



TEN THOUSAND
VILLAGES



Eco Angel Ornament

The Product

Recycled Paper Products: Adapted from traditional basket-making techniques, these unique items are made using recycled posters that have been discarded from a printing company. The imaginative artisans working with Mai Handicrafts cut these recycled posters into flat strips, dip them into a glue mixture, and then hang them to dry. Once dry, artisans re-wet the strips and coil them into the desired form. These coiled strips are held together with glue, forming sturdy household items!

The Artisan Group: MAI Vietnamese Handicrafts



Mai Handicrafts is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 by two social workers concerned by the plight of street children in Ho Chi Minh City. At the time, schooling was only available to those who held legal papers and could afford the tuition fees. Street children, meeting neither of these requirements, were therefore excluded. Mai Handicrafts gave work to youth and provided them with informal literacy classes. Now that schooling is free for all children in

Vietnam, Mai Handicrafts has expanded their mandate to provide work for the poor and marginalized, including women and ethnic minority groups.

Today, Mai Handicrafts works with 1,669 artisans in 26 producer groups – 90 percent of whom are women. The group runs several craft production projects and markets the work of numerous other craft producers. During recent years, Mai has established itself as the primary marketing agent for artisans from neglected families and women. It practices a model of social development in which social service cannot be separated from economic self-reliance.

Mai Handicrafts' artisans receive social and health care insurance benefits and can apply for scholarship funds. The organization's sales fund various community development activities – chosen based on groups' needs – including clean water projects, vocational training, equipment purchases and teacher wage subsidies. Mai has also responded to environmental concerns by collecting waste material for recycling – some of which is utilized in the creation of new products. Looking for ways to employ as many people as



This little angel ornament is a new use for old news! Handcrafted from recycled magazines, she's bright, cute and a good choice for your "green" tree.

Travel the world with each visit to Ten Thousand Villages.

Learn how Fair Trade really makes a difference. Our goal is to provide vital, fair income to artisans by marketing their handicrafts and telling their stories in North America. Ten Thousand Villages sells product from more than 30 countries, providing work for nearly 60,000 people around the world.

possible, Mai also hires young women to work after school cutting and forming boxes rather than buying ready-made packaging materials.

The Country: Vietnam

Vietnam – the most populous country in mainland Southeast Asia – offers both sublime beauty and traditional charm. Remarkable landscapes and a relaxed atmosphere indicate little of the country's long and troubled history of occupation and war.

Over the past 30 years, Vietnam has faced the challenges of recovering from not only the lasting effects of conflict, but also the rigidities of a centrally-planned economy. Since 1986, considerable progress has been made as the Communist Party of Vietnam has begun introducing market elements as part of a broad economic reform package called doi moi (“renovation”). These changes have dramatically transformed the country: over the last ten years, GDP has more than doubled and inflation has come to low single-digit figures.

To keep up with the country's rapid rate of population growth, Vietnam has also been working to promote job creation. Rural unemployment, however, is estimated at 35% during non-harvest periods and urban unemployment has risen steadily as people migrate to the cities in search of work. Alternative sources of income are critical in a society where roughly 65% of the labour force works in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

Vietnam continues to experience positive dynamic change as it strives to become an industrialized nation by 2020. Despite its poverty, it is a land of youthful hope and bustling enterprise. The economy is growing and trade is increasing. Rich in history, culture and natural beauty, Vietnam is also becoming a major tourist destination.