their talent and are competing with the children from affluent communities. Recent success in state-wide competition validates that fact.



Two dedicated teachers are not only training them in several art forms but also exposing them to the outside world of performance.



Children from Natun Para won First prize in a District wide competition at Birla Technology Center and drew attention of the cultural community of Kolkata. The same team also won second prize in prestigious Sishu Utsav in Howrah.

Aranyer Alo

VAROSHA Aqua-culture/fisheries

Villagers of Sonakhali and Khulna, two remote and neglected villages of South 24 parganas are very excited and are definitely seeing hope for their future through VAROSHA's 'Aranyer Alo' project.

Neglected and rejected lands that were not suitable for any productive farming are being converted by local villagers for Aqua-culture and Fish-farming through VAROSHA's and HVR's organized planning, training and support.

Under the local leadership of HVR and resource support from VAROSHA, a detailed and thorough training for the beneficiaries was delivered by experts from Kalyani University. Villagers learned all aspects of these processes of farming fish in previously useless land. Since last August, several new plots have been converted to fish farms. Several new initiatives are in place for 2nd half of 2014 to make these lands more productive by utilizing the banks of the ponds for suitable environmentally hardy vegetables farming and goat farming.

Harvesting of fish has already started and VAROSHA beneficiaries are already making a reasonable earning.

...Please see the cover and Mr. Sanyal's view

VIJOY

'Masum Jewelry, Jori & Cosmetic house' opened its doors with the support of VAROSHA-VIJOY. Fifteen VAROSHA trained girls will be selling their products through this outlet in Bardhaman.



VAROSHA - Views

VAROSHA appreciates the effort of several of our patrons visiting VAROSHA sites. Following are some of the condensed observations as shared by them. Details of their writings will be in VAROSHA web-site.editor

An Enchanting Visit to VAROSHA Sites Samar Kundu, Libertyville, IL

As a long time contributor of VAROSHA, I wanted to see how these sites are doing with the help of VAROSHA. On February 12, 2014, I had the privilege to visit three sites near Kolkata. My first stop was to PUBER ALO in Goragacha. Here young girls from the slum get training in Tailoring and Embroidery. I was amazed to see these girls who became experts in tailoring and embroidery. They showed with pride what they can do in these skills. Each of them earn money in tailoring and embroidery work approximately Rs.2, 000 per month. It is a real success story for VAROSHA.

My next visit was to JORIR ALO in Thakurpukur, Kolkata. This is a Jori training center for economically challenged and socially restricted community. Here, I saw that the girls became professional and displayed their jori work with pride. Each of them earns Rs.1, 500 -. 2,500 per month. This is a real success project for VAROSHA.

My final visit was DIPTO ALO in New Alipore Basti. This is a Training Center where young children of this slum come to this center every day after their formal school is over and learn the important aspects to be successful in real life. They learn three different subjects: English, Math and Computer skills. It was nice to see that many of the students learn to be disciplined, learn pranayama and to speak English. I heard a few students speaking English fluently, read poems in English and even learn to dance. All the students were given a very healthy lunch. It was very nice to see them grow in a very positive way. It is a great success project of VAROSHA.



Sonakhali Fisheries Shubham Sanyal, Palatine, IL

On a pleasant December morning Dr. Arup Chakrabartty, picked me up from my house and drove me in his rented van to Sonakhali, 2 ½ hour away from South Kolkata. The route was pleasant via the rural roads of Sunderbans area, through the misty, chilly winter air.

Fishery projects are being conducted by VAROSHA for economically challenged communities in Sunderbans area. There are two sites: Sonakhali (two ponds of 1 ½ bigha and 18 katha size), and Khulna – 1 bigha pond taken on lease by VAROSHA from government .

Aurobindo and Gautam, two local supervisors (paid by Varosha), oversee these fisheries. The beneficiaries of the Sonakhali project are rural poor women who get economic benefit from this fish farming. They are really very poor profession-less village women. Fish spawn sowed in August last year at Sonakhali have grown into large Katla, Mourola, Follie and other fish, sellable in the market.

During my visit Aurobindo and Gautam organized a 'Netting session' for both ponds at Sonakhali. Professional hired fishers dragged nets across the ponds, assisted by local members, catching scores of kilos of fish. The catch consisted of Katla, Mourola, Follie and other fish. They let the small fish grow more and sell them to 'Bheri's' when they are bigger and in the market later this year. The proceeds will be shared amongst the members of the Fisheries project. After the netting I spent time speaking to members of the project (around 15 men and women), told them about VAROSHA, its objectives and listened to their issues. Most were too shy to express their needs. They spoke about the need for a hospital, which they lack, and local schools.



VAROSHA 2014 Beneficiaries

VAROSHA

2014

Current beneficiaries

Sonar-Alo			Puber-Alo		
Kumrokhali	Tailoring	15	Dipto-Alo- Naton para + Kulti		50
	Thread & Needle*	15	Tailoring School (Kulti)		20
	Pasta Making **	10	Goragacha		15
	Fabric Print*	10	Naton para		15
	Mechanised Embrodary*	10	Jorir Alo		
Ukila			Thakurpukur		20
	Tailoring	15			
Ashar Alo			Alor Sparsha		
Jagatpur	Tailoring/Soft		Beej Prkalpa,		11
	Toy /printing	15			
	Tailoring/Soft				
Salt Lake	Toy /printing	15			
Aranyer Alo			VIJOY		
Basanti	Fisheries	21	Masum Jewelry/Jori		15
	S Total	126			146
	G Total				272

* Multi participation

**Sustained performance...no ongoing support

Uptill now, over 1500 women, girls & children have received their vocational training, financial support & learnings from VAROSHA. Their economic situations have dramatically improved since then.

VAROSHA is a Tax-exempt philanthropic organization. Every penny that it collects goes to support beneficiaries. VAROSHA has no Compensation, Administrative, management or infrastructural cost of it's own. All Costs of managing VAROSHA are donated by patrons and/or leaders as they come across them.

Thanks: VAROSHA would like to thank 'Tata Consultancy Services' and it's leadership team in Kolkata under Mr. Atosh Saha for donating computer units to satisfy the total needs of Dipto Alo training centers in Kolkata and Kulti..... Our hats off to TCS

VAROSHA's 2014 Honored Partners

Health Vision and Research

Dr. Arup Chakrabartty

Sonarpur, Jagatpur,
Saltlake, S 24 Parganas
Naton para, Goragacha,
Thakurpukur, Kulti

Pub-Paschim

Mr Debsankar Ray

Stay tuned for Future activities:

Additional Aqua culture and Vegetable farms
Independent enterprises (VIJOY)

South 24 parganas
Several

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