



## Karama : Egypt

Creating sustainable livelihoods by promoting Egyptian handicrafts

### Project description

Karama markets Egyptian handicrafts, linking marginalised artisans to the global market and highlighting the tradition and artistry that lies behind every piece. The initiative also trains artisans and encourages them to take pride in their cultural heritage, thereby ensuring that their skills are passed down through the generations.



### Business model

Karama markets and exports Egyptian handicrafts such as mother-of-pearl inlays, patchwork and embroidered textiles, engraved brass and copper items, and blown glass perfume bottles and ornaments. The initiative focuses on high-quality items and features every artisan individually in its online shop.

Karama markets the products to wholesale customers worldwide via its website and to wholesale and retail customers directly at trade fairs in the United States and Europe.

### Scaling up activities in 2012

- Acquire a number of regular wholesale customers in Europe or the United States
- Relaunch the GebRaa online shop to enable effective international marketing
- Raise USD 15,000 so that the initiative can participate in trade fairs in Europe or the United States
- Develop unique designs for handicraft items to improve their competitiveness

### Immediate needs

- Links to wholesale importers of high-quality handicrafts in Europe and the United States
- Information about European and US high-quality handicraft markets
- Capacity building in the area of export, marketing and business management
- Links to impact investors to raise funds for participation in trade fairs





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### Partnership

- **GebRaa Co.** buys, markets and exports the handcraft items
- **The Syndicate of Traditional Artisans** provides links to skilled artisans and helps organise training
- **The Istebdaa' Initiative** provides technical and financial assistance to artisans
- **The El Nafeza Foundation for Contemporary Art and Development** trains disabled female artisans to recycle rice straw and other organic waste



### Social, environmental and economic impacts

**Social impact:** Karama supports artisans engaged in disappearing crafts by marketing their products internationally. The initiative promotes the status of craftsmanship in society and encourages young people to take up these trades, thereby preserving cultural heritage and providing skills and income to marginalised rural communities.

**Environmental impact:** Unlike short-lived and mass-produced items with a negative environmental footprint, traditional handicrafts made from natural

materials promote a sustainable lifestyle. In addition, providing stable income to rural artisans helps to combat mass urbanisation in the Greater Cairo area.

**Economic impact:** Karama strives to increase the currently limited availability of traditional Egyptian crafts in international markets. Developing a stable demand for high-quality handmade items produced in poor and partly rural communities strengthens local value chains in disappearing trades.

### Contact

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### SEED Partners

SEED's founding partners are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) and SEED is hosted by UNEP-WCMC. Other current partners are the governments of Germany, India, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America; the European Union; Conservation International; and SEED's corporate partner, Hisense.

### About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative identifies and supports promising small scale social and environmental entrepreneurs around the globe, entrepreneurs that while working towards a greener economy also tackle poverty, marginalisation and social exclusion.

SEED provides these social entrepreneurs with know how and networks, taking the lessons learnt at local level up to decision-makers to promote evidence-based policy making.

More information: [www.seedinit.org](http://www.seedinit.org)

### SEED Secretariat

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