

## **Community-Based Ecotourism and Livelihood Enhancement in Sirigu, Ghana**

**Manu, Isaac**

**Kuuder, Conrad-J.Wuleka**

University for Development Studies  
Department of Ecotourism and Environmental Management  
Nyankpala Campus, Tamale-Ghana

### **Abstract**

*Tourism/ecotourism has the greatest pro-poor impact on rural communities because the customer comes to the facility/product creating room for direct sell thus fostering the creation of the economic multiplier effect. As a result of overuse of farmlands over the years, yields from agriculture have been dwindling culminating in the phenomenon of “trying livelihoods” in Sirigu. Alternatively, some residents are now taking control of their own destiny by embracing tourism development as a means to enhancing their livelihood. A sample size of 440 respondents was obtained from the community making use of both simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Results analyzed revealed that stakeholders were serious minded about issues regarding the tourism-development nexus. Many women were engaged in tourism related income generation activities and revenue accruing to the community was quite impressive. The study recommended that a map of the village be availed to visitors to foster private/guided village tours and domestic tourism be encouraged to further boost receipts.*

**Keywords:** Sirigu, community-based ecotourism, livelihood enhancement, stakeholders, income generation,

### **Introduction**

Ecotourism is an alternative form of tourism that is consistently gaining grounds on a global scale during the past few years (UNWTO, 2001). It is one of the newest opportunities for income generation from natural resources without destroying the environment (Colvin, 1996). Its fundamental principles refer to minimizing negative impact on the environment, representing the local cultures and actively contributing to the economic well-being of host communities as well as the stakeholders involved. Ecotourism has the potential to become a driver of sustainable tourism development and also provide opportunities for the development of the disadvantaged, marginalized and rural areas leading to poverty alleviation. It stimulates economic development and social well-being of people and at the same time preserving the natural environment and cultural heritage through awareness creation.

Strong arguments have been advanced in support of ecotourism playing a central role in conservation and rural development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The growth of community-based ecotourism for instance in this region has been the strongest in the global market in the past ten years due to the positive economic impacts on the people in the region making it an increasingly important industry in East and Southern Africa (UNWTO, 2001). Ecotourism activities using natural resource attractions in remote rural areas can be important sources of economic diversification and livelihood opportunity (Ashley et al., 2001; UNWTO, 2002). For instance, in Kenya, 11 N’gvesi Community-Based Ecotourism Site was awarded the Equator Initiative Award at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002 due to how the destination impacts economically on the local residents. Again, in South Africa, Buffalo Ridge Thakadu River Safari Camp within Madikwe Game Reserve is a 100% owned community-based ecotourism site which gives numerous economic returns to the local people ([www.africacommunity-based-ecotourism.com](http://www.africacommunity-based-ecotourism.com)).

In Ghana, community-based ecotourism came to the fore since 1996 towards developing economically and culturally sensitive locations in rural parts of the country (Ghana Tourism Authority, 1996).

It has created opportunities for rural communities to earn income and created tourism related jobs through the conservation of local ecosystems and culture. Due to the contribution of community-based ecotourism to socio-economic development of local people, such laudable projects receive funding from donor agencies such as USAID and Netherland Development Organization (SNV) to which Sirigu Pottery and Art in the KasenaNankanaWest District in the Upper East Region is one of the few lucky beneficiaries. Sirigu is imbued with infrastructure such as a guest house which fosters overnight stay, large craft display rooms for interactive craft workshops, summer huts for meetings and opportunities for village tours. The community has unique symbolic wall decorations (fostering village tours) which attract visitors from home and abroad.

### **Problem statement**

With a growing interest to spend leisure time in nature related facilities and increasing awareness on environmentalism, ecotourism has become one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry in the world (UNWTO, 2001). The declaration of the year 2002 as International Year of Ecotourism by World Tourism Organization reflects the importance of ecotourism in the global industry. It provides better linkages, reduces leakages of benefits out of a country, creates local employments, creates the multiplier effect and fosters sustainable development (Khan, 1997; Belsky, 1999).

In Ghana, the tourism sector places fourth behind gold, cocoa and foreign remittances and earned revenue that is equivalent to 6.2% of Gross Domestic Product (Ministry of Tourism, Ghana, 2010) of which community-based ecotourism plays a crucial part. The core aim of community-based ecotourism is poverty alleviation in rural communities through the creation of sustainable income-generating tourism activities, while conserving the delicate and sensitive ecological and cultural resources in their environments.

Community-based ecotourism sites offer potential benefits to the individual, communities and the nation as a whole, in areas such as the creation of employment, foreign exchange earnings and improving the welfare of local people among others (Mbaiwa, 2003). Community-based ecotourism has therefore been given much attention these days as it yields the results of the purpose for which it has been advocated for. Based on the above benefits derived from the community-based ecotourism initiatives generally, one therefore wonders if any such benefits come the way of the local people of Sirigu in the KasenaNankana West District by way of livelihood enhancement, hence the need for this research.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general aim of the study is to ascertain the livelihood enhancement opportunities brought in the wake of ecotourism development in Sirigu whilst the specific objectives were to:

- Identify the income generating ecotourism related activities in the community.
- Assess the level of female participation in the development of ecotourism in Sirigu.
- Identify the key stakeholders in the Sirigu ecotourism site.

### **What the Literature Says**

A search in the literature, suggests that the term 'ecotourism' was coined by Hector Ceballos-Lascuráin, who was at the time (July, 1983) was Director General of Mexican Ministry of Urban Development and Ecology. He provided the first definition of the term later that year at a conference in Mexico City:

*"Ecotourism is tourism that involves travelling to relatively undisturbed natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural aspects (both past and present) found in these areas. Ecotourism implies a scientific, aesthetic or philosophical approach, although the 'ecotourist' is not required to be a professional scientist, artist or philosopher. The main point is that the person who practices ecotourism has the opportunity of immersing him or herself in nature in a way that most people cannot enjoy in their routine, urban existence. This person will eventually acquire a consciousness and knowledge of the natural environment, together with its cultural aspects, that will convert him into somebody keenly involved in conservation issues (Ceballos-Lascuráin, 1996)".*

In general, ecotourism should satisfy conservation and development objectives (Lindberg, Enriquez and Sproule, 1996).

## **Community-Based Ecotourism in Ghana**

The term “community-based ecotourism” is used to describe ecotourism ventures that are characterized by high environmental consideration, increased control and involvement of the local residents, as well as significant benefits for the host community (WWF-International, 2001). This concept is clearly distinguished from other ecotourism ventures that are largely or even totally planned and managed by outside operators and generate negligible benefits for local people (Akama, 1996 cited in Scheyvens, 1999).

Community-based ecotourism refers more specifically to tourism activities or enterprises that involve local communities; it operates in their lands, and is based on their cultural and natural assets and attractions (Nelson, 2004). Community-based ecotourism therefore is tourism which focuses on travel to areas with natural attractions (rather than, say, urban areas), and which contributes to environmental conservation and local livelihood enhancement. Ghana has emerged as a pioneer in the field of community-based ecotourism which aims to create a mutually beneficial three-way relationship between conservationist, the tourist and local communities. The southern part of the country has numerous community-based ecotourism destinations such as the Xavi Bird Watching Sanctuary in the Volta Region, Bobiri Butterfly Sanctuary in the Ashanti Region and Boabeng Fieema Monkey Sanctuary in the Brong Ahafo Region to mention a few. In the northern part of Ghana, community-based ecotourism sites range from Paga Crocodile Pond, Tongo Hills and Tengzug Shrines and the Sirigu Pottery and Art in the Upper East Region. Notable in the Upper West Region is the award winning Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary.

## **Participation in Community-Based Ecotourism**

Local community participation in all endeavours of ecotourism is not a new concept. The word participation implies how and to what extent people are able to share their views, take part in an activity, project, programme, decision-making, profit sharing and other issues related to the tourism development process. The most important reason for the inclusion of local inhabitants in ecotourism is equity, taking into consideration the conservation of the area through ecotourism development which inevitably entails restrictions in the traditional usage of local resources by the residents (Eagles et al., 1992 cited in Lindberg, 1998).

In fact, numerous studies indicate the importance of incorporating the perceptions, values and interest of the local people in the very region where the ecotourism resource/destination is found (Vincent and Thomson, 2002). The involvement of local people should be encouraged from the very beginning by promoting public dialogue and by enabling them to participate in the process of decision making and profit sharing (Diamantis, 2004). The main underlying concept for the development of community-based ecotourism is the empowerment of local people. This is only possible when ecotourism planning takes into consideration the views, the perceptions and preferences of the local inhabitants (WWF-International, 2001). Community participation in community-based ecotourism makes the project sustainable and attains the objective in its establishment.

When people do not receive sufficient benefits as a result of non-participation, they are prone to develop negative attitude towards ecotourism development. This might occur for example when indigenous people whose survival depends heavily upon the exploitation of the natural resource perceive tourism as a threat that deprives them of their livelihood by competing with others over land and resource (Ross and Wall, 1999). In such instances, community-based ecotourism is very likely to either fail completely or not succeed to the minimum possible degree thus, remaining far from the desired sustainability (McCool and Moisey, 2001).

## **Stakeholders in Community-Based Ecotourism**

Stakeholders are organizations, individuals and institutions directly or indirectly involved in development, operation and management of community-based ecotourism projects. The organizations include governmental agencies such as research institutions, non-governmental institutions, local people, traditional authorities and tourists. Stakeholders' interest in community-based ecotourism can affect the outcome of tourism development. In fact, tourism is complex and dynamic, with linkages and interdependencies and therefore requires multiple stakeholders with diverse and divergent views and values. Stakeholders assume collective responsibilities for the ongoing directions and success of any ecotourism establishment (Gray, 1989).

Community-based ecotourism should therefore involve collaborative effort of all the stakeholders to avoid creation of imbalances and uneven development of ecotourism sites.

The ecotourism industry is complex because of its nature and dynamics between its stakeholders (Lawrence et al., 1997). Each group brings to the industry its own set of interests, capabilities, strategies and traditions and if not well structured conflict may arise and at the end, the community-based ecotourism may not give the desired benefits to the stakeholders involved.

### **Benefits of Community-Based Ecotourism**

Community-based ecotourism helps improve standard of living for example through increased disposable income of individuals. Besides these, there is an underlying concept of development of community-based ecotourism which is empowerment of local people. In particular, the concept of empowerment of host communities can be divided into four different categories: Economic, psychological, social and political. In economic terms, ecotourism generates long-term benefits that are distributed equitably within the host communities and can be used for the constant improvement of the community's infrastructure. Moreover, ecotourism can contribute to the psychological empowerment of the local people by enhancing their sense of self-esteem and by cultivating pride for their cultural and natural heritage. This happens because ecotourism reveals to the public the value of host community in terms of natural beauty or cultural uniqueness. In addition, ecotourism may strengthen social bonds within the community by promoting cooperation among its members. Finally, ecotourism brings about political empowerment, since it creates a forum for the expression of peoples' voices concerning issues of local development (Scheyvens, 1999).

The concept of community-based ecotourism development appears to meet the majority of the targets established in the definition of sustainable tourism, since it constitutes a tool for both social empowerment and long-term economic development of the local communities (WWF-International, 2001). This is even more crucial for small, rural and remote communities that often suffer from the lack of governmental attention and assistance. Self-development through ecotourism is particularly important for these communities, since it gives people the opportunity to utilize their own internal strengths and resources in order to become more self-sufficient (Joppe, 1996).

Wearing and Neil (1999) stated that the more obvious reason to initiate an ecotourism project is to maximize the benefits of tourism, specifically: (a) additional revenue to the local business and other services, example, medicare, banking, car hire, cottage industries, souvenir shopping, tourism attractions; (b) increased market for local products, example, locally grown produce, artifacts, value added goods thereby sustaining traditional customs; (c) employment of local labour and expertise, example, ecotour guides, retail sales assistance, restaurant table waiting staff; (d) source of funding for the protection of and enhancement or maintenance of natural attractions and symbols of cultural heritage; and (e) heightened community awareness of the value of local indigenous culture and natural environment. Benefits to the local business area and its communities are the major reason for undertaking community-based ecotourism. It is also one of the outcomes desired by all stakeholders in community-based ecotourism.

### **Community-Based Ecotourism and Poverty Alleviation**

Poverty alleviation through tourism is defined as tourism that generates net benefits to the poor, not only economic benefits, but also creating positive socio-cultural and environmental benefits to the poor (Ashley, 2001). Many countries have adopted community-based ecotourism as a tool for poverty alleviation. In Asia, the Greater Mekong Sub-region comprising Cambodia, The Peoples Republic of China, Laos Peoples Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam have set up paradigm related poverty alleviation strategies which stated that community-based ecotourism should be a major source of securing the biodiversity in the sub-region and playing a major role in tackling the issue of poverty (WTO, 2005). There has been an employment creation on part-time basis as guides, drivers and home stay managers and service payment benefits which they used to fund community development projects such as agriculture, school projects, water among others. Africa's poverty is at the centre stage in contemporary development debates because the situation is bad and getting worse. In accordance with the Millennium Development Goals, the World Tourism Organization has placed tourism at the forefront of poverty reduction in Africa. Community-based ecotourism in particular has been advocated for within the academic literature as an important community economic development strategy due to the potential economic and social benefits that the sector can generate while also protecting the natural resource base (Mulindwa, 2007).

In Tanzania, community-based ecotourism has been embraced as a tool for poverty alleviation. A bulk of tourism investment is concentrated in a small number of globally community owned famous parks in the northern parts of the country such as Serengeti, Ngorongoro, Tarangire, Lake Manyara among others (Nelson, 2004). In Ghana community-based ecotourism has received much attention at the national level due to opportunities it has created for rural communities to earn income and has created tourism related jobs through the conservation of local ecosystem and culture. These gains have been consolidated as a show of significant impact on poverty alleviation (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2010).

### **Challenges to Community-Based Ecotourism**

In terms of community-based ecotourism management, there are some issues of concern such as carrying capacity and the problem of benefit flow to local people at ecotourism sites (Bhoj and Jan, 2007). By definition, ecotourism prefers a small number of tourists but in many cases, control and monitoring of the carrying capacities of target areas is often difficult. The impact of tourism on the environment includes depletion of natural resources, pollution, soil erosion, natural habitat loss, increased pressure on endangered species and heightened vulnerability to forest fires (Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, 2011). Negative impacts from tourism occur when the level of visitor use is greater than the environment's ability to cope with this use within the acceptable limits of change. There are arguments about the influx of tourists, economic benefits from tourism and infrastructure development which suggest that if these are not managed properly, they may turn ecotourism into mainstream mass tourism. Currently, there are negative impacts in some instances but these could increase in the long-term and as noted by Autthapon & Suthida (2010), all stakeholders including local people have had very little experiences in managing ecotourism and its varying objectives. Several critical factors according to them have been noted as constraints for the progress of poverty alleviation through community-based ecotourism: (a) limited access of the poor to the tourism market; (b) lack of commercial viability for their product in terms of value and price; (c) weak marketing capability; (d) lack of intergovernmental suitable policy framework and (e) inadequate knowledge about tourism and service skill, managing and implementing at local level.

### **Methodology**

#### **The Study Area**

Sirigu in the Upper East Region of Ghana is located close to the border with Burkina Faso and about 17 kilometers leftwards off the main Bolgataga-Navrongo road. It is in Kasena Nankana West District with administrative capital at Paga. It is east of the town of Navrongo. Sirigu shares boundary with four sister villages namely: Natunniato the north, Zoko to the South, Yua to the east and Mirigu to the west. Its administrative boundaries are Basengo, Dalongo, Gunwado and Puwelingo. (Kasena-Nankana West District Profile, Population and Housing Census, 2000). Sirigu is popular throughout Ghanaian history for its pottery, basket weaving and unique symbolic wall decorations. Sirigu has a population of four thousand two hundred and thirty one (4,231) people. Females constitute the majority numbering 2,182 and the males 2,049 (Population and Housing Census, 2000). The fertility of the land is poor due to overuse over the years pushing people into pottery and basket weaving. Subsistence farming is practiced during the raining season.

#### **Data Collection**

Data collection was from November 2011 to April 2012. Data was gathered using tools such as interviews, questionnaire administration while secondary data was obtained from the Ghana Tourism Authority regional office in Bolgatanga.

#### **Tools of Data Collection**

Semi-structured questionnaires were used to seek information from respondents in the community especially those engaged in pottery, basket weaving and making of other artifacts. Leaders of Sirigu Women Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA), tour guides, Sirigu community-based ecotourism Management Team, workers of the Tourist Information Office and Ghana Tourism Authority office at Bolgatanga were the target. Information sought after included the revenue generation levels of local residents and the facility, while visitor numbers and revenue per visitor was sourced from the Ghana Tourism Authority (Bolgatanga). Interviews were scheduled to find out the level of community participation and the impacts of the ecotourism site on the community.

## Sampling

A sample size of 440 respondents was obtained from the community making use of both purposive and simple random sampling techniques. The 440 respondents arrived at is clearly more than 10% of the population of Sirigu (4,231) which is seen as representative for research work. Those into the tourism development effort such as tour guides, opinion leaders, members of the Sirigu Women Organisation of Pottery and Arts (SWOPA), officials of the tourism information office, the regional office of the Ghana Tourism Authority and the tourism management committee were purposively selected because they hold key information while the simple random method was employed to select 320 household heads to also take part in the study (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Number/groups of respondents contacted**

Respondent groups	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Tour guides	8	1.8
Opinion leaders	22	5.0
Members of SWOPA	68	16.0
Tourism Management Team	12	2.7
Employees of Tourism Information Office	6	1.3
Officials of Ghana Tourism Authority Office (Bolgatanga)	4	0.9
Household heads	320	72.3
Total	440	100.0

Source: Field survey, 2012

Out of the 440 respondents contacted, 40% constituted female while 60% were male. This high purposive involvement of women was because of the engagement of the Sirigu Women Organization in Pottery and Art (SWOPA) members and also due to the fact that most household heads (men) asked their spouses to respond because they perceived the tourism project in the community to be largely controlled by women and as such felt most women could give relevant information on their behalf. Majority of respondents (63%) have had some level of education comprising 4% primary level education, 45% Junior High School level leavers and 14% Senior High School leavers. However, about 37% of them had no formal education but were all actively involved.

## Results and Discussions

Many of the workers in the Sirigu Community Pottery and Arts Project (aside from those in the Tourism Information Office) are self employed earning income based on their own resourcefulness, on guest inflow and the kinds of activity of interest engaged by the guest.

### Main Ecotourism Related Income Generation Activities in Sirigu.

Data analyzed from respondents on the main tourism related income generation activities in Sirigu indicated that pottery, basketry, wall designing (see plates 2, 3, 5 and 6), village tour (traditional homes, chief palace, sacred grove and local market), overnight stay in local styled-guest house (see plate 1), do-it-yourself sessions (involving the guests taking up art learning sessions at a fee-sometimes referred to as interactive craft workshops) including artifacts and souvenir shopping are the main tourism related income generating activities in Sirigu. These activities serve as sources of livelihood enhancement opportunities and is in consonance with Ashley *et al.* (2001) who opined that ecotourism activities should generate income to the host community and also further confirms the statement by Ghana Tourism Authority (1996), that income from ecotourism activities serve as a means of poverty alleviation in rural areas in Ghana. Figure 1 depicts these ecotourism related income generation activities in Sirigu community with the highest income generating activity being pottery (18%).

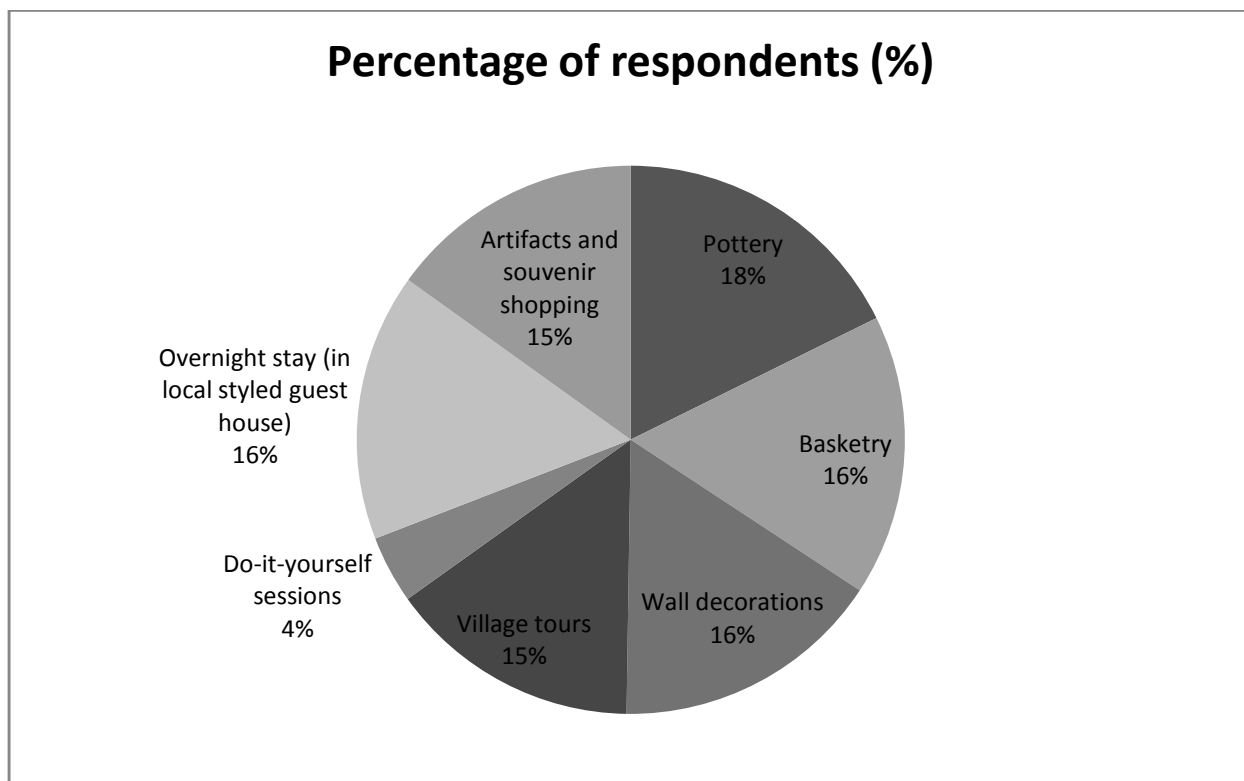


Figure1: Main ecotourism income generation activities in Sirigu

Source: Field survey, 2012

These ecotourism activities offer visitors an exciting package at the destination and each of these activities attract a fee when pursued by the guest. Table 2 shows the various activities per fees charged.

**Table 2: Ecotourism related income generating activities in Sirigu per fees charged**

Activity	Visitor category	Price (Ghc)	
Village tours (chief palace, local homes, local market, sacred grove)	Ghanaian	3.00	
	Non-Ghanaian	4.00	
	Student (Ghanaian)	1.50	
Wall design/canvas painting	Ghanaian	5.00	
	Non-Ghanaian	6.00	
	Student (Ghanaian)	3.00	
Overnight stay in local styled-guest house.	Ghanaian	25.00	
	Non-Ghanaian	25.00	
	Student (Ghanaian)	25.00	
Pots and baskets	Ghanaian Non-Ghanaian	Prices ranges from 6.00-15.00 depending on their sizes	
Do-it –yourself sessions (interactive craft workshops)	Ghanaian	5.00	
	Non-Ghanaian	6.00	
	Student (Ghanaian)	3.00	
Artifacts and souvenir shopping	Ghanaians Non-Ghanaians Student (Ghanaian)	Prices ranges from 3.00-15.00 depending on the item picked	
Pick-up tour	All visitors	One way	Return
	Paga, Bolga, Navrongo, Bongo	25.00	35.00
	Tongo	40.00	50.00
	Widnaba	80.00	100.00

Source: SWOPA Information Centre, 2012.

### Community Participation

Results indicate that the natives were actively involved in tourism activities in the community including the decision making process and management from the inception of the project in 2002. The community comes together in the form of durbars to discuss issues pertaining to tourism and (92%) of respondents attested to this fact. The involvement of the local people agrees with the assertion made by Diamantis(2004), that community-based ecotourism should involve the local residents from the beginning by promoting public dialogue, decision making process as well as profit sharing. As a way of involving the community, all fourteen (14) permanent employees at the site are natives of Sirigu and this has created employment for the local people which agrees with Wearing and Neil(1999) that ecotourism creates employment for local people (reflected in ecotour guides, sales assistants, caretakers at local lodge, cooks and drivers). The rate of women participation is very high (about 90%) and this has led to the establishment of Sirigu Women Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA). Thus, the people welcome ideas on improving any tourism activity in the community for they see it as an opportunity for livelihood enhancement.

### Benefits Derived by Community

Analysis has revealed that the community has received some benefits since the establishment of the community-based ecotourism project in Sirigu. Respondents (100%) contend that the community has benefited from a total of ten (10) toilet facilities and five (5) boreholes from project proceeds while a community library and a school block were both also donated by tourists. The community's share of proceeds from the site (variable percentage based on revenue obtained) is used for these community developments. In addition, a micro credit scheme has been established and is open to members of SWOPA from which they obtain 'soft loans' for establishment of local retail businesses. Again there is always some level of capital injection into the local economy of Sirigu as visitors spend some money on indigenous food and souvenir shopping. These benefits received are in consonance with the assertion made by Ghana Tourist Authority (2010), that the gains in community-based ecotourism have been consolidated as a show of significant impact on poverty alleviation. Table 3 shows benefits derived from the ecotourism project in the community.

**Table 3: Benefits derived from ecotourism**

Benefits	Absolute number of respondents	Percentage of respondents (%)
Bole hole in the community	698	28.9
Toilets (KVIP)	652	27.0
Income from souvenir trade	422	17.0
School block donated by tourists	242	10.0
Access to micro credit	211	9.0
Library donated by tourists	194	8.0
Total	2419	99.9

\*These results are from multiple responses.

Source: Field survey, 2012.

The Sirigu Pottery and Art Project right from its establishment continue to achieve its visitor day's goal performance. Information from management indicates that the average daily arrival is between 21-30 guests. The peak arrival periods were 2007 and 2008 with slight decline from 2009 to 2011. The decline in arrivals was due to the withdrawal of support from funding agencies like SNV-Netherlands Development Organization and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). However, records from SWOPA Information Centre indicates that international arrivals outweighed the domestic arrivals since the inception of the project in 2003 as indicated in table 4 while Figure 2 also gives a trend in the revenue pattern.



**Table 4: Arrivals and Receipts at Sirigu Pottery and ArtProject Site**

YEAR	DOMESTIC ARRIVALS	INTERNATIONAL ARRIVALS	REVENUE (GHc)
2003	223	711	4,619.00
2004	476	745	5,821.00
2006	642	1092	12,221.50
2007	996	1205	15,385.10
2008	1213	1228	18,554.80
2009	742	1094	18,645.30
2010	777	1063	21,500.00
2011	704	943	22,346.20
TOTAL	5773	8081	160,492.90

Source: SWOPA Information Centre, 2012.

\*Despite drop in arrivals after 2008, revenue is still high because fees were raised.

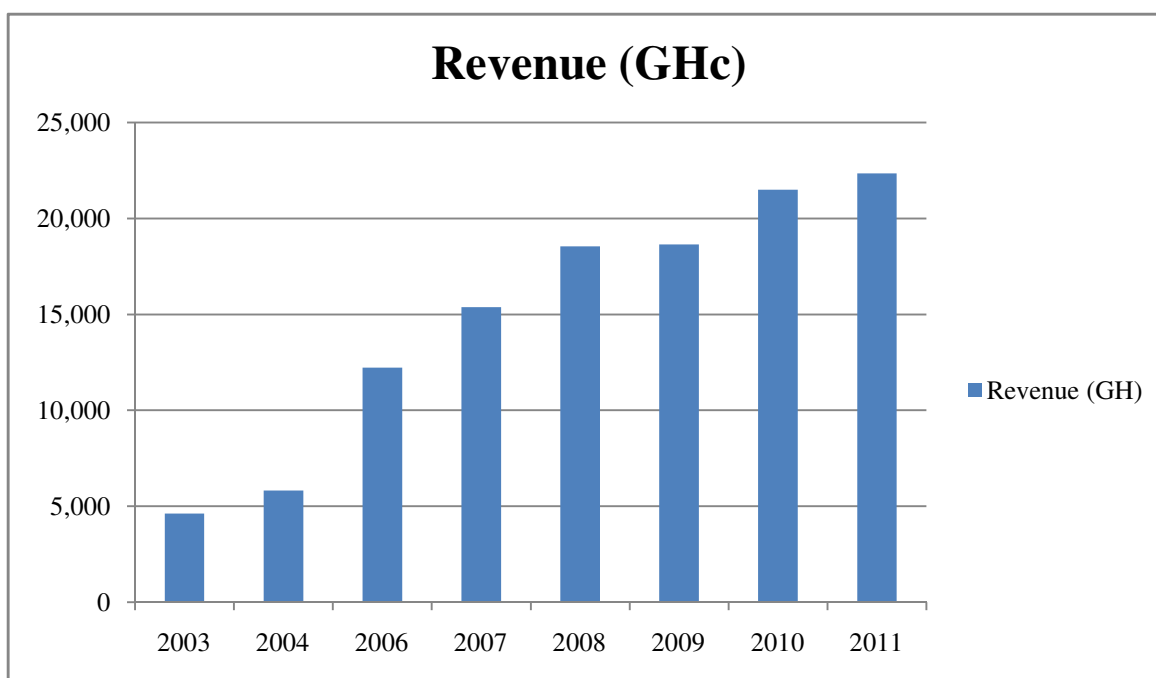


Figure 2: Bar graph showing receipt trends at the destination (Sirigu)

Source: Field survey, 2012

**Key Stakeholders and their Roles**

An interview with officials of Sirigu Pottery and Art Project revealed that the community is represented by the chief, elders and the assemblyman forming part of the stakeholders. The community takes part in the decision making process especially with issues pertaining to tourism and making sure that any proposed tourism developments taking place is in cognizance with local beliefs, culture and needs.

Ghana Tourism Authority is also one of the stakeholders identified. They help in the improvement of marketing of tourism products and creation of tourism awareness sessions tailored for target groups in the community. The authority also organizes training for the management and employees of the destination concerning ecotourism management.

There are NGOs that are also key stakeholders. Nature Conservation Research Centre, SNV Netherlands Development Organization, United States Peace Corps-Ghana, Friends of Sirigu, Felix Foundation and USAID support the destination with funds and training of personnel at the site. Visitors arriving are also stakeholders. Their ideas, suggestions and support are incorporated into the tourism planning process

### **Challenges to the Sirigu Pottery and Art Project**

The Sirigu Pottery and Art Project like any other community-based ecotourism site face a number of constraints. There have been inadequate funds from funding agencies and the government. This has resulted in inadequate facilities at the site. Fluctuating visitor inflow, language barrier between the tour guides and tourists (non-English guests), poor commercial viability of products in terms of value and price and the poor nature of the road to Sirigu are some of the challenges the destination is faced with.

However, the management of the project is making frantic efforts at addressing these challenges. Local artists are being trained to make transition from painting on big walls to painting on small canvas; from the use of loam and stones to the use of brush, paint and canvas. The use of colours, the style, composition and themes based on the ancient tradition are being intensified to preserve the authenticity of their art products. This will help add value to the products in terms of market price. Again efforts are being made to ensure good market for their products via posters, brochures and the use of internet facilities to source assistance from funding agencies.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The tourism sector is a major contributor to socio-economic development and can be used as a tool to reduce poverty at the national, regional and rural areas in Ghana. The evolution of community-based ecotourism in Ghana has triggered enormous interest among people and has set a stage for ecotourism development as well. It has received much attention at the national level due to the positive results it has delivered in terms of visitor numbers and revenue generation. Sirigu community-based ecotourism project has gained a considerable dint of success and also presented challenges for other community-based ecotourism destinations as it has a moderately strong infrastructural base and diversified tourism related income generating activities that are offered as a package to visitors from which revenue is derived to enhance the livelihood of the community members.

This study has generally brought to the fore the fact that community-based ecotourism can be used as a strategic tool for poverty alleviation as in the case of Sirigu in the KasenaNankana West District in the Upper East Region. The enhancement of livelihood through tourism related income generating activities at this destination has been made possible because the management and capacity building at Sirigu community-based ecotourism project is done in conjunction with the local community which is indeed a true reflection of the meaning of community-based ecotourism: that is, ecotourism venture of which there is increased control and involvements of local residents as well as significant benefits for the host community' (WWF-International, 2001), and with this strategic management, the destination is now patronized by quite a lot of Ghanaians (about 42%) and non-Ghanaians (58%). Thus, the community continues to further exploit markets for pottery, basketry and paintings; its prime revenue base and other activities related to tourism in the community.

### **Recommendations**

The study recommended that:

1. The management should develop a town plan or map to further strengthen its ecotour offerings which include home and village tours (visit to the chief's palace, traditional homes and sacred grove) and pick-up tours should be expanded.
2. An eco-museum should be established in the community to help preserve some old artistic works that people have done. This can give mythological insight into the values and ancient traditions of the community and further enhance the ability of future generations to learn the former ways of life of their ancestors.
3. The destination should establish linkages with other sister destinations such as Paga Crocodile Pond, Widnaba and Tongo Hills including Tengzug Shrines and other private tourism companies so that their ideas can also be incorporated in the ecotourism development process.
4. An awareness campaign should be intensified to target Ghanaians to help stimulate domestic tourism. This will increase domestic arrivals at the destination leading to increase in revenue in the community.

## References

- Ashley, C. (2001). Pro-poor tourism strategies, expanding opportunities for the poor, London: Overseas Development Institute
- Ashley, C., D. Roe, & Goodwin, H. (2001). *Pro-Poor Tourism Strategies: Making Tourism Work for the Poor. A review of experience*. Pro-Poor Tourism Report No. 1. ODI, IIED, and Centre for Responsible Tourism, London.
- Autthapon, S. & Suthida, J. (2010). Poverty alleviation through Community based ecotourism in the trans-boundary protected areas: the emerald triangle perspective, *South Asian Journal of Tourism and Heritage*, vol.3.No. 2
- Belsky, J. (1999). Misrepresenting communities: The politics of community-based rural ecotourism in gales point manatee, Belize. *Rural Sociology*, 64 (4), 641-666.
- Bhoj, R.K., & Jan, T.B. (2007). Policy brief-Community-based ecotourism for sustainable development in the Mekong Region. Retrieved June 16, 2012 from website <http://cuts-international.org>
- Blangy, S., & Nielson, T. (1993). Ecotourism and minimum impact policy. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 20 (2): 257-360.
- Ceballos-Lascurain, H. (1996). Tourism, ecotourism and protected areas. Gland: IUCN - The World Conservation Union.
- Dawson, C. P. (2001). Ecotourism and Nature-based Tourism: One End of the Tourism Opportunity Spectrum? In S. F. McCool and R. N. Moisey (Eds.), *Tourism, Recreation and Sustainability – Linking Culture and the Environment*. Oxon and New York.
- Diamantis, D. (2004). Ecotourism Management: An Overview. In D. Diamantis (Ed.), *Ecotourism–Management and Assessment* (pp. 3-26). London.
- Eagles, P. F. J. (2002). Book review: A trip too far: ecotourism, politics and exploitation. In Rosaleen, D. (Ed.), *Environmental impact assessment review*, 22(6): 728-730.
- Fennell, D. (1998). *Ecotourism*, Oxon: Routledge
- Gray, J. (2002). Book review: Tourism in Southeast Asia. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 29 (4): 1179-1181.
- Ghana Tourism Authority, (1996). *CBEP- Promoting tourism, conserving nature, alleviating poverty*. Accra: GTA
- Ghana Tourism Authority, (2010). *Community-based ecotourism and poverty alleviation, final report*, 1-19, 40-43. Accra: GTA
- Ghana Statistical Service, (2000). *Population and Housing Census*, Accra: GSS.
- Higgins, B. R. (1996). The global structure of the nature tourism industry: Ecotourists, tour operators, and local businesses. *Journal of Travel Research*, 35(2): 11-18.
- Hvenegaard, G. T. (1994). Ecotourism: A status report and conceptual framework. *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 5(2): 24-35.
- Joppe, M. (1996). Sustainable community tourism development revisited, *Tourism Management*, 17(7): 475-479.
- Khan, M. M. (1997). Tourism development and dependency theory: mass tourism vs ecotourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24(4): 988-991.
- Kiss, A. (2004). Is community-based ecotourism a good use of biodiversity conservation funds? *Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, 19 (5): 232-237.
- Lawrence, T. B., Wickins, D., & Phillips, N. (1997). Managing legitimacy in Ecotourism, *Tourism Management*, 18(5): 307-316.
- Lindberg, K., Enriquez, J., & Sproule, K. W. (1996). Ecotourism questioned: case studies from Belize. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 23 (3): 543-562.
- Mbaiwa, J.E. (2003). The socio-economic and environmental impacts of tourism development on the Okavango Delta, northwestern Botswana, *Journal of arid environments*, 54: 447-467
- McCool, S. F. & Moisey, R. N. (2001). Introduction: Pathways and Pitfalls in the Search for Sustainable Tourism. In S. F. McCool and R. N. Moisey (Eds.), *Tourism, Recreation and Sustainability – Linking Culture and the Environment* (pp. 1-15)
- Mulindwa, D. (2007). Rethinking community participation in ecotourism management: The case of Kafred in Bigodi-Uganda. Retrieved, May 16, 2012 from website <http://sunderland.academic.edu/DirisaMulindwa/papers/692948>
- Nelson, J. (2004). The evolution and impacts of community based ecotourism in northern Tanzania. Issue paper no.131, Retrieved June 15, 2012 from website <http://www.sandcounty.net>
- Nelson, J. G. (1994). The spread of ecotourism: Some planning implications. *Environmental Conservation*, 21(3): 248-255.
- Orams, M. B. (2000). Towards a more desirable form of ecotourism. In C. Ryan & S. Page (Eds.), *Tourism Management - Towards the New Millennium* (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Oxford: Pergamum-Elsevier Science.
- Ross, S., & Wall, G. (1999). Ecotourism: towards congruence between theory and practice. *Tourism Management*, 20(1): 123-132.
- Scheyvens, R. (1999). Ecotourism and the empowerment of local communities, *Tourism Management*, 20(2): 245-249.
- Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority (2011). *Tourism and the environment*. Retrieved June 16, 2012 from website [http://www.sltda.gov.lk/tourism\\_and\\_the\\_environment](http://www.sltda.gov.lk/tourism_and_the_environment)
- The International Ecotourism Society (2012). *Ecotourism development*; Retrieved, 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 from website <http://www.ecotourism.org>
- UNWTO, (2001). *Compendium of Tourism Statistics*; Madrid: Spain, UNWTO.

UNWTO, (2002). Tourism and Poverty Alleviation, Madrid:Spain, UNWTO.  
Vincent, V. & Thompson, W. (2002). Assessing community support and sustainability for ecotourism development, *Journal of Travel Research*, 41(2): 153-160  
Wearing, S. & Neil, J. (1999). Ecotourism: Impact, potentials and possibilities. Woburn: Butterworth-Heinemann.  
WWF-International (2001). Guidelines for Community-based Ecotourism Development, Retrieved May 5, 2012 from website <http://www.zeitzfoundation.org/userfile/guidelinesforcommunitybasedecotourismdevelopment.pdff>



Plate 1: A local-styled guest house

Plate 2: SWOPA visitor centre



Plate 3: Baskets for Souvenir trade

Plate 4: Designed pots for the souvenir trade



Plate 5: Summer hut for meetings



Plate 6: A female artist at work in Sirigu