

VISION 2013 -2017

PROJECT FOR EMPOWERING MARGINALIZED WOMEN TO BECOME AGENTS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

A. Core Purpose of Ankur Kala

Empowering marginalized women to become agents of social change in the marginalized communities situated *in* the slums and suburbs of Kolkata and in the rural areas of Bengal.

There are thousands of marginalised women in West Bengal who are searching for ways and means to overcome their daily struggle and to live a life of dignity. Ankur Kala wants to enable these women to grow in self-belief and leadership and achieve economic and social empowerment through education and small business enterprises.

B. Core Competence

Ankur Kala has over the last 30 years gained valuable experience to create a sustainable infrastructure for providing vocational, marketing and leadership skills among communities/groups of marginalized women. In fact Ankur Kala has already started building this infrastructure through its ongoing programmes at its Centre in Kolkata and its rural Centre at Mathurapur which is about 2 hours by train from Kolkata.

C. If Ankur Kala has to close down

If Ankur Kala had to close down – most affected would be thousands of marginalized young girls and women especially vulnerable to trafficking, HIV Aids and poor mental health – there are increasing amount of mentally ill women roaming in the streets of Kolkata and all over Bengal. In the words of one of our women – “I would have been in the mental asylum if not for Ankur Kala.”

D. WHY?

Because poor and marginalized and especially single women are shunned by their own families. They have no where to go – hardly any Government Aid – Government Funds are in a mess – above all, there is no sense of “Caring” in the Government sector. On the other hand if a woman is ill-treated by her husband and in-law the police here in Bengal will refuse to take prompt action or give any meaningful support. They will always put the blame on the women. She will be considered a burden by her own family.

E. Vision 2018

Ankur Kala’s vision for 2017 is to create 5000 empowered women artisans from marginalized communities who will act as agents of social change to empower thousands of more women within West Bengal

F. Pictures of Success:

Ankur Kala is a place of holistic training – a woman gets immediate encouragement and support (financial and psychological). Within 2-3 months she already feels a sense of belonging (community spirit) - and gradually she learns the skills, values, and becomes self-reliant and confident – ready to reach out to other women.

Ankur Kala plans to build up a strong CORE TEAM of committed women and Co-ordinators who will tirelessly work for the empowerment of marginalized women all over West Bengal especially in the poorest and most vulnerable districts. We have already seen in our last 30 years that when we truly empower women, the entire family gets empowered – she will be the guiding force in her family.

In the next 5 years we will create women leaders who are empowered with the wonderful characteristics of self-confidence, education, well being through their own livelihood, integrity, devotion and a passion to reach out to millions of other neglected women.

G. Strategies for Success

- i) Promote Ankur Kala's vocational and small business management course among various NGOs and institutions working with women's groups in the city and also in the rural areas. Invite such organizations to send their women beneficiaries to Ankur Kala for training. Identify sincere and competent women who display leadership skills.
- ii) Provide basic and higher level skill and empowerment training to women beneficiaries who are sent to Ankur Kala by friends, well-wishers and other NGOs.
- iii) Regular networking with rural groups for promoting our non-formal education classes for drop out girls and vocational classes in tailoring and marketing of products in rural areas.

Practical Application - How?

We will network with other existing voluntary groups and will impart our empowerment training. We will also create our own CORE TEAMS of women and Co-ordinators in various villages, centres, pockets and will take up the challenge of creating a chain of marketing outlets where the women will earn fair means of livelihood. When she will enjoy good health, she will be able to send her children to school – in other words Ankur Kala will make it possible for marginalized, neglected women to find a LIFE OF DIGNITY where all the basic needs of HEALTH, HOUSING, EDUCATION will be met and above all will instill in the women and their families a CARING AND POSITIVE attitude towards society.

H. Empowerment Project:

1) Empowerment through Vocational Training and Self-employment

This project will have 2 components : i) Urban and ii) Rural

i) Urban Plan:

10 women junior trainees will be selected for vocational training in one of the skills – batik, tailoring, block and silk screen printing and making of Jam, Squash and Pickles. The skill to be taught will depend upon their aptitude and interest. This training will be for a period of one year.

10 women who have become the senior trainees will continue with their training at a higher level and will be given hands on experience in production, marketing, small business management and leadership skills. This training will be for a period of one year.

All these women will attend regular education classes to empower them to read and write and thus enable them to manage their own business units in the future. During their training they will also be encouraged to improve their health and personality through yoga and spiritual inputs.

Some of these women after their training will also continue in Ankur Kala as supervisors and also as resource persons for providing training to outside groups who regularly approach us for vocational and business management training.

ii) Rural Plan:

Tailoring

Presently in the rural areas vocational training in stitching is a regular need and we will be providing training classes at different villages for about 25 village women living in the villages in Mathurapur block situated in the District of South 24-Parganas. Once they complete their 6 month training those women who have achieved a good degree of skill will be invited to join our rural Centre at Mathurapur.

Non- formal Education

We are also running a non-formal education course for poor drop out girls who wish to sit for the government school leaving examination but were unable to complete their studies due to lack of financial support. For most of these girls this is a starting point for further studies, a future employment opportunity and also a means of delaying an early marriage.

Organic Kitchen Garden

Another important aspect of our rural programme is to train village women to create organic kitchen gardens in small plots of land which can provide them regular vegetable, fruits and herbs. This would provide them three-fold benefits – better health and nutrition for their family, help them to save money and also sell the excess produce in the market. This training programme will economically empower many marginalized women who in most cases have to shoulder the responsibility of maintaining their families. Once this programme takes root in the different villages then some of their produce can also be purchased by Ankur Kala for making jam, squash and pickle.

2) Empowerment through Training in Marketing and Sales

After completing two years of basic training the women artisans will be trained to market their products in the open market by organizing sales exhibitions in different schools, colleges, offices and public places. They will also be encouraged to visit other towns and cities to market their products. This experience will help them to interact with various customers and obtain direct feedbacks on the quality and pricing of their products and also understand customer's needs. Such interaction will boost their self-confidence and will encourage them to make need based and quality products.