

Pran-Prokritir Kabbo

Poems of Life & Nature

Agro-Art Project

Project Summary

Pran Prokritir Kabbo was established as an agro art social enterprise on 1 July 2020 in Langri Para, Alikadam, Bandarban, with the guiding principle of “শিল্প-প্রাণ-কৃষি থাকবে মিলেমিশি” "Art — Life — Agriculture in harmony." The project combines contemporary artistic design with modern, agricultural practices to cultivate uncultivated hill lands. Its primary goal is to enhance livelihoods and local well-being by creating marketable, locally sourced products and promoting sustainable economic opportunities rooted in culture.

Project Information

Project name: Pran-Prokritir Kabbo

Slogan: “শিল্প-প্রাণ-কৃষি থাকবে মিলেমিশি” “Art — Life — Agriculture in harmony”

Project thinker: Artist Monjur Ahmed

Project Founder: Artist Monjur Ahmed and Artist Tanjil Fatema Tushi

Start date: 1 July 2020

Type: Mixed social enterprise

Location: Mouza 291 (Tainfa), Holding 45, Ward 07, Kalar Jhiri, Langri Para, Union No.1, Alikadam Upazila, Bandarban Hill District

Land area: 4 acres (Class-2 land)

Land tenure: Erosion-mortgage agreement between land donor and beneficiary

Agreement period: 1 July 2020 – 30 June 2030 (10 years)

Land deed beneficiary: Tanjil Fatema Tushi

Beneficiary address: 91 Amir Hossain Dobash Road, Double Mooring, Chittagong

Land deed donor: Langri Mro Karbari (Lenri Murong)

Donor address: Mouza 291 (Tainfa), Holding 45, Ward 07, Kalar Jhiri, Langri Para, Union No.1, Alikadam Upazila, Bandarban Hill District

Local advisor: Mohammad Hossain

Early Collaborators: Sifatuddaula and Nasir Uddin

Mro coordinator: Rachit Mro

Mro Co-coordinator: Sampung Mro

Field supervisors: Monir Hossain

Vision

Drive socio-economic development by blending research, conservation, production and aesthetic marketing of agricultural and livestock resources through a creative fusion of art and agriculture.

Mission

Activate uncultivated hill lands into productive, technology-led agricultural economies through contemporary aesthetic design, and improve livelihoods and community wellbeing by marketing locally produced goods to build a self-reliant nation.

Background

Established on 1 July 2020, Agro Art is a social enterprise situated on 4 acres in Tainfa (Mouza 291), Kalar Jhiri, Langri Para, Alikadam, Bandarban. The project combines modern, technology-driven farming with contemporary artistic practices, cultivating around 3,000 high-yield fruit trees alongside various vegetables and crops in a comprehensive system. Initially conceived as a community response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the initiative involves local Bengali and diverse indigenous communities in sustainable farm management and innovative value addition.

The driving force behind this initiative is artist Monjur Ahmed, who co-founded it with artist Tanjil Fatema Tushi, along with early collaborators Sifatuddaula and Nasir Uddin. Pran Prokritir Kabbo promotes the integration of art, science, and agriculture to create new livelihood opportunities and foster entrepreneurship. By linking indigenous knowledge and hill culture production with the Creative Economy framework, the project aims to generate employment and contribute to sustainable development in the community residing in the Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.

Project Objectives

- Develop a new agricultural economy by combining modern, technology-driven farming systems with agricultural science and contemporary art to boost economic growth.
- Encourage young people to participate in a creative, digitally enabled agricultural economy and create job opportunities in agriculture.
- Transform unused and unproductive lands into productive, modern agricultural resources to enhance national food self-sufficiency and resilience.
- Utilize aesthetically pleasing, site-specific design to activate extensive hill lands and enhance local livelihoods through value-added production and access to local markets.
- Establish an environmentally friendly agricultural economy by connecting the cultural heritage of hill communities with the endorsed Creative Economy.
- Assist in the growth of new Agro Art entrepreneurs through partnerships, networking, and business development facilitated by modern information technology.
- Educate youth on indigenous knowledge, nature-based learning, and local realities through training programs to promote self-reliance.

Theoretical Foundation

“মনরে কৃষি কাজ জানোনা
এমন মানব জমিন রইল পতিত
আবাদ করলে ফলতো সোনা”

-রামপ্রসাদ সেন

"Mind knows not the work of agriculture.
Uncultivated land remains barren.
If sown, it yields gold."

— Ramaprasad Sen

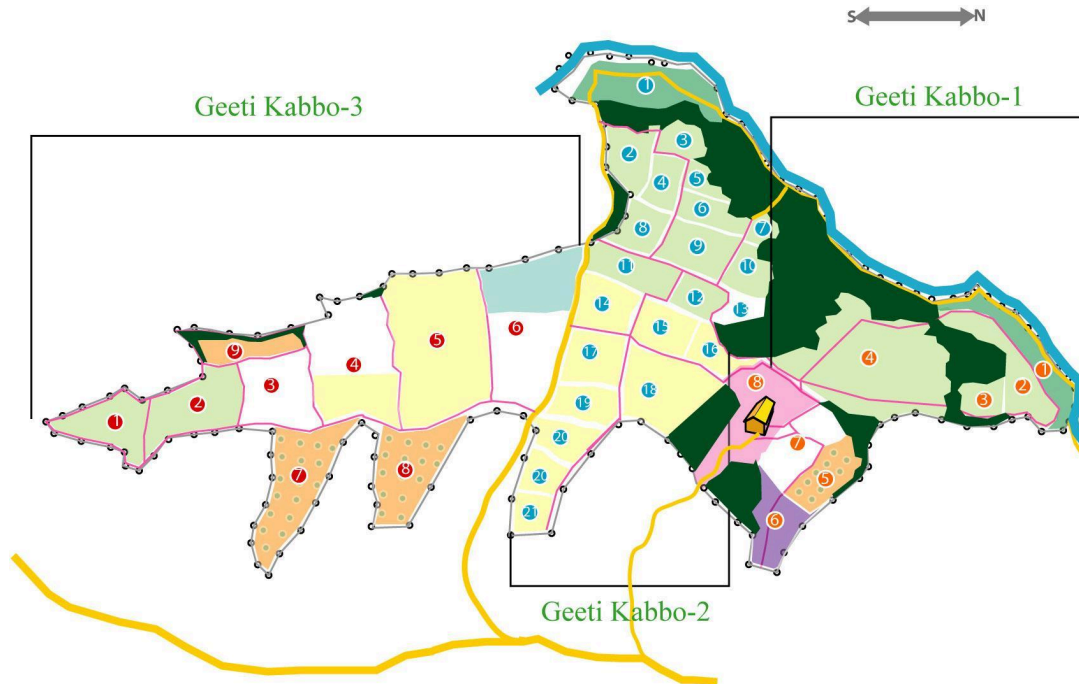
Knowledge is cultivated through the labor of both the mind and the body, just as crops are grown through the hard work of tilling the land and using our hands. Throughout history, civilization has been shaped by the combination of contemplation and cultivation. In our modern, mechanized world, many have become disconnected from these foundational practices. The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted a global reassessment of the importance of self-reliance and survival, leading to the emergence of small, innovative initiatives that blend art and agriculture as resilient models for a new world.

Pran Prokritir Kabbo was founded with the vision of bringing together art and agriculture for socio-economic uplift. Operating as a mixed social enterprise, its mission is to promote research, development, conservation, production, and aesthetic marketing of agricultural and livestock products through creative agro-art practices. By prioritizing indigenous knowledge, nature-based education, and local realities, the project aims to establish a productive, technology-driven agricultural economy in hilly landscapes. Monjur Ahmed and Tanjil Fatema Tushi, the founders, lead the initiative with the support of core collaborators from the local Mro and Bengali communities.

Project Map

Pran-Prokritir Kabbo

Agro Art Project



Land Type – 2nd Class Land Land Area - 4 Acres

- Kashmiri Apple Cool / Ball Sundari Cool
- Thai Guava
- Darjeeling Orange / Paisa Malta
- China 3 Seedless Lemon
- Paddy/Vegetable/Felon Lentil
- Nabo Kabbo – Medicinal and New Species Trees
- Bamboo Bush / Other Shrubs
- Hills / Small Hills
- Kabbo Nir - Office and Accommodation Center
- Main Road
- Connecting Road
- Connecting Road

Socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and pathways for progress

1. Bangladesh's geographical and anthropological features highlight a traditional culture deeply rooted in an agricultural way of life dating back to ancient times. Local customs are closely linked to the diverse cultivation methods practiced in different regions of the country. Disparities in agricultural-based cultural practices exist between the north-western regions, such as Dhaka, Comilla, and greater Mymensingh, and the south-eastern and hilly areas. The rich cultural traditions of twelve ethnic groups residing in the hilly regions, particularly in Chittagong division, have long influenced the traditional culture of the region. However, socio-political changes over time have impacted the lives and perspectives of the younger generation of ethnic groups in some areas, leading to a transformation in the agricultural culture based on Jhum cultivation.

2. Jhum cultivation, a traditional farming method practiced by ethnic groups in Bangladesh's hilly regions, is prevalent among the Mro community in Bandarban Hill District. Many Mro families face economic hardships and malnutrition due to the lack of land for jhum cultivation, leading to the repetitive cultivation of the same crop. The traditional practice of cultivating one crop every two years on hilly land has hindered the improvement of the local people's quality of life.

3. The vibrant traditions of ethnic groups like the Mro, known for their production of natural dyes and crafting of woven products from natural materials, are gradually fading. Alikadam, once celebrated for its natural beauty and cultural heritage, is confronting environmental challenges such as unplanned deforestation, resulting in ecosystem imbalances. The depletion of mountain springs and the reduced flow of the Matamuhuri River have caused a scarcity of drinking water. Furthermore, activities like stone quarrying and tobacco cultivation pose significant threats to the area's natural resources.

The Pran-Prakriti Kabbo project aims to promote inclusive socio-economic development by utilizing agriculture and industry as key tools. The project seeks to enhance socio-economic and cultural conditions by achieving the following objectives through a combination of modern agricultural techniques, innovative methods, and indigenous knowledge:

- Create sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial opportunities for local youth and ethnic groups.
- Preserve cultural heritage by integrating it into marketable products.
- Promote environmentally friendly land use, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Contribute to food security and uphold traditional cultural values.

Through its collective efforts, Pran-Prakriti Kabbo is working towards socio-economic development, environmental protection, and preservation of local culture by engaging the youth community in creative agro-industrial agriculture in the hills.

Philosophical Perspective

1. In the global competition for urban development, cities are becoming increasingly isolated, leading to a lack of social connections among urban dwellers. The absence of a connection with nature in urban environments contributes to a profound sense of loneliness. Skyscrapers, a prominent feature of urban landscapes, further distance people from nature. Additionally, the consumerist urban lifestyle exacerbates this isolation, fostering a culture of irrational consumerism that diminishes the spiritual essence of humanity. This detachment from nature hinders individuals from appreciating the beauty of the natural world, such as trees, mountains, rivers, and seas, ultimately impeding their ability to understand the significance of relationships.

2. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the vital importance of our relationship with nature for survival in the modern world. The pandemic has prompted individuals to reflect on the environmental impact of their actions and the value of nature in sustaining life. The urgent need for oxygen during crises like the pandemic highlights nature's essential role in supporting life on Earth. In response to this realization, artists, environmentalists, agricultural scientists, art curators, critics, and investors have come together to explore new artistic concepts that emphasize the interconnectedness of humanity and nature.

Amid the pandemic, we have embraced the concept of "survival and vitality" as a foundational philosophy, leading to the development of the Agro-Art project, which celebrates the beauty of life and nature. By integrating agriculture and art, we aim to rejuvenate the essence of life and foster a deeper understanding of the natural world. This harmonious blend of agriculture and art can enrich urban life by nurturing an appreciation for both the environment and human ecology.

Furthermore, our cultural heritage plays a significant role in shaping our daily experiences, as traditions are deeply ingrained in our identities. The fusion of agriculture and art resonates with the intrinsic values of many societies worldwide. Through the Agro-Art project, we seek to promote this global idea by intertwining agricultural practices with art, culture, and tradition, thereby supporting sustainable development and fostering a creative economy.

Action Plan:

The action of Pran-Prokritir Kabbo is categorized into two segments:

1. Economic development
2. Socio-cultural development activities.

Economic development:

1. **Production and marketing of high-yielding fruits and seedlings:** The initiative focuses on cultivating and marketing high-yielding fruits commercially in selected hilly lands within the project area. Additionally, it aims to produce and market new high-yielding fruit seedlings using modern agricultural techniques.
2. **Livestock development and marketing:** The project involves collecting and breeding domesticated livestock samples from the local community in the hilly areas surrounding the project site. These livestock are preserved through research and commercial production and marketing using farm methods.
3. **Production & marketing of new consumer goods:** The initiative aims to produce and market new consumer goods by collecting grains from local people engaged in Jhum cultivation in the hilly areas near the project site. It also supports the cultivation of traditional natural dyes by local indigenous groups, collection and processing of crop residues from Jhum farming, and production and marketing of creative products using natural dyes.

4. **Producing Medicinal plants for marketing:** The project focuses on identifying and preserving information on medicinal plants in the hilly area through research. It aims to produce these medicinal plants for marketing purposes.
5. **Marketing service:** The project provides support in marketing and pricing of grains produced by local people in the hilly areas near the project site. This is facilitated through a modern information technology-based marketing system.

Socio-cultural development:

1. **Promoting Life & Livelihood:** The project aims to raise awareness about modern agricultural practices to enhance the quality of life for indigenous communities in the hilly regions near the project site. Workshops and training sessions are organized to empower a new generation of agro-entrepreneurs, focusing on agro-based economy and job creation. Additionally, health awareness campaigns and primary healthcare services are provided to the local population.
2. **Cultural Enrichment:** The project emphasizes the preservation and promotion of Mro traditional arts and the creative talents of local artists to foster cultural awareness. Through traditional dances, songs, performances, workshops, and the establishment of indigenous art and cultural centers in hilly villages, the project aims to educate the community about their environment and heritage.
3. **Environmental Conservation:** By engaging with local communities and conducting training, workshops, and research on eco-friendly farming practices, the project seeks to address issues such as deforestation, landslides, and water conservation. Artists and agricultural researchers from various parts of Bangladesh participate in these activities to deepen their understanding of the natural environment and indigenous cultures. Through these initiatives, both the local administration and the community gain insights into sustainable development and improved living standards.

Conclusion:

Pran-Prokritir Kabbo was established to unite art and agriculture as a driver of socio-economic development. Operating as a mixed social enterprise, it advances research, conservation, production and aesthetic marketing of agricultural and livestock products through creative agro-art practices. The project's core aim is to strengthen livelihoods and local welfare by developing marketable, locally sourced products and promoting sustainable, culture-based economic opportunities.