



PROKRATEE

**a fair trade company
manufacturing and
exporting handicrafts**

**Annual
Report
2024**



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CONTENTS

Message from the Chairperson	04
Vision, Mission & Company Profile	05
Foreword from the Executive Director	06
Words of Appreciation from Prokritee's Valued Buyer	07
Top 15 Buyers	08
Financial Overview	09
Saving a Legacy	10
Story of Rabeya	11

My name is Rehana Akter, and I have been working at Shuktara Handmade Paper Project since 2015. Before this, I worked at another paper mill, but their irregular payments forced me to leave. At Shuktara, my steady income has allowed me to send my two sons and daughter to school. My husband, a rickshaw puller, appreciates and values my contribution to our family. Together, we are building a brighter future for our children, and I feel proud to support my family through my work.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

The fiscal year 2023-24 brought significant changes to the international market, as we encountered major transitions with some of our long-standing buyers who are facing challenges in sustaining their businesses. Our marketing team put in extra efforts to reach new buyers, while our product development team introduced new products based on trend analysis and research. It was a challenging situation for the management team, which worked hard to meet the annual sales targets for our artisans/producers. The Board of Directors encouraged the management team to maintain their trust and efforts and explore new markets, both domestically and internationally.

Reaching consumers through e-commerce, online platforms, and identifying corporate customers to boost domestic sales are promising avenues, alongside our ongoing efforts to find new buyers in international markets. Although the overall situation remains challenging, I strongly believe that Prokritee's artisans and management have the experience and resilience needed to overcome these challenges in the near future. This is a time for us to adapt and grow. Our team has traveled far

and wide, meeting new partners and nurturing relationships. Though there were moments of doubt, we remained committed, trusting in the value of change and believing in its potential to bring us new opportunities.

As we navigated these external shifts, we also strengthened our internal team. Prokritee welcomed a five new General Members this year, and I am confident that their contributions will help shape our future. Our internal team continues to work with dedication, adapting to the evolving needs of a new generation of customers whose preferences are clear and whose demands are changing faster than we might anticipate.

As we look ahead, I invite everyone reading this report, both in Bangladesh and abroad, to join us on this journey. Together, we can strengthen the bond between artisans and customers, forging new pathways for collaboration and creativity in this ever-changing world.

Marina Tabassum
Chairperson
Board of Directors
Prokritee

COMPANY PROFILE

Prokritee, founded in 2001 by the Mennonite Central Committee (www.mcc.org), manages ten production centers established between 1977 and the present. These centers operate under individual Managers and Producer Management Committees (PMCs). The company is registered as a Not-for-Profit Company with the Registrar of Joint Stock Companies and Firms in Bangladesh. Since its inception, Prokritee has upheld ethical business practices and Fair Trade principles.

Currently, it provides jobs to 1,800 women artisans across the country. It is a Fair Trade organization certified by the WFTO Guarantee System and holds Sedex certifications. Additionally, it is listed in the Ethical Style Guide by Ambiente, Messe Frankfurt, Germany, and People and Planet First. Alongside empowering women artisans, Prokritee uses eco-friendly raw materials and promotes Bangladeshi handicrafts in international markets.

OVER
3500
PRODUCTS

VISION

All women of Bangladesh live with dignity and are valued as contributing members of society.

MISSION

To develop the social and economic capacity of disadvantaged women of Bangladesh by creating productive employment opportunities and sustainable linkages to the world markets

1800
ARTISANS

10
CENTERS





FOREWARD FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Warm greetings to all—Esteemed Buyers, Fair Trade Friends, Community Patrons, Artisans, and Colleagues.

The fiscal year 2023–24 has been a journey of resilience and adaptability for Prokritee, amidst a challenging global landscape. Market shifts impacted retail sales, exports, and turnover. Yet, our unwavering commitment to fair trade and promoting Bangladeshi handicrafts have remained our guiding force.

Prokritee thrives on diversity, embracing individuals irrespective of religion, race, gender, age, or ethnicity. Our work prioritizes uplifting artisans within their communities. Despite external perceptions, we build trust through transparency and accountability. Strengthened by certification in Sedex, People and Planet First, Ethical Style by Ambiente, and continued WFTO Guarantee System membership, we uphold ethical trade practices.

The departure of key buyers such as The Body Shop International and Trade Aid International was a challenge, but also an opportunity to innovate. Prokritee's mission of empowering disadvantaged women by showcasing their craftsmanship globally continues to inspire our strategies.

We expanded marketing through online promotions and are planning to launch a new e-commerce website for the local market. New product lines include pet care items and eco-friendly packaging from jute and upcycled materials. Rising costs prompted necessary pricing adjustments, ensuring artisan welfare. Looking ahead, we plan to develop mini green garment lines and research and development centers to further sustainability goals.

Recognizing technology's impact, we've embraced tools like ChatGPT, Canva, and Trello, integrating Gen-Z and millennial talents to modernize our workflows. These steps position us for future growth and transformation.

Prokritee's progress reflects our dedication to our artisans, partners, and fair trade community. Your feedback is vital to shaping our journey. We invite you to share thoughts via email at contact@prokritee.com or our Facebook page. Together, we can create a meaningful impact, driving forward the spirit of fair trade.

Warm regards,
Swapan K. Das
Executive Director



WORDS OF APPRECIATION FROM PROKRITEE'S VALUED BUYER

It is a great pleasure for GEPA to work together with Prokritee.

Our partnership has existed for over 45 years. I met Swapan and Elizabeth in person 5 years ago at Ambiente in Frankfurt when GEPA was looking for Christmas tree tags.

“I was impressed with how quickly and easily Prokritee met our requirements and within 6 months of that meeting GEPA had the Christmas tree tags on sale.”

I was impressed with how quickly and easily Prokritee met our requirements and within 6 months of that meeting GEPA had the Christmas tree tags on sale.

As GEPA has focussed their handicraft range, GEPA now only buys baskets from Prokritee. The idea or even the design of the baskets is largely developed by GEPA and then skillfully realized by the artisans.

I would like to emphasize that this collaboration works wonderfully to our great satisfaction.

The result is beautiful baskets that are made with great care by the artisans.

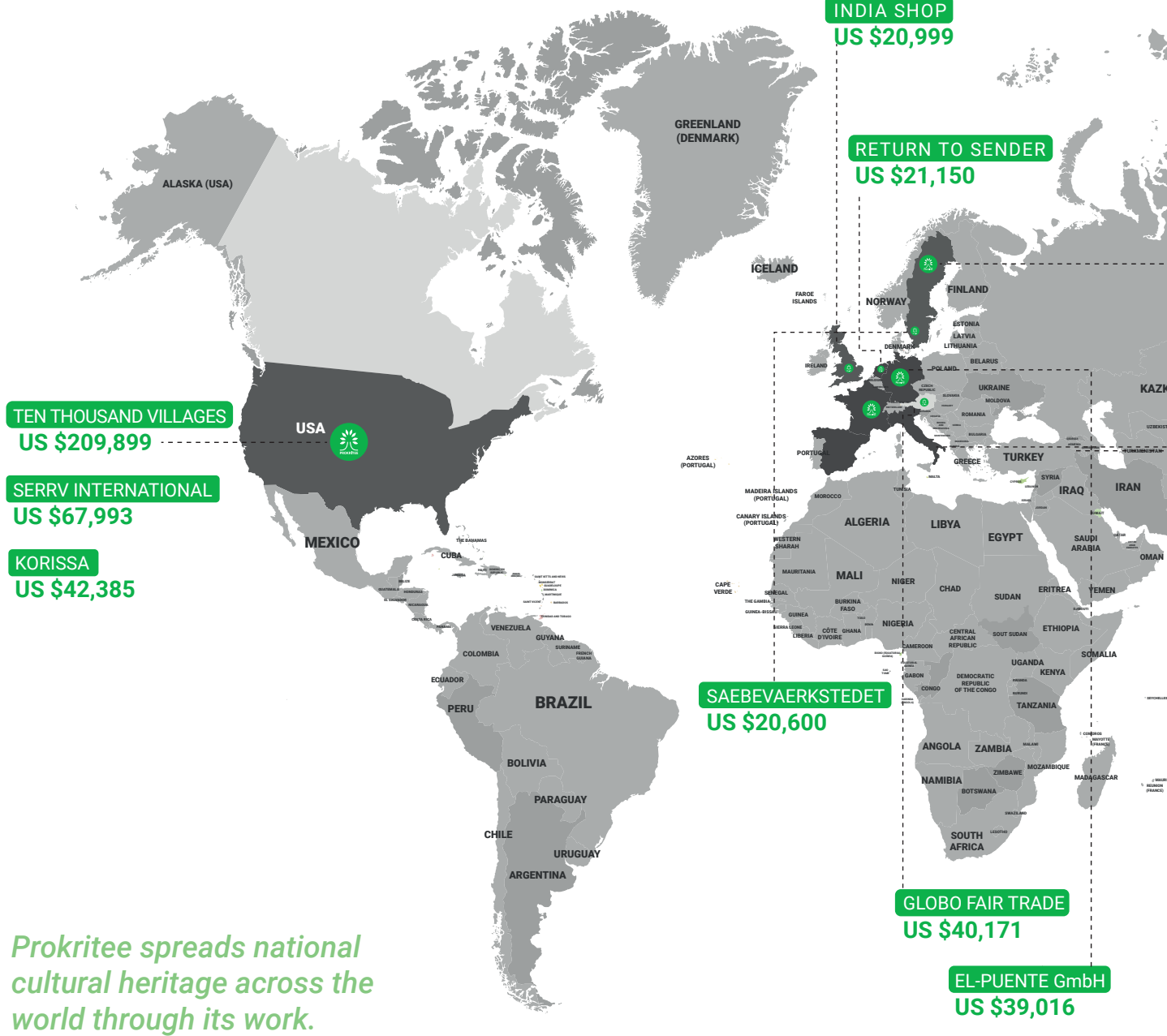
Our customers are also very enthusiastic, so the baskets sell very well.

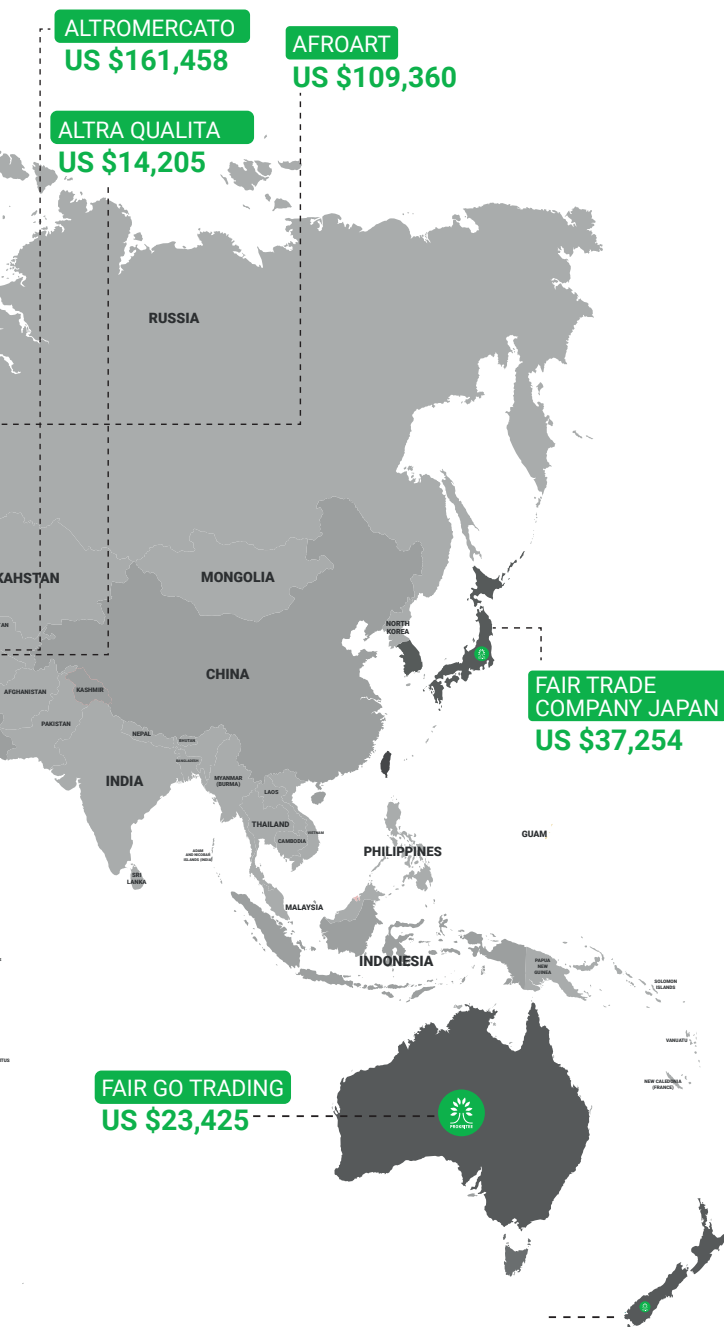
Unfortunately, it is currently difficult to assess the consumer behavior of our customers in Fairtrade shops in Germany.

In any case, we can always be sure that our customers love the quality and uniqueness of the Prokritee baskets.

Meike Beermann
Purchase Manager
GEPA – The Fair Trade Company

TOP 15 BUYERS





FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

FY 2024 (JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2024)

Income	(USD)
Export Sales	1,060,408
Local Sales	103,587
Income from Cash Incentives	55,174
Income on Investment	24,253
Total Income	1,243,424

Expenses	
Cost of Goods Sold	547,535
Administrative Expenses	609,717
Marketing Expenses	25,618
Development Expenses	9,699
Total Expenses	1,192,569
Net Income	50,855

1 USD = BDT 117.61

Source : www.xe.com

COUNTRIES WE EXPORT

AUSTRALIA	NETHERLANDS
AUSTRIA	NEW ZEALAND
CANADA	SOUTH KOREA
DENMARK	SPAIN
FRANCE	SWEDEN
GERMANY	SWITZERLAND
HONG KONG	TAIWAN
ITALY	UK
JAPAN	USA



SAVING A LEGACY STORY OF SHUKTARA HANDMADE PAPER PROJECT

The Shuktara Handmade Paper (SHP) Project, launched in 1984 by the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), was Bangladesh's first handmade paper production plant. Initially experimenting with water hyacinth as the primary material, MCC soon found waste jute more effective for paper molds. Once the process was refined, local artisans, mostly women, were engaged to produce notebooks, greeting cards, and photo albums. These unique products gained international recognition, allowing MCC to market them globally. Later, Prokritee took over SHP's management, ensuring its steady growth.

By 1993, SHP employed over 170 artisans, marking its peak. However, the rise of digital alternatives like e-notes, social media, and online greeting cards led to a sharp decline in demand for traditional products. Consequently, SHP's business suffered, impacting its workforce. Competition from other industries in the industrial area led skilled artisans to leave for better-paying jobs, causing a loss of expertise.

Frequent leadership changes further disrupted

production processes, weakening SHP's operations. To address these challenges, innovative strategies were implemented, including regular management visits and tighter control from the head office. SHP diversified its offerings, introducing affordable items such as bags, totes, marble fabrics, and tissue boxes to appeal to a broader market. Infrastructure improvements also began, with plans to repair the frequently flooded SHP building.

Despite setbacks, Prokritee's guidance and the artisans' dedication inspire hope. SHP has shifted focus to producing low-cost shopping bags while preserving its handmade paper legacy. Buyers are encouraged to support SHP by choosing products labeled with its code, directly sustaining artisans' livelihoods. With collective efforts from artisans, management, and customers, SHP can overcome challenges and reclaim its status as a thriving enterprise, ensuring its rich heritage inspires generations to come.

Jannatul Ara Ratna
Production Officer
Shuktara Handmade Paper Project

STORY OF RABEYA

My name is Rabeya Akter, and I come from a poor family. My father was a farmer, and he often couldn't provide enough food for my five sisters, my brother, and me. Attending school was never an option for us. As we grew up, we had to share each other's clothes because we couldn't afford to buy new ones, not even during festivals.

When I got older, I started looking for work, but no one would hire me because I didn't have an education or work experience. One day, I discovered the Shuktara Handmade Paper Project (SHP), a production center of Prokritee. They offered jobs to people like me—those who were struggling but had untapped potential. I worked hard to learn and started making paper products, and later, bags.

With my earnings, I wanted to support my family for as long as I could, but my father wanted me to marry and start a family of my own. After much pressure, I caved in.

My husband worked abroad, and I hoped life would improve. I thought he might help me support my siblings, but his income wasn't enough, and my siblings continued to struggle. I eventually convinced my in-laws to allow me to return to SHP so I could help my family. Now, I care for my siblings and my daughter, who is in grade 2.

My in-laws still give me a hard time about working, but I've made my position clear—I cannot abandon my siblings.

Recently, SHP hasn't been receiving many orders, and work has slowed down. I'm deeply worried about the future. Still, I hold onto hope that things will improve so I can continue supporting my family and give my daughter a brighter future. That is my simple wish.

Rabeya Akter
Artisan
Shuktara Handmade Paper Project



REBUILDING HOPES

The artisans of Sacred Market Enterprise (SME) come from challenging backgrounds, including experiences of domestic abuse and sex trafficking.

Currently, they work in a rented facility, but our vision is to secure land for them to establish better production facilities.

However, limited orders have constrained our financial resources, delaying this goal. We seek support to turn this dream into a reality and further empower these artisans.

SACRED MARK ENTERPRISE

Established by Mennonite Central Committee Bangladesh in 2009, Sacred Mark Enterprise provides alternative employment opportunities for former sex workers. These women, often victims of abuse, trauma, and extreme poverty, were forced into unimaginable circumstances.

Sacred Mark produces luxurious handmade soaps crafted from 100% natural ingredients, including coconut oil, soybean oil, olive oil, castor oil, and essential oils, with both scented and unscented options. Additionally, the producers create unique items using recycled saris (cotton fabric) and denim.

Starting with just nine producers, the unit has grown to employ 7 staff and 28 artisans. Managed by Prokritee since 2015, Sacred Mark continues to empower lives and foster meaningful change.



FOUNDING
YEAR
2009



ARTISANS
Regular 22 Seasonal 06



MAIN PRODUCTS
Natural Soap, Recycled
Sari Blankets and
Recycled Metal Pots



LOCATION
Mymensingh



PRODUCTION
PROCESS

HAJIGANJ HANDICRAFTS (CROCHET UNIT)

Prokritee established the Hajiganj Crochet Unit in 2005 to support Bihari families in Saidpur, Northern Bangladesh. This marginalized group, displaced twice—during the 1947 partition and Bangladesh's independence in 1971—faced severe challenges in education and income opportunities.

Using traditional crochet skills passed down through generations, the unit started with 22 women. With Prokritee's design and marketing support, they developed hundreds of products and received training in quality and packaging. Producers craft blankets, crochet toys, flowers, and products from recycled and new fabrics, which are popular in Australian, Netherlands, USA, and Canadian markets. Today, 5 staff and 96 artisans benefit from improved livelihoods and education opportunities.



FOUNDING
YEAR
2005



ARTISANS
Regular Seasonal
26 | 70



MAIN PRODUCTS

Recycled Sari
Blankets, Flowers,
Crochet Doll (Soft
Toys)



LOCATION
Saidpur, Nilphamari



PRODUCTION
PROCESS



SHARED SUCCESS

Bonoful Handmade Paper (BNF) previously specialized in handmade paper and batik fabric but shifted its focus to producing birdhouses due to declining sales of paper products. These birdhouses are crafted from recycled fabric, sea grass, kaisa, and waste plastic, which are woven around metal frames. In 2024, BNF produced over 45,000 birdhouses. Prokritee supports smaller centers with fewer orders by involving them in preparing birdhouse production materials, ensuring fair opportunities and steady work for all its units.

BONOFUL HANDMADE PAPER

Established in 1995 by MCC, Bonoful Handmade Paper is located in Dharagram village, Mymensingh, surrounded by lush rice fields and palm trees. Initially, the unit was created to meet the growing international demand for handmade paper.

To make handmade paper, Bonoful uses natural and local materials, including hemp, wheat straw, pineapple leaves, coconut fibers, recycled paper, and cotton waste from the garment industry. Producers craft unique paper products such as photo albums, greeting cards, gift bags, journals, lampshades, and gift boxes. They also create birdhouses, beehives, ant houses, hedgehog houses, and more using recycled saris, hogla, and wheat straw.

Bonoful employs 9 staff and 240 artisans, creating sustainable livelihoods for the community.



**FOUNDING
YEAR
1995**



ARTISANS
Regular **56** | Seasonal **184**



MAIN PRODUCTS
Birdhouses, Handmade
Paper and Stationery Items
for Christmas



LOCATION
Muktagacha,
Mymensingh



**PRODUCTION
PROCESS**

HAJIGANJ HANDICRAFTS (BASKET UNIT)

Established in 1999 by MCC, Hajiganj Handicrafts operates in an underdeveloped village at Ashrom Road, Gorogram village, in the Nilphamari district of Northern Bangladesh. Initially part of MCC's broader initiatives from the 1998s, the unit was endowed under Prokirttee in 2008 with all the other production units of MCC and has since witnessed remarkable progress.

In an area where livelihoods rely heavily on seasonal, low-paid agricultural work, Hajiganj Handicrafts creates sustainable opportunities, especially for women. Producers weave baskets using kaisa grass, palm leaves, hogla and recycled fabrics, crafting diverse designs and sizes. Their vibrant basket hampers have become popular exports to the US and Europe. Currently, Hajiganj employs 9 staff and 155 artisans, empowering the community.



FOUNDING
YEAR
1998



ARTISANS
Regular Seasonal
19 | 136



MAIN PRODUCTS
Baskets made from
Recycled Sari, Kaisa
Grass, Palm Leaves,
Hogla (Sea Grass)



LOCATION
Hajiganj,
Nilphamari



VIDEO LINK



BAGDHA ENTERPRISE

Located along winding river Sandha in Bagdha village, under Barishal District, Bagdha Enterprise was established in 1982 by MCC to create employment opportunities for local women in a remote area with limited job prospects. Initially, the women produced rope and twine from jute and hemp, spinning fibers into balls of garden twine in various colors and sizes. In 1985, a woodworking component was added, and women began carving small wooden toys. Currently, they produce jute and hemp products like handbags, shopping bags, purses, floor mats, and they work with The Body Shop International UK to make hemp bath mitts, providing consistent earnings and support for their families.

Bagdha currently employs 9 staff and 111 artisans.

ARTISANS IN CRISIS

In 2023, The Body Shop International, one of Bagdha's biggest buyers, discontinued their orders due to evolving adverse business conditions. This development left over 200 artisans in a precarious position. In response, BE has initiated the production of handloomed rugs using recycled fabric, jute, hemp to sustain opportunities for these skilled workers.



FOUNDING
YEAR
1982



ARTISANS
Regular **81** | Seasonal **30**



MAIN PRODUCTS
Bath Mitts, Body Scrubbers, Exfoliators, Bags and Baskets. (Hemp, Jute, Recycled Sari)



LOCATION
Bagdha, Barishal



PRODUCTION
PROCESS

BIBORTON HANDMADE PAPER

Located in Kalurpar village, Agailjhara, Barishal, Biborton Handmade Paper was established in 1993 by MCC to address poverty in this vulnerable region of southern Bangladesh. Frequent floods, droughts, and unemployment have made life challenging for the community.

Biborton creates handmade paper using abundant water hyacinth, a weed that clogs local waterways, rayon silk fibers, & waste paper. Producers craft creative products like notebooks, Christmas decorations, and a wide range of greeting cards for Easter and Halloween. They also make baskets using hogla and drawstring (jute and cotton).

Biborton thrives today, employing 12 staff and 77 artisans, empowering disadvantaged women with steady livelihoods.



FOUNDING
YEAR
1993



ARTISANS
Regular Seasonal
42 | 35



MAIN PRODUCTS

Handmade Paper (made from Jute, Water Hyacinth and Silk), Paper Products, Baskets and Drawstring Bags, Christmas Decorations



LOCATION
Kalurpar, Barishal



PRODUCTION
PROCESS



FOUNDING
YEAR
1984



ARTISANS
Regular Seasonal
33 | 50



MAIN PRODUCTS
Paper, Paper Products
(Christmas Decorations
& Gifts)



LOCATION
Jobarpar, Barishal



UNIT TOUR
VIDEO

JOBARPAR ENTERPRISE

Established in 1984 in Jobarpar village, Barishal, Jobarpar Enterprise initially produced rope and twine, later expanding to desiccated coconut powder and coir products. After years of experimenting with new materials and technologies, the unit successfully shifted to handmade paper production using water hyacinth, a common weed in nearby rivers and canals. They also produce silk paper.

Today, Jobarpar is renowned for its beautifully crafted Christmas decorations, gift items, baskets, jewelry, wrapping paper, greeting cards, paper flowers, and angels. This unit specializes in quilling technique.

The unit employs 8 staff and 83 artisans, creating sustainable livelihoods through their skilled craftsmanship.

QUILLING MAGIC

Jobarpar Enterprise is a distinctive production centers specializing in crafting handmade paper through the art of quilling. This unique technique involves intricately coiling handmade paper to create exquisite home décor items, ornaments, greeting cards, and more. Currently, Jobarpar Enterprise collaborates with a major buyer, Afroart, based in Sweden. In the past year alone, the enterprise has produced over 77,000 units of products exclusively for this valued partner.



SHUKTARA HANDMADE PAPER

Shuktara Handmade Paper was established in 1989 in Feni, making it the first handmade paper project in Bangladesh. The women here are busy throughout the day making pulp, drying sheets of paper, and ensuring the quality is perfect. Shuktara produces jute paper and creates a wide range of products, including decorated cards, lampshades, gift boxes, stationery sets, and wrapping paper. They also incorporate unique techniques such as marbling and embossing. Recently, they have started producing low, medium, and high-end bags, purses, and accessories made from tribal fabrics, upcycled denim, recycled fabric, jute, leather, and grass mats, providing new employment opportunities as paper sales decline.

Shuktara employs 5 staff and 32 artisans.



FOUNDING
YEAR
1989



ARTISANS
Regular 17 | Seasonal 15



MAIN PRODUCTS
Handmade Paper, Stationery,
Marbelled Paper, Jute Bags,
Denim



LOCATION
Charipur, Feni



PRODUCTION
PROCESS



KEYA PALM HANDICRAFTS

Keya Palm Handicrafts was established in 1987 at Boromogra village in Agailjhara, employing seven women to create products from palm and keya leaves. Over time, the unit has expanded to employ more than 50 artisans, skilled in crafting a variety of items including bracelets, earrings, pencil holders, napkin rings, baskets, terracotta items such as candle holders, pots, and decorative pieces, and popular star and fish streamers for room and Christmas tree decorations. The star streamers are especially popular and are sold worldwide. Keya Palm currently employs 6 staff and 35 artisans.



FOUNDING
YEAR
1987



ARTISANS
Regular | Seasonal
22 | 13



MAIN PRODUCTS
Terracotta, Christmas
Decorations and
Gifts (Leaf, Grass, Clay, etc.).



LOCATION
Boromogra
Barishal



UNIT TOUR
VIDEO

MATERIAL BANK

Torulota Crafts, a production center of Prokritee, specializes in crafting intricate home décor items, baskets, and bags using unique raw materials such as paati grass, sea grass, and bamboo. It also functions as a raw material bank, supplying high-quality materials to other centers in the Barishal area, ensuring transparency and consistent quality. Additionally, Torulota features an in-house guesthouse to accommodate Prokritee's visitors and buyers.

TORULOTA CRAFTS

Located at Nagarbari Village, Agailjhara, in Barishal, Torulota Crafts was established in 2001 as part of MCC's Job Creation program, focusing on pathi grass products mixed with hemp twine from Bagdha Enterprise. Initially, MCC tested market samples in North America, finding them attractive to buyers. From 2002 to 2011, MCC partnered with Charity Foundation to support the project until financial constraints led to its closure. In 2011, Prokritee took over, reviving the initiative by renting facilities and launching Torulota Crafts as one of its production units. In addition to making products, Torulota maintains a raw material bank for the other four production centers in Agailjhara.

Today, Torulota employs 3 staff and 25 artisans, maintaining a steady recovery and creating sustainable livelihoods.



FOUNDING
YEAR
2011



ARTISANS
Regular Seasonal
13 | 12



MAIN PRODUCTS
Baskets, Wall Hangers
and Placemats.
(Jute and Pathi Grass),
Jewelry Boxes.



LOCATION
Nagarbari, Barishal



PRODUCT VIDEO

PROKRITEE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Ms. Marina Tabassum
Chairperson



Ms. Afzalun Nessa Chowdhury
Director



Ms. Tasneem Athar
Director



Ms. Sufia Akhtar Rahman
Director



Ms. Hasina A. Inam
Director



Mr. Mohammad Ahsanul Haq
Director



Mr. Mirza Najmul Huda
Director



Mr. A. M. M. Farhad
Director



Mr. Abdul Majid Mallik
Director

PROKRITEE GENERAL MEMBERS



Mr. A F M Mayeen
General Member



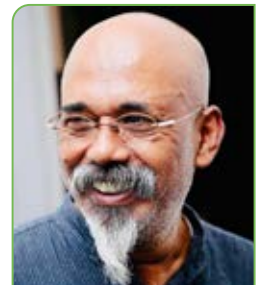
Ms. Jesmin Banu
General Member



Ms. Saniyya Faheem Ansari
General Member



Mr. Khondoker Hasibul Kabir
General Member



Mr. Wakilur Rahman
General Member

CURRENT CERTIFICATIONS

Prokritee acknowledges the importance of obtaining international certifications to establish a presence in both global and domestic markets. Currently, Prokritee holds certifications from WFTO, People + Planet First

the Ethical Style Guide, and ECOTA. This year, Prokritee has also received certification from Sedex. We are confident that this achievement will enable us to attract new buyers and expand our reach.



MEMBERSHIP



ASIA

World Fair Trade Organization, Asia (WFTO - ASIA)



Export Promotion Bureau (EPB)



National Craft Council of Bangladesh (NCCB)



Banglacrft



Dhaka Chamber of Commerce & Industry (DCCI)



National Association of Small & Cottage Industries of Bangladesh (NASCIB)



Jute Diversification Promotion Centre (JDPC)



Bangladesh Jute Goods Exporter Association (BJGEA)



The Directorate General of Jute, Bangladesh

Prokritee supports 1,800 women artisans, helping their families thrive. Many have sent their children to school, who have now become doctors, engineers, and high officials, and socially responsible leaders, driving a social revolution in their respective communities.



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