

Rural Craft Hubs of West Bengal



Sitalpati

K

Wooden Mask



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Clay Doll



Wooden Doll

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Terracotta



Chau Mask

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Madurkathi



Rural Craft Hubs of
West Bengal

Rural Craft Hubs of West Bengal



Introduction

Handicrafts of Bengal embody our rich heritage of aesthetics, creativity and artistry. The craft sector provides low cost, green livelihood opportunities to more than 5.5 lakh men and women. The sector represents economic lifeline of the vulnerable sections of the society, with women accounting for around 50% of the crafts persons and a significant number belonging to the scheduled castes, tribes and religious minorities. In today's globalised world, the growing retail industry, fashion and luxury markets, demand for green production, potential for e-commerce have created new opportunities for developing a vibrant craft economy thereby providing increased income opportunities to the craft communities like the Patuas, potters, weavers, wood carvers, Dokra makers etc. Besides its high potential for employment, the craft sector is economically important from the point of low capital investment, high ratio of value addition, and high potential for export and foreign exchange earnings for the country. The Government of West Bengal thus aims to unleash the potential of the sector in terms of employment, enterprises, export and growth.

The Department of MSME&T, Government of West Bengal in collaboration with UNESCO, New Delhi is developing 10 rural craft hubs in the state. The vision is to develop the villages with families traditionally skilled in craft traditions like Sitalpati, Madurkathi, Terracotta, Patachitra, Dokra, Wooden and Chau masks, Wooden and Clay doll making and Kantha as vibrant craft hubs connected to national and international market.

S I T A L P A T I



The word 'Sital-pati' means cool-mat. These mats are luxurious, comfortable and utilitarian. Sitalpati mats are crafted from green cane slips of *Maranta dichotoma* or Muthra reed, which are split into fine slices length wise. The slips are then skillfully joined by interlacing weave.

Mukta (pearls) is the local name for *Maranta dichotoma* as the fruits of the plant resemble pearls. According to local beliefs Lord Krishna wanted Radha to gift him pearls. Radha denied the gift. Krishna said he himself would grow pearls in a garden and planted a certain plant which grew that very day and bore seeds that looked and shined like pearls. Out of 12 famous gardens in Vrindavan, one is Mukta.

The quality of the Sitalpati mat is judged by its glossiness, smoothness and fineness of texture. From the cane, the best fibre is extracted in various layers as the quality depends on the different layers of the cane. There are various kinds of Pati like Bukar Pati, Dala Pati, Sitalpati, Mihi Sital, Bhushnai Pati etc. Mihipati is a better quality pati weaved with Soru Sital. It is said that the best kind of Sitalpati is so smooth that even a snake cannot glide over it.



There is a large concentration of *Pati* weavers in Coochbehar district of West Bengal. Men are involved in making the cane slips whereas women do the weaving by hand. The craft community is mostly refugees from Bangladesh, who lost everything during the partition and settled here. They brought with them their skills of weaving and took this craft as their source of livelihood. Presently there are around 4000 families involved in *Pati* making.

A 3 days village folk festival will be held at Ghughumari on Jan 8-10, 2016.

Over 525 *Pati* weavers are attached to this Rural Craft Hub initiative. There is an existing co-operative society, Cooch Behar 1 no. block Patishilpi Samabay Samity.

Location and access: Nearest railway station is New Cooch Behar. It takes 2.5 hours by car from Siliguri.

Contacts:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Geeta Rani Pal | 9832585627 |
| • Gobinda De (Chairman of Samity) | 9851345748 |
| • Gobinda Sarkar (Secretary of Samity) | 9851185527 |
| • Gouranga Dey | 9749270832 |
| • Jyotsna Dutta | 9733102883 |
| • Juran Dey | 9547568174 |
| • Pradip Kumar Dey | 9832616155 |
| • Purna Chandra Dutta | 8927153840 |
| • Santosh Bhowmick | 9832281234 |



**Rural Craft Hub
at
Ghughumari,
Coochbehar**



WOODEN MASKS



The ecstatic Gomira dance masks of Dinajpur districts have ensued from animistic practices of the Desi and Poli communities of the Rajbangshis. The Gomira dances are organized to propitiate the deity to usher in the 'good forces' and drive out the 'evil forces'. It is usually organized within the months of Baisakh-Jaistha-Asarh, corresponding to mid-April to mid-July. There are no fixed dates for organizing these dances, but each village organizes at least one Gomira dance during this period according to their convenience, at a central location. Every village of reasonable size, say a thousand inhabitants, has its own Gomira dance troupe. The dancers are all male, without exception, and portray one or many characters: male, female or animal.

Thus the craft of Gomira mask-making, in its pristine form, catered to the needs of the dancers and any villager wishing to give a mask as an offering to the village deity. A villager makes a 'promise'- called 'manat', to offer a mask to a deity if his or her wish is fulfilled.

Kushmandi block in Dakshin Dinajpur is the hub of wooden mask making. Around 150 craft persons live in this area. Moreover there are about 60 families involved in bamboo based work.

In the last three or four decades there has been a shift in the market trends as the masks have become a coveted collector's item. This was the beginning of a new journey for the craft. Crafts person make different decorative and utility items besides making the masks. Some have also specialized in bamboo works.



The crafts persons have formed a collective, Mahishbathan Hastashipla Samabay Samity. A Resource Centre is being currently built here.

A 3 days village folk festival will be held at Mahisbathan, Kushmandi on October 30-November 1, 2015.

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Kaliaganj. One can also reach from Malda by road, it takes 2 hours.

Contacts:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| • Ananta Sarkar | 8145157712 |
| • Krishna Deb Sharma | 7797987542 |
| • Paresh Chandra Sarkar (Secretary) | 9733462109 |
| • Shankar Sarkar | 9609937877 |
| • Shankar Das | 9593358360 |
| • Sanjulal Sarkar | 9734958839 |
| • Tulu Sarkar | 9600937877 |
| • Uttam Sarkar | 9593617166 |



Rural Craft Hub
at
Kushmandi,
Dakshin Dinajpur



K A N T H A



Simple run stitches at the hands of skilled artists create a magical artwork called, Kantha embroidery. This embroidery was a means of self expression by rural women of Bengal. It is the way in which this stitch is used, in different arrangements, that forms the complex vocabulary of Kantha. Kantha making is a 'women's art'. It was the Bengali housewife who helped the art to evolve. A Kantha is often referred to as a rural woman's personal account of her life's events and happenings.

The origin of this craft traces its history to a period not less than a thousand years. Since then the tradition has come a long way today when the artistic brilliance of the women artists have found expressions in lifestyle products like saree, dress materials, bed and cushion covers etc. Motifs of nature including animals, birds and flowers are extensively stitched and the art work varies from intricate and heavy to light and simple designs.



There is a large concentration of the women doing Kantha embroidery in Nanoor block of Birbhum, West Bengal. Around 2000 women of this area are engaged in doing Kantha embroidery on different products. About 600 Kantha artists are included in the Rural Craft Hub. There is an existing co-operative society, Kulia Tantubay Mohila Samabay Samity.



A 3 days village fair along with folk festival will be held on October 9-11, 2015 in Nanoor.

Artists from Nanoor:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| • Tajkira Begam | 9474413141 |
| • Amina Khatun | 7407737627 |
| • Afrunnisa Begam | 8001781314 |
| • Anhara Bibi | 8967260020 |
| • Lavli Begam | 8642820926 |
| • Lutfa Bibi | 8389928571 |
| • Najiba Khatun | 8670081686 |
| • Papiya Begam | 8798352715 |

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Bolpur, half an hour drive to Nanoor. It takes 3.5 hours by car from Kolkata.



**Rural Craft Hub
at
Nanoor,
Birbhum**



C L A Y D O L L S



The brilliance of human imagination lies in its transformation of mundane into magnificent. Being a river basin, West Bengal has a rich abundance of clay, which has been used as a raw material for a wonderful tradition of doll making in Ghurni, Krishnanagar since last 250 years. From realistic and naturalistic to symbolic, the clay dolls of Ghurni have got recognition worldwide. These dolls are unique in their style and the quality of their finish. The crafts persons shape the humble clay into miniature human figures at work. The perfect detailing of form, feature and stance, the meticulous realism of the clothes to the last fold and tuck, and the marvelous expressions make each of the Krishnanagar dolls a collector's item. From dainty human figures to large ones, from animals to motifs of religious rituals these art pieces bears the signature of inherent artistic skills as the artists are traditionally practicing the art form since generation without any formal training. These beautiful, lively clay structures are adorned with vibrant colors.

Though the art of doll making has always been an integral part of Bengal's culture, it gained momentum under the patronage of Maharaja Krishnachandra of Krishnanagar, who brought the doll makers from different parts of East Bengal, specially Natore in 18th



The annual village festival will be held on February 26-28, 2016 in Ghurni.

At present there are more than 1000 crafts persons engaged in clay doll making. About 275 Clay doll artists are included in the Rural Craft Hub.

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Krishnanagar.

Artists from Ghurni:

- | | |
|--------------------|------------|
| • Bangsi Biswas | 8515815966 |
| • Bhiswa Biswas | 9378032372 |
| • Deb Kumar Paul | 9333211258 |
| • Deb Kumar Sarkar | 9732782673 |
| • Jayanta Paul | 9593495067 |
| • Krishna Paul | 9932816035 |
| • Mriganka Paul | 9434105395 |
| • Narottam Paul | 9609496259 |
| • Pranab Paul | 9474483055 |
| • Subir Paul | 9434105339 |
| • Tarit Paul | 9474341672 |



Rural Craft Hub
at Ghurni,
Nadia

WOODEN DOLLS



Ethnic character dolls handmade from Natungram village, Agradeep of Bardhamaan District, West Bengal, are carved in wood and decoratively painted by a group of rural crafts persons. These crafts persons are referred to as 'Sutradhars' (meaning 'narrator' or 'story teller'), because they make characters from ancient folklore and mythology and tell stories through their dolls.

The owl, with its unique design and colours, is the brand product of the village. On the white background of the owl is painted a distinctive design of red, green, yellow and black lines. Besides owls, Krishna-Radha and King-Queen Dolls are traditionally made. The dolls are craved from one piece of wood. A big chunk of cylindrical wood is cut off according to the size and figure of the item and then chiseled out. The traditional designs based on culture and mythology, the richness of ideas, the brilliant combination of pure simplicity and glamour combined with the master craftsmanship of the craft persons, result in an amazing work of art.

Around 60 families living in the area are involved in doll making. In this family based craft, both men and women have key role.



The doll makers are organized as a collective, Natungram Kashtho Khodai Hastashilpa Samity. A Resource Centre is being currently built here.

A 3 days village folk festival will be held on January 15-17, 2016 in Natungram.



Artists from Natungram:

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| • Bijoy Sutradhar | 7872214736 |
| • Buddhadeb Bhaskar | 9800519567 |
| • Dilip Bhaskar | 9733902691 |
| • Dilip Sutradhar | 9333386561 |
| • Gaurchandra Sutradhar | 8145283862 |
| • Kripa Bhaskar | 9609667141 |
| • Madhab Bhaskar | 9733530152 |
| • Manik Sutradhar | 9932469992 |
| • Nimai Bhaskar | 9735185052 |
| • Sukhen Sutradhar | 8967967114 |

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Agradwip or Katwa. It is about 1.5 hours drive from Bardhaman or Santiniketan and takes 4 hours from Kolkata.



**Rural Craft Hub
at
Natungram,
Bardhaman**



D O K R A



The name Dokra was used to indicate a group of crafts persons of nomadic type scattered over eastern and central India and was identified by their beautifully shaped and decorated metal products.

It is said that about three thousand years ago the king of Bastar, which is in the state of Chhattisgarh, was gifted a Dokra necklace for his beloved wife. He was charmed on seeing the necklace and thus honored the crafts persons with the title 'Ghadwa' derived from the word 'Ghalna' meaning melting and working with wax. They are also known as Vishwakarmas, Ghasias, Mangan and Kansara in some regions of India. Many of the tribes of Chhattisgarh (Bastar) making Dokra now live in Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha. The Dokra makers of Central and Eastern India also traveled as far as Andhra Pradesh in the south and Rajasthan in the north and thus the art form is now practiced all over India.

Imagination, variety and technique, all three have come together in this rural traditional craft form of Bengal. We can call it the advanced art form of the indigenous people which now has won a permanent place in the living rooms of the elites. The history of Dokra artisans in Bikna is about 150 years old. The crafts persons at that time migrated from Chhotanagpur region to Rampur, beside Bankura. From there the crafts persons settled in Bikna which later became the hub. There are about 65 families in Bikna, who practice this traditional craft.

The Dokra artists of Dariyapur village in Bardhaman settled some 120 years back from Odisha. Presently there are about 35 families who practice this craft as their main livelihood.

The Dokra artisans at Bikna have organised into a collective called Bankura Bikna Dokra Hastajata Kutir Silpa Kalyan Samiti. Dariyapur Dokra Artisan Cooperative Industrial Society is the collective formed at Daiyapur. A Resource Centre is also being currently built here.



A 3 days village folk festival will be held on September 18-20, 2015 in Dariyapur and September 25-27, 2015 in Bikna .

Artists from Bikna

● Amar Karmakar	8045195981
● Budhhadev Karmakar	9547496004
● Dhiren Karmakar	8298000397
● Gita Karmakar	9933698558
● Harendra Nath Rana	9932601095
● Netai Karmakar	8759758626
● Putul Karmakar	9933457509
● Sudhir Karmakar	9732023305
● Gopen Karmakar	8670518026

Artists from Dariyapur:

● Ashok Karmakar	9635673082
● Jiten Karmakar	9647105645
● Joydeb Majhi	9002222039
● Mukul Karmakar	9933798502
● Sridhar Mondal	9547604124
● Subhash Mondal	9735228086
● Subho Karmakar	9153255955

Location and access:

Bikna: Nearest railway station is Bankura, it is about 4.5 hours drive from Kolkata.

Dariyapur: Nearest railway station is Gushkara or Bardhaman. It is about 2.5 hours drive from Kolkata, a little detour on the way to Santiniketan.

**Rural Craft Hubs
at
Bikna, Bankura
&
Dariyapur, Bardhaman**

TERRACOTTA



Terracotta is a type of fired clay, typically of a brownish red colour which is used as ornamental building material and in modeling different idols, figurines etc. It is believed that the tradition of making terracotta craft items started from Panchmura region under the Malla dynasty, which is towards the end of the 7th century AD. The artists then used inscribe the temple walls with the artwork. Bankura's Terracotta is an internationally appreciated art form.



Panchmura village in Bankura is the home of around 300 artists making Terracotta items. The place is famous for long-necked Terracotta horses. Terracotta means baked clay. The crafts persons colour their products with clay itself and fire them in kilns with the help of dry Eucalyptus leaves. The Terracotta of Bankura is famous for its simple yet dynamic artistry having a range of products starting from animal and human statuettes to household utility and decor products.

A 3 days village fair along with a folk festival will be held on November 6-8, 2015 in Panchmura.

Panchmura Mritshilpi Samabay Samity is the name of the artists' cluster.

Artists from Panchmura:

- Bauldas Kumbhakar 9732108543
- Balai Kumbhakar 9734754423
- Bhuthnath Kumbhakar 9732187161
- Buddhadev Kumbhakar 9732029858
- Braja nath Kumbhakar (President) 9732035729
- Dipankar Kumbhakar (Secretary) 9547163124
- Jagannath Kumbhakar 8101737907
- Jawharlal Kumbhakar 7585895520
- Kanchan Kumbhakar 9732052247
- Mathur Kumbhakar 9732338882
- Nepal Kumbhakar 7407477705
- Santosh Kumbhakar 8372906804
- Taraknath Kumbhakar 9732236796

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Bishnupur or Bankura. It is about 4 hours drive from Kolkata.

**Rural Craft Hub
at
Panchmura,
Bankura**



CHAU MASKS



Chau dance, an acrobatic martial dance form of Purulia is inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The Chau Mask is traditionally associated with this age old dance form of Purulia, where the performers wear masks of various mythological characters and also different animals. Chau is indigenous to the eastern part of India. It originated as a martial art and contains vigorous movements and leaps. In Purulia Chau dancers wear large stylized masks while performing. The barren land with its tribal inhabitants and multi-layered influences of Vedic literature, Hinduism and martial folk-lore have all combined to shape the Purulia Chau dance which has only one message - the triumph of good over evil.



The masks are made from paper pulp, mud and clay. Adornments are sometimes done with feathers of peacocks. The masks are painted in attractive shades using acrylic colours and have a bold look. The masks are of different sizes starting from small to large ones. The mask making industry today has come a long way from making products only for the artists and are now skilled in making masks of different shapes and sizes for interior decors.

Around 150 years back during the rule of King Madan Mohan Singh Deo of Baghmundi the tradition of making Chau masks started in Charida village. Presently there are around 300 traditional artisans of Sutradhar community in the village. Chau Mukhos Silpi Sangha is the name of the artists' cluster.

A 3 days village fair along with folk festival will be held on December 18-20, 2015 in Charida.

Artists from Charida:

- | | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| • Anil Sutradhar | - 9732250196 |
| • Dharmendra Sutradhar | - 9679719388 |
| • Dwijen Sutradhar | - 9732085763 |
| • Dulal Sutradhar | - 9564875990 |
| • Gautam Sutradhar | - 9800158230 |
| • Manoranjan Sutradhar | - 9732336157 |
| • Nepal Sutradhar | - 8972237593 |
| • Parimal Dutta | - 9593816766 |
| • Triguni Sutradhar | - 9564811026 |
| • Uttam Sutradhar | - 8145063264 |

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Barabhum or Purulia. It is about 6 hours drive from Kolkata.



Rural Craft Hub
at
Charida, Purulia

P A T A C H I T R A



Patachitra and Pater Gaan are unique cultural traditions of Bengal. The Patuas paint stories on long scrolls of cloth. The 'Jarano' and 'Gutano' Pat means a scroll depicting a story in serially in picture frames. This is also a performing art as the Patua sings the story while unfurling the scroll. The most unique thing is that all the colours used by the artists are natural ones, extracted from different vegetables, fruits and flowers.

Moving from folklore to mythology, today the painters depict incidents like the Tsunami and terrorist attacks on 9/11 in their art. Social themes like protection of environment, planting of trees etc. have also found place in their creations. Patachitra has drawn the attention and interest of artists, art connoisseurs and art researchers and has been nationally and internationally acclaimed as a very interesting style of painting. The Patuas are not only painting and singing on new themes but have also moved into new forays. They are making apparel, stationery items and home décor products with Patachitra motifs. They have travelled to other regions of India and internationally showcasing their art form. Today they have a folk art centre inside the village to exhibit their creations.



An intricate tapestry of music and visual art is what makes Naya of Pingla more than just a village in the Paschim Midnapore district of West Bengal. The village is home to around 250 Patuas, a unique tribe of folk artists who are painters, lyricists, singers and performers - all in one. The artists have organized themselves under Chitrataru cluster.



The 6th edition of the 3 days village festival, POT Maya, will be held on November 13-15, 2015.

Location and access: Nearest railway station is Balichawk. It takes 3.5 hours by car from Kolkata.

Rural Craft Hub at Pingla, Pashchim Midnapore



Artists from Pingla:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| • Anwar Chitrakar | 9733700769 |
| • Bahadur Chitrakar | 9734536388 |
| • Dukhushyam Chitrakar | 9933542873 |
| • Gurupada Chitrakar | 9679479557 |
| • Ganga Manna | 9933855272 |
| • Jaba Chitrakar | 8509477383 |
| • Khadu Chitrakar | 9733521594 |
| • Manu Chitrakar | 9732731776 |
| • Montu Chitrakar | 9733521335 |
| • Mamoni Chitrakar | 9932170077 |
| • Rani Chitrakar | 9609066351 |
| • Rahim Chitrakar | 9932356176 |
| • Rupsana Chitrakar | 9832592732 |
| • Sonali Chitrakar | 9126144489 |
| • Swarna Chitrakar | 9732799107 |
| • Yakub Chitrakar | 9733952127 |

M A D U R K A T H I



A craft form of Medinipur, Madurkathi is basically grass weed used for making mats. Mat or Madur weaving is an age old cottage industry of Bengal. Madur is a common item in any Bengali household and is used for sitting, sleeping and also in religious rituals. Expanding the scope of creativity in order to suit the present market the artists today make various diversified products which include table runners and mats, curtains, hats, purse, sun-guards etc. Fairs and festivals are the main market of the products while some life style boutiques also purchase premium products from these artists.



Bhagabanpur of Purba Medinipur is known for its age old tradition of making mats with the natural fibre available locally. Handlooms are used for making the mats of various designs. Previously a large number of people were engaged in this craft but today there are around 500 Madur weavers in the area. Most of weavers are women working in small units. About 170 Madur weavers are attached to this Rural Craft Hub initiative.



Location and access: Nearest railway station is Digha or Mecheda. It takes 4 hours by car from Kolkata.

Artists from Bhagabanpur:

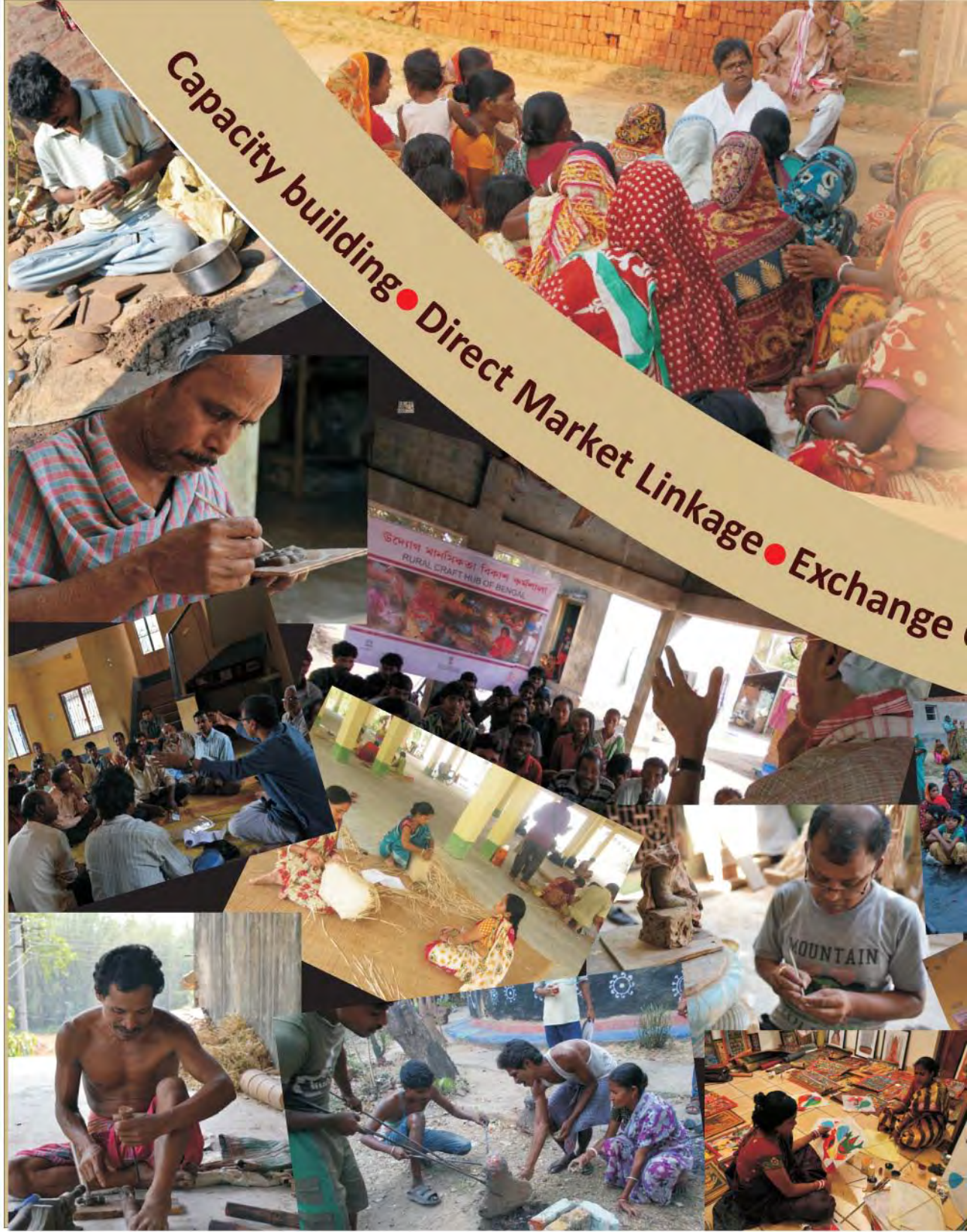
- Biswajit Dutta 9733804115
- Bablu Kr. Das 9933953233
- Gopal De 8001220075
- Pushpa maity 8373878392
- Ranjit Guhait 9733486806
- Sachin Guhait 9593990206
- Gourhari Maity 8348382957



**Rural Craft Hub
at
Bhagabanpur,
Purba Medinipur**



Capacity building • Direct Market Linkage • Exchange



SCHEM FOR RURAL CRAFT HUB OF BENGAL
RURAL CRAFT HUB OF BENGAL

MOUNTAIN

Rural Craft Hubs of West Bengal

Annual Village Festivals Celebrating Heritage

Location	District	Heritage	Village Folk Festival Date
Dariyapur	Bardhaman	Dokra	Sep 18-20, 2015
Bikna	Bankura		Sep 25-27, 2015
Nanoor	Birbhum	Kantha	Oct 9-11, 2015
Kushmandi	Dakshin Dinajpur	Wooden Mask	Oct 30-Nov 1, 2015
Panchmura	Bankura	Terracotta	Nov 6-8, 2015
Pingla	Paschim Medinipur	Patachitra	Nov 13-15, 2015
Charida	Purulia	Chau Mask	Dec 18-20, 2015
Ghughumari	Cooch Behar	Sitalpati	Jan 8-10, 2016
Natungram	Bardhaman	Wooden Doll	Jan 15-17, 2016
Ghurni	Nadia	Clay Doll	Feb 26-28, 2016



Implementing partner of UNESCO

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GOVERNMENT OF WEST BENGAL

Department of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises & Industries
Government of West Bengal



**Rural Craft Hubs of
West Bengal**