

RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Rural Tourism Promotion and livelihood enhancement: an evaluation of craftworks of Sirigu Women Organisation in Pottery and Arts (SWOPA) Project in the Kasena-Nankana East District of Ghana

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## Abstract

The Sirigu Women in Pottery and Arts (SWOPA) project was set up as a rural tourism promotion facility to enhance the economic wellbeing of women in the community. However, patronage in recent times has begun dwindling making the financial fortunes of the facility on women highly uncertain nowadays. This study sought to examine possible causes of the low patronage of the pottery and arts products and suggest a way forward to reactivating the association's fortunes for a better livelihood. The study considered a mixed methods approach employing both qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection. The number of respondents sampled was 226 from the membership of the women's association while other relevant stakeholders in the community were also purposively contacted. The results

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indeed, pointed to low patronage of pottery and related art works as end products now were accordingly not appealing to clients anymore due to factors such as poor finishing, bulky sizes and weight of products to be carried home as souvenirs among others. Low tourist arrivals to the centre in recent years has been attributed to poor publicity and infrastructural challenges of the destination area. It is suggested that training with modern methods in the arts to enhance outcomes of products and likewise introducing new arts forms to add value to their works will do a “hat-trick”. Furthermore, engaging visitors in the practical sessions of the artwork would prolong their stay and encourage re-visit intentions to the centre.

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## Introduction

Africans have contributed to the cultural heritage of the world creating masterpiece artworks of astonishing innovation and creativity. These legendary artworks are seen or discovered in diverse cultures across the continent. Works of arts are known to communicate vital aspects of cultures in which they were created. The arts play central roles in the socio-political lives of the African as well as in their customs and beliefs too. African art and culture cuts across various disciplines such as traditional sculpture, textiles, metal-works and ceramics (Clarke, 2006). The importance of the arts in the economic life of indigenes where these arts are practiced are key to the sustainability of life in these places. In Ghana, various towns and communities are noted for their uniqueness in one traditional art or the other. Pottery related works are found in places in Ashanti, Northern and Volta regions; metal works as seen in smiting of gold is common in the Ashanti lands, while the art of weaving is prominent among the Ashanti, Northern and Volta regions but equally practiced in other places across the country. Traditional architecture varies considerably based on geographical area where it is being practiced but mainly from materials in the region of clay, wood and thatch. Pottery products are usually handmade ware from clay and fired at a low temperature of 600-550 degree Celsius. This art form contributes over the centuries to archaeological findings in remote areas to transmit knowledge and leave evidence of historical happenings. Despite these contributions, fewer and fewer people are demanding pottery products in Ghana, leading to a sharp decline in practitioners in the field of pottery production (Nortey, Amoanye & Essuman, 2017). This study, looking into the traditional artwork of Sirigu community mainly involves women considering their expressions in mainly pottery wares and architecture, mural decoration in a unique manner using earthen colours. Although

various organizations have come to the support of these women to diversify their works for more international exposure and improvement on their financial lifestyles and status, much have not change. Activities in the centre seems not to bring in the needed results to sustain their livelihood. Pottery production is a key element at the centre to support the economic lives of members. However, the techniques employed in the production of these traditional pottery for their aesthetic, philosophical and utilitarian values seem to be static over the years (Asmah, Frimpong & Asinyo, 2013), hence it is no longer yielding the desired results for the association. According to Speight and Toki (2000) embellishment with simple incised lines and geometric incisions or basic relief forms in plant shapes patterns are not effective aesthetic designs to produce the needed economic attraction for buyers in recent times.

The SWOPA association, practice other art forms aside from pottery and architecture. These works add to the economic fortunes of members but not in a manner that can alleviate their economic challenges in recent years as patronage is becoming problematic. Besides, the introduction of other art forms like printing, beading, sculpture, fabric weaving and the likes, a blend or a mix method approach also needs to be considered in expanding the scope of art activities and introducing new ideas for a diverse and better result. Mix media is therefore the combination of materials and sometimes production techniques in a single work of art for a desired end result (Mensah, 2011). Traditional culture expressiveness in artifact products have technically improved rural tourism, which has become one of the most important sectors for developing countries including Ghana, which seeks to maximize foreign exchange earnings, increase employment and secure resources to conserve natural and cultural sites, often contributing to poverty alleviation. It is therefore considered one of the socio-economic indicators for women and other disadvantaged people in the society (Eisler, 2007). Women participation in artifacts and other handicraft production in a sector mainly dominated by men, hinders their entrepreneurial abilities because of constraints of culture, tradition and family roles which becomes a hindrances restricting them from economic liberty as they cannot take full advantage of opportunities in these arts and crafts production to enhance their livelihood (Mueller & Dato, 2010).

In Ghana, the tourism sector over the last few years has witnessed quite significant growth. In recent times, the tourism sector in Ghana placed fifth behind gold, oil, cocoa and foreign remittances being foreign exchange earner to the country. Tourism contributed GHS10.5 billion to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) representing 7.8% to GDP in the year 2015 (Ministry of Tourism, 2015). It is expected that, this would have translated into sustainable income-generating sources to rural economies of which these tourist sites are sited. In the northern parts of Ghana in particular, the rural tourism industry is bedeviled with a number of challenges which limits its ability to attaining its primary goal of fighting poverty therein. These include poor marketing of rural areas as destinations for tourists, the lack of a Ghana Tourism Brand; low

awareness of the potential of tourism as a viable economic sector; poor infrastructure especially poor access roads to tourist sites, lack of facilities at destination areas, poor human resource base, lack of domestic awareness and patronage and poor coordination among authorities (Aboagye, Frempong, & Eshun, 2013; Gyasi, 2013; Eshun, Agbadze, & Asante, 2014).

It is a truism that rural tourism creates potential for employment enhancement, reducing poverty and producing a reaping effect which can foster sustainable economic development (Pratt, 2015). Issues of livelihood sustainably are better addressed if women at the grassroots level are empowered which will trickle down to the economic sufficiency of the family for a better living. The Sirigu Women in Pottery and Arts (SWOPA) association founded in the Kassena Nankana West District was established to help alleviate women's poverty in the community as these women exhibit great potential in the arts. This community through SWOPA served as a rural tourist precinct aside from the Paga Crocodile pond, Pikworo Slave Camp, Ghana-Burkina Frontier and the Zenga Pond within the Upper East Region. The SWOPA centre has been in operation since 1997 but however, preliminary studies have shown that, the association is bedeviled with a number of challenges that limits its ability to attain its primary goal of fighting poverty among its members especially through the use of the art forms. Therefore, the study's main objective is to evaluate the craftworks currently being produced at the SWOPA centre and identify ways by which they impact the lives of the association's members, hence leading to rural development through tourism.

## **Literature Review**

### ***The Concept of Rural Tourism***

A cursory look at the term rural tourism points to the fact that this phenomenon takes place in rural areas. This concept has a long history and most people view the concept erroneously as referring only to non-urban areas. Rural tourism has been around since time memorial and scholars like Mathembu (2008) and Cole (2009) still maintain that it might have originated in mountainous region of Germany and in some coastal areas of France. A number of factors have contributed to rural tourism's development, notably; lower transportation cost, increased disposable income, smaller family sizes, changing demographics, improved standards of living, peace, serenity and tranquility of the countryside, interest in healthy lifestyles (Spa), growing interest in heritage infrastructural development, more hospitable environments for tourists and increase in leisure time. Rural tourism sustainability for enhanced development is anchored by art tourism in recent years which are prevalent in forms of mural or street tourism projecting views of cultures and destinations (Asante and Yirenkyi, 2019; Crespi-Vallbona and Mascarilla, 2021; Pooley, 2022).

Many studies critiqued most of the positive benefits of conventional tourism as envisioned by its proponents. It was during this era that rural-based community studies began reviewing some of the environmental and socio-cultural effects resulting from poorly planned tourism development (UNEP, 2013). These led to the criticism labeled against tourism by cautionary platforms as neglecting protection of the environment which later resulted in the appearance of niches such as ecotourism, cultural tourism and green tourism appearing in the tourism literature (Gartner, 2005). New models of tourism development by academics started to emerge (Mathembu, 2008) with most of them calling for less instructive forms of development and to adopt more sensitive approaches that cater for the need of rural dwellers and a greater reliance on local capital for development. The idea that tourism must cater for local needs then began to take centre stage as majority of these types of tourism developments were concentrated in rural areas as urban areas were already physically transformed (Gartner, 2005).

Rural tourism has widely been promoted as a means of addressing the socio-economic challenges faced by the rural poor, especially those that are associated with the decline of traditional agrarian societies (Asiedu & Gbedema, 2011; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2010; as cited in Rogerson, 2012). According to Kumra (2008), rural tourism is a subset of tourism that consists of ranging aspects such as farm/agricultural tourism, cultural tourism, nature tourism, adventure tourism and ecotourism. Any form of tourism that therefore displays the rural life, art, culture and heritage at rural locations, thereby benefiting the local community economically and socially as well as enabling interaction between the tourists and the locales for a more enriching tourism experience can be appropriately termed as rural tourism. According to Negi (1990) attractions in rural areas includes enjoyment of rural scenery, the desire for open space, quiet and peace of mind. Rural sports like hunting, fishing and ethnic attractions like folk life, custom, food, drinks and festivals all play vital roles in enhancing rural tourism.

### ***Rural and Cultural Tourism Development in Ghana***

Tourism products in Ghana fit within five broad categories as a result of a gradual shift in tourists' interests from high-density activity to more personalized activities such as exploration of historical, cultural and ecological heritage, in which Ghana is richly endowed (Gyasi, 2013). The five broad categories are; Cultural and Heritage tourism, Ecotourism/rural tourism, Beach tourism, Conference or business tourism and Urban tourism. These resources could be developed and managed to add value to the livelihoods of the poor in peripheral areas like the Kassena-Nankana West District. Cultural tourism for instance is one of the fastest growing sectors of the travel industry worldwide where arts and culture are the vital constituents (Richards, 2007). Tourist art is the immediate communicative object of formulation that has a definite impact on the artist's social and the consumers' commercial exchanges. It is a summation of the symbolic properties of the artist and the consumer's believe to their cultural

and economic realities (Baudrillard, 1994). Tourist art, then becomes the cultural classifications and creative ideas that the artist communicates to an external audience involving a circle of exchange among the artist, the middleman and the consumer. It makes a valuable contribution to cross-cultural exchange which forms a miniature copy of the processes of socio-economic change; and influence many of the social and cultural transitions that takes place in a contemporary community where the art was purchased. Tourist art can, therefore, be defined as a kind of contemporary art created locally for use by outsiders (Shiner, 1994). It is more than a system of exchange between an artist who work for profit and a consumer who buys for pleasure. It is also a perceived symbol that represents a cultural experience which demonstrate the uniqueness and value of the art piece of the artist and its acceptance of the collectible art piece to the consumer. This agreed system of exchange and its operations, associated with tourist art is understood by both the art producers and the modern tourists. To Cohen, (1993), one of the modern prospects of cultural tourism is to actively contribute to the economic well-being of communities as well as the stakeholders involved.

Cultural significance and artistic appraisal of the wall paintings which espouses human creativity is often the expression of culture. People express themselves creatively in dance, music, costume and textiles, painting, sculpture, narrations, poetry and drama. The singing, clapping, dancing and general merry making that portray wall decoration sessions reveal the extent to which they are a social event, fostering community spirit, and promoting healthy competition among women involved in the performing arts by serving as platforms for launching new musical compositions and dance arrangements. Women who are not specifically participating in the mural making will often participate in the celebrations and offer vocal encouragement. The desire to pass on to future generations an inheritance based on an iconography that is peculiar to local community is deeply installed in Sirigu culture (Kissick, 1993). Furthermore, a finely painted wall means that female solidarity and family cohesion is at its peak, as it suggests that women who may customarily be rivals must have worked together on the same task.

### ***Rural Tourism vis a vis Poverty Reduction Strategies***

Some scholars have argued that tourism has made huge contributions to the economies in developing countries in terms of foreign exchange earnings; employment opportunities, tax revenue, and poverty alleviation (Hall, 2007; Ashley and Mitchell, 2007). Many developing countries support tourism as a developmental tool because it provides employment opportunities, improves balance of payments, boosts foreign exchange earnings and is assumed to support regional development (Teye, 2000). Tourism activities in developing countries nowadays are seen as a way to improve a local community's economy by producing new opportunities (Njole, 2011).

Tourism is therefore noted to generate enormous employment opportunities for poor people if managed well and provides options for local and marginalized communities (Neto, 2003). It's a good instrument for alleviating poverty if tapped well for rural livelihood enhancement (Zhang, 2019; Wang et al., 2020a; Yang et al., 2021) and economic empowerment (CumberlandValley, 2022). Socially, it is also seen as assisting in the development and improvement of social services such as the provision and equipping of health centres, schools, community roads and the provision of clean and safe water and plants a sense of cultural exchange between foreigners and citizens (Yehia, 2019). Tourism revenue can be channeled for the enhancement of rural economies and generates benefits through improved infrastructure such as telecommunications and sanitation systems thereby improving the conditions of the local population (Nguyen, 2021).

The UNWTO endorsed Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), actively promotes tourism as an instrument of prosperity through sustainable development and poverty reduction. Pro-poor tourism (PPT) is another strategy developed to which attempts to link tourism development and poverty alleviation among local communities. Thus, PPT is a form of tourism that is envisaged to increase net benefits for the poor (Ashley & Roe, 2002; Asiedu & Gbedema, 2011).

## **Methodology**

### ***Study Area***

The study area, Sirigu, is a community located in the eastern part of the Kassena-Nankana West District of the Upper East Region (UER) of Ghana. There are two main vegetation seasons in the study area, the wet season is mainly for farming activities while the dry season which lasts between November and March enables women of the association to be actively engaged in the various art works for sustainable livelihood as farming activities are not in progress. The community has a traditional culture of local architecture designs with unique mural decoration using earthen colours from their immediate environs, whilst also equally engaging in basketry and pottery works.

### ***Sirigu Arts in Perspective (the Origin of SWOPA)***

Sirigu tourist art began in 2001, when the Sirigu Women Organization in Pottery and Art (SWOPA) project 'caught' the attention of the World Art Foundation who were impressed by the authenticity of their wall designs including traditional architecture. In line with the aim of World Art Foundation to advance contemporary artistic creation with a cultural/ethical background, their representatives visited Sirigu in 2002 and shared ideas about further development of transferring their artistic expression and techniques on canvas (Cowhey, 1996). Their experiences were built on an intensive training curriculum offered by Corrie Haverkort and July Leesberg (Cowhey, 1996). The Dutch NGO, Interkerkelijk Coördinatie Commissie Ontwikkelingshulp (ICCO) which translates as Inter-church Organisation for Development Cooperation, provided

substantial funding in an attempt to revitalize symbolic painting on local architecture, pottery, canvas and for the promotion of eco-cultural tourism with the objectives of improving the society and economic status of adult females and their kinsmen (Manu & Kuuder, 2012; Bonye, Aasoglenang, & Owusu-Sekyere, 2013; Kwoyiga & Apusiga, 2017). The artistic importance of this development gave birth to the translation of Sirigu metaphoric wall paintings into small sized portable canvasses, while retaining its authentic traditional values. In 2006, SWOPA and World Art Foundation agreed on a partnership to promote SWOPA art in Europe. This partnership resulted in the exhibition "WALL TO WALL" that took place in 2007 and 2008 at different locations in the Netherlands and possibly other European countries (Cowhey, 1996). This exhibition resulted from five years' experience in the changeover from traditional to contemporary or tourist art by women of Sirigu (Woets, 2014). This marked the beginning of a partnership that opened up the symbolic art of Sirigu to the international community and "released the valves" to the floodgates for tourists to begin 'trooping' into Sirigu. Local architecture is used to provide shelter, space for storage, as well as rearing of livestock. Mural decoration in Sirigu on the other hand, codifies the cultural values, morale, totemic figures, events, aspirations, and caprices from the perspective of women. This has helped preserve essential cultural facets of the Sirigu society for posterity.

The traditional housing architectural structural designs are rectangular or circular in plan and have either flat mud roofs (adobe style) or thatch roofs. The buildings are generally wider at the base and slightly narrower at the top. The buildings are connected by walls that together create a series of linked courtyards. The external wall of the building marks the boundary between public and private spaces. The communal nature of architectural construction and mural decoration, fosters community cohesion and healthy competitions among the practitioners. In mural decoration, the communal nature of the art form presents a unique stage for launching new musical compositions and dance formations. The greater part of these "tourisms", ostensibly, fit into the structure of 'cultural tourism' since culture is said to centre on the totality of the way of life of a people. Cultural tourism as a product basically centres on the ethos and social environments of the locality, which may include heritage, visual and performing arts, festivals, landscape, cultural values and ways of life from one perspective and cultural facilities, for example, museums, galleries, theatres and historic sites on the other perspective (See plates 1 to 14 at the end of reference section on the artistic setups in Sirigu community)

### ***Research Design***

A descriptive cross-sectional research design where a case study approach was considered appropriate due to the unique cultural setting of the community and the SWOPA centre that needs in-depth data collection approach for the desired results was opted for. The approach

calls for the use of instruments such as the use of questionnaire for eliciting information from the general SWOPA members, the use of an interview guide for stakeholders while participatory observation was used in order to closely observe art works, methods employed in the working processes, time spent, end results and buyers (tourists) reaction to exhibited works.

### **Sampling and Research Instrumentation**

The community has an association referred to as Sirigu Women Organisation in Pottery and Arts (SWOPA) project with a membership population of 450 women. A sample size of 226 active women engaged in various art forms at the centre were purposively sampled for the data collection as all members had expertise on issues pertaining to the types of artworks done at the centre and possible challenges they encountered. With regard to qualitative data, visitors to the centre were also contacted via convenience sampling basis for their contributions if they agreed to respond. Again those women playing key leadership roles in various grouping within the association based on their art works produced at the centre were contacted via use of In-depth interview (IDI) guides for their responses. Other community leaders such as the chief and elders and the assemblyman were also contacted purposively for information on traditions and culture including the history of art and architecture of the area. Officials of the Ghana Tourism Authority were reached for their responses through in-depth interview (IDI) guides.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Socio-demographic characteristics**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents, who were part of the pottery and arts association in Sirigu. From the results, the age category of women varied from 20 years through to 50 years and beyond. The study revealed as follows: the youth in their 20s (5%) and 30s (13%) portraying that the youth were losing interest in joining the association. The reasons were beyond just the desire of the youth to pursue education but mainly hinged on the unattractiveness of the association to the modern generation as income levels and activities were low and static as outlined by the assemblyman and other female leaders interviewed in the community who were not members of the association. Member's formal educational attainment level was generally low as those who got to secondary levels constituted only 1% of the sample population under study.

**Table 1: Socio- demographic characteristics of respondents**

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage%</b>
<b>Age Group</b>		
20 – 29	11	5

30 – 39	29	13
40 – 49	114	50
50 and above	72	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>		
No formal	159	70
Primary	57	25
JHS	8	4
SHS/Vocational	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	3	6
Married	197	87
Divorced	9	4
Widow	17	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Kusasi	47	20
Frafra	141	63
Kassena	38	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religion</b>		
Christianity	103	46
Islamic	2	1
Traditionalist	121	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>No. of Dependents</b>		
1-3 dependents	15	7

4-6 dependents	147	68
7-9 dependents	52	24
Above 9	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey (February, 2023)

A few of the women in the study area were not married (single, divorced and widowed) equating to 1% 4% and 8% respectively but majority (87%) of them (respondents) were married. This revealed the level of responsibilities they carried as data on dependency rates shows 92% of these women had dependents between 4 to 9 individuals who were mainly wards of members and relatives to care for making the issue of insufficient income level more worrisome as a result of the dependency ratios. Apparently all women involved in the survey were natives of the region, belonging to one of the three native tribes as in Kusasi, Frafra and Kassen. The religious inclination of respondents was however unevenly represented as 46% were Christian, 53% Traditionalist with only (1%) being Muslim indicating there were more traditionalists involved in the study, perhaps a very strong indication why traditional art and cultural practices are still prevalent in the community.

### Engagement of Women in Pottery and Arts Projects in Sirigu

The results identified that the establishment of the association was primarily on pottery works and supported with other related arts as all respondents indicated they engaged in pottery making (100%). However, the extent of engagement varied from one respondent to the other. Other supporting arts and non-arts engagements equally contributed to the overall success of SWOPA members as seen in Table 2.

**Table 2: Respondents' engagement in Pottery and Arts in Sirigu**

Category	Frequency	Percentages %
<b>Periods of engagement in pottery production</b>		
Everyday	126	56
When there is demand	35	15
After farming activities	48	21
When products stock is low	17	8

<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years engaged in pottery and art projects</b>		
Below 10 years	23	10
Between 11 to 20 years	55	24
Above 20 years	148	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Other related arts projects</b>		
Fabric weaving	14	6
Painting on canvas	71	32
Basket weaving	84	37
Tie and Dye production	32	14
Hat weaving	25	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Other activities aside pottery and arts</b>		
Farming		
Trading	176	78
Others (teaching, cleaning, etc)	43	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey (February, 2023)

The study also inquired whether all respondents (SWOPA members) could produce any of the art projects practiced at the centre. The responses showed that, any member of the group have basic skills on pottery production. Further probes however clarified that traditional pottery and architectural building and moral designing were primary to almost every household in the community, hence most women had some knowledge in these areas of art. However, in relation to the level of participation, engagement and experiences gained in the pottery works, it came to the fore that 56% of members work daily in pottery at the centre, while the rest 15%, 21% and 8% respectively worked when there was demand, after farming for the day or when products they had in stock had run-out hence needing replacement. The study further 'interrogated' if people in pottery did not participate in any other art forms and to this, the responses showed

that all participants practiced one or two additional artworks aside from pottery. It was noticed that, canvas painting which replicates mural designs on walls in miniature forms on canvas was engaged in by 32% of respondents while basketry and hat weaving artworks were practiced by 48% of respondents, typically because these were popular crafts noted in the region and seemed to enjoy high patronage from buyers for export. Close to 14% of respondents engaged in batik, tie and dye production, which also enjoyed a bit of local patronage. Personal observation showed that, designs from the these arts did not have any link to traditional ideologies of the community and finishing were not even close to what was done in the open market, hence did not attract visitors much to purchase. About 6% respondents who said, they were engaged in fabric weaving, an art not practiced at the centre indicated they learnt the art from some members in the community and that most of their canvases for painting were done mostly on these locally woven fabrics. As to whether an introduction of this art form at the centre will be welcomed, respondents affirmed this but wondered if it could provide some financial prowess. On the issue of if members engaged in any other economic ventures aside from pottery and related arts, responses showed that, majority (78%) engaged in farming whilst 19% engaged in petty trading. Three percent (3%) of the respondents resorted to other economic activities such as teaching, cleaning, fetching fuelwood or producing charcoal for sale. To some respondents, the farming and trading activities were part-time works while others dedicated most of their time during the farming season to crop cultivation and only did the art works after they were done with the days` farm activities.

The activities of the SWOPA association were seen as essential for poverty alleviation among the women hence, majority (90%) of the respondents have been in this business for more than 10 years, and so tended to be abreast with the economic transformation that had occurred over the years with particular reference to tourist participation in the destination area and their contribution to livelihood enhancement in the community. Although women dominated the production of pottery and other arts projects, there were certain roles played by men. This was confirmed by all respondents, who indicated that there were some key roles men played to help them in their pottery and arts works. Respondents asserted the men assisted in preparation of the clay, gathering of firewood for baking the wares, digging for traditional stones for painting, harvesting grass for weaving, and working as tour guides and drivers to take visitors around the community and often acted as caretakers at the lodge.

### **Livelihood enhancement through Pottery and related Arts**

The activities of the association contributes highly to livelihood enhancement of SWOPA members through product sales and tourist arrivals to the centre. Table 3, elaborates on the economic value of the projects undertaken at the centre and its contribution to the livelihood of members. The patrons to their various wares are herein also identified.

**Table 3: Patronage of Pottery and Arts for enhanced livelihoods**

Category	Frequency	Percentages%
<b>Category of people who patronized pottery and related Arts</b>		
Local tourists	11	5
Foreign tourists	215	95
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Craftworks mostly patronized at the SWOPA centre</b>		
Pottery products	93	41
Tie and Dye production	37	16
Painting on canvas	62	28
Basket weaving	23	10
Hat weaving	11	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Standard of living of SWOPA members</b>		
Improved	204	90
Worst off	7	3
No change (static)	15	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source:** Field survey (February, 2023)

The results as presented in table 3 shows the categories of people who patronized the pottery and other art works from the SWOPA centre. Majority (95%) of the patrons were foreigners with only 5% being local patrons. The high patronage by foreigners does not only give the community an international exposure but also a source of foreign income (exchange) which together with earnings from local patrons boosted the local economy hence making it akin to a similar study by Manu and Kuuder (2012) which identified monetary injections in the local economy as one of the benefits the community derived from tourism related activities. From the

results on patronage levels among the arts exhibited at the centre, it was evident that most tourists bought pottery related crafts (41%). This seems to contrast studies done by Nortey, Amoanye and Essuman, (2017) who asserted that, there was a considerable decline in demands for pottery wares in Ghana. This is followed by paintings on canvases that speaks to the mural works from their traditional architecture in limited forms (26%), closely followed by batik, tie-dye production (17%) which did not express ideas of the community beliefs as in the case of pottery and canvas painting. Observations also showed that, designs produced are restricted, with little or no dynamism of the products thus, failure to command great patronage due to lack of aesthetics which is paramount to attracting people toward artworks to whisk-up the interest of buyers.

Results from this research also indicates that most members of SWOPA who responded to the study are better off and claimed to have an enhanced livelihood today than when they did not belong to the association. Majority of respondents (90%) indicated that their livelihood had improved courtesy of the pottery and arts association and this again is in tandem with the views of Manu and Kuuder (2012), who disclosed that engaging in tourism related activities at the Sirigu community had the potential to enhance the livelihood of the people involved. Close to 3% of respondents however revealed their living standards had declined with about 7% stating there was no change in their livelihood status after they joined the association. The fact that respondents had joined an association with the opportunity of a handiwork in this study relates to findings of Ashley and Roe (2002) who posited that the participation of the local communities in tourism activities can range from the individual to the whole community engaging in a variety of activities through employment in the sector and supplying goods and services to community enterprise ownership and other joint ventures.

### **Challenges and Strategies to enhancing Livelihoods through Rural Tourism in Sirigu**

All respondents contacted agreed that there were challenges which hindered the activities of the association and thus affects wellbeing of members within the community. During IDI with stakeholders in the community the following revelations came to the fore.

*There are inadequate facilities at the SWOPA centre and in recent times there is low visitor inflow, language barrier between the tour guides and tourists, the poor nature of the road to Sirigu and poor patronage of our products are a barrage of problems this facility is beset with (SWOPA 3, September, 2022).*

Other concerns raised by other stakeholders had to do with the following:

*Difficulty in sourcing and preserving stones used in the painting and pottery arts is an issue now. Pottery wares in these modern times are now increasing being replaced with metal or*

*aluminum and rubber/plastic containers in most homes. Lack of interest by the youth in joining the association is also a matter of worry to us nowadays (SWOPA 1, September, 2022)*

The aforementioned IDI report seems to buttress the viewpoints of Nortey, Amoanye and Essuman (2017) who expressed concerns about the decline in use of pottery wares in Ghana nowadays probably due to the native's interest in these plastic related containers that are in vogue.

Despite purchasing the artworks of the community, an IDI session with a tourist revealed the following: A local and international tourists met at the centre on what they see to be challenges that might make them not to patronize arts works revealed as follows:

*Results of craftworks produced are not up to standard and again most items are too weighty or bulky to carry as souvenirs. Furthermore, the designs and finishing of products are not encouraging and this makes the standards quite low (Visitor No. 7, September, 2022).*

The study also sought to unearth measures put in place to address the challenges confronting the association. It was obvious a series of efforts were put in place by management of SWOPA to address the challenges but these measures were not yielding the desired results. An IDI with management revealed the following:

*Workshops are being organized to update members on techniques to improve on the crafts, advertising through social media, creation of a website, using promotional materials such as posters, magazines and flyers. The artists were also trained to make transition from painting done on walls onto canvas so that guests could take these home as souvenirs (Manager of SWOPA, September, 2022)*

From officials of the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the potentials of the community are bright:

*The community explicitly is endowed with rich artistic, cultural and ecological assets that could promote "cultural or heritage tourism". Indeed, the artistic, cultural and ecological assets of Sirigu if well managed and promoted has the potential of rendering a positive economic impact on the lives of women in the community and the GTA is working on achieving this through tourism assiduously (GTA 2, September, 2022).*

Thus, the challenges besetting the SWOPA project notably low visitor inflows which also resulted from poor road network to the destination area. This therefore translated to the poor patronage of products, hence less income to the local residents especially the women.

## Conclusion

The research indicates Sirigu women have a great deal of cultural wealth and influence on their part as artists. Their paintings are mirrors mirroring their indigenous customs and socio-cultural identity. Despite the fact that the materials utilized were not very durable, their paintings were oftentimes (frequently) repainted, and this aided in protecting their iconography for successors. The fact that the muralists are overwhelmingly women support the perceptions of Nikoi (1993) on women's innovative and intellectual capacities in connection to tasks directed towards managing the cultural identity of their ethnic group. On the social front, since the people work as a group, they have sufficient chance to share their dreams, discuss personal issues and settle any differences of opinion. The murals painted by the women of Sirigu emerge as a historical and cultural model of women's aggregate art that seems to incorporate tasteful and economic targets, and gives the women a very obvious status in their community. They certify the accreditations of mural art as a medium that offered opportunities for communitarian social analysis and inventive self-articulation to the people who may somehow or another wind up on the edges of society. Despite the fact that many of the women may not be formally educated, their work serves as a basis for educating and learning creative patterns preserved for future generations. Their works feature the careful utilization of general principles of design, such as, harmony, rhythm and variety and element of design such as Sirigu art and pottery. Clearly the Sirigu muralists are satisfying this role, with the most experienced artists and the slightest experienced cooperating to guarantee that customary information is transmitted down the ages. The study, in this manner, concludes that pottery and art has potential for enhancing the standard of living of the people, and in addition development of tourism in Ghana and beyond. It has been revealed clearly from the study that pottery and arts is an essential source of livelihood activity for women in Sirigu, which has helped to improve their economic fortunes over the years in spite of recent low patronage challenges. Majority of patrons of pottery and arts products are foreigners hence this boosts tourism in the local economy. Generally women engage in the art as a full time occupation and may only do other forms of economic activities such as farming during the farming season, others however had other primary occupations, hence do art as a part-time activity to supplement their income.

## Recommendations

To improve on the limitations militating against the sustenance of traditional architecture, painting and pottery production in the Sirigu community and in addition to helping them benefit from the tourism and other forms of art as enshrined in their cultural setting, the following recommendations are essential for consideration;

1. The wall painting and pottery motifs ought to be elevated to guarantee their consolidation and use in interior decorations, furniture decorations, textiles designs, graphic designs, public painting works and other artistic fields to immortalize the themes.
2. The arts of the SWOPA association must be improved upon through good finishing processes. This can be effected through workshops, training sessions and introduction of new art concepts in-line with the culture of the people to open new avenues for income generation.
3. International and local exhibitions of cultural and visual ancient rarities by SWOPA and the Sirigu traditional council could go far in drawing the consideration of investors and tourists to the community to aid the sustenance of the pottery and art forms and the improvement of the community.
4. Since the uncommon appeal and uniqueness of the artistic and cultural heritage within Sirigu community is the attraction that will draw visitors, endeavours must be made, to reinvigorate interest for earth design, wall paintings and pottery production in the community. This should be possible through annual competitions and educating the youth on the significance of art works amid home-coming festivals.
5. Promotional materials and projects, for example, posters, radio, television, daily papers and magazine notices and the advancement in cultural and tourism websites, could all go far in actively marketing and promoting Sirigu as a good tourism destination and in this way attracting tourists to the community.
6. The tourist lodging facilities and services in Sirigu must be improved to meet the standard of visitors. Since fulfilled visitors would recommend others to come and experience similar good culture, tourism and art settings. This would provide continuous business to the association and the community.

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**Pictures of Pottery and other Artworks in Sirigu**



Figure 1: Display of art work



Figure 2: Woven product displayed



Figure 3: Women mixing clay



Figure 4: Pottery vases and bowls displayed



Figure 5: Woman artist at work



Figure 6: Canvas painting



Figure 7: Women weaving baskets



Figure 8: Women at work



Figure 9: Group tourist room



Figure 10: A local-styled guest house



Figure 11: Double bed room