



SIRIGU WOMEN'S ORGANISATION FOR POTTERY & ART



(SWOPA)

Telephone: 0205880712/0243012967

POST OFFICE BOX 550
BOLGA (UE/R) – GHANA

Siriguart@yahoo.co

BOFAM APPLICATION FOR SUPPORT OF SWOPA:

A BRIEF PROFILE OF SWOPA

SWOPA was established by Mama Melanie Kasise a retired educationist on 25th April, 1997 as a means of empowering the women of Sirigu to revive the dying traditional artworks, to serve as an eco-tourism site and to enhance their incomes. The Association was registered with the Registrar General's department on 16th October, 1997 with registration number G2552.

Since its establishment, the Centre has received numerous Regional and National and International awards in the tourism sector and have hosted many prominent people such as the former UN Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan and his wife, the late vice president Aliu Mahama and Ambassadors from many countries among others.

Sirigu is well known for its traditional architecture, pottery and wall designing. About 350 women make up the Sirigu Women Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA) originally registered in the name of Sirigu Women Potters Association. The name was changed to Sirigu Women's Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA), because of the inclusion of other arts such as Canvas painting, wall designing, basketry and mat weaving

Sirigu is predominantly a farming community but due to the climate change, there has been low yields in recent years. Many of the youth

have thus migrated to southern Ghana in search of greener pastures which in most cases is unavailable.

This makes the feminine local industries already mentioned above the main sources of income for many families.

In the past the women used to sell their wares individually, and as a result did not really get the worth of such economic ventures. They could not get good prices for their wares and this was what prompted Mama Melanie to work for the start of the Centre so as to give the women a group bargaining power in selling their wares locally, nationally and internationally.

Vision

SWOPA's vision is to be a community based service provider for empowering women and their families in Sirigu. SWOPA provides a unique opportunity for women solidarity, improvement of skills and production of quality pottery and the other arts for our cultural identity. SWOPA also works for the improvement of marketing and income situation in the community.

Mission

The mission of SWOPA is to provide services to the community, to improve the social and educational position of women and the Girl child, to strengthen the traditional and cultural expressions and promote community-based products for the local, national and foreign markets towards poverty reduction.

SWOPA as women centered Non-Governmental Organization seeks to promote the livelihood, food security and welfare needs of the rural women of Sirigu and its environs.

In the early 2002, SWOPA included the painting of canvas because tourists admired the wall designs on the homes and so they encouraged us to put a replica of the wall paintings on canvases.

Over the years, SWOPA has brought together many young ladies to learn and practice the Sirigu arts of pottery, basketry, wall designing, canvas painting and batik tie and dye.

As a result of the numerous benefits enjoyed by members, many other women have joined SWOPA making the numerical strength rise to over three hundred. This challenges the management of SWOPA to develop strategies towards empowering present and future generation of our community economically towards poverty reduction.

Current activities are as follows:

- Older women transferring the local art to younger ones
- Training of women in Quality production of the various arts
- Securing marketing avenues for their products
- Group dynamics
- Reviving wall designs in Sirigu for its perpetuation and tourism
- Advocacy for community development (Electricity extension, Dam rehabilitation and encouragement of child education)

Achievements

- Trained about 200 women in pottery, canvas painting and baskets weaving
- SWOPA's quality products now meet national and international market standards
- SWOPA has sales outlets in the national capital Accra
- Ability of members to cost their own products through empowerment sessions in basic costing and record keeping training.
- A reasonable rise in the income levels of some members leading to an improved standard of living

- A forum for sharing ideas and skills created
- Have be able to get light to SWOPA and its environs through advocacy

CHALLENGES

- We need to expand our production to engage more youth in the various arts
- We need more sales outlets within and outside the country to help increase sales
- Funding- Due to Donor-Fatigue in funding, there is the urgent need for us to raise internal funds to enable continuous training.
- Durability of wall designs (Technology); Because the local materials easily fade, we have resorted to using acrylic and oil paints for more lasting results on walls which is questioned by tourists.
- Lack of good road network to the village is affecting our sales as most of our pottery gets broken during transportation. It is also a deterrent to tourists.
- Ebola has had a long standing effect on the number of tourists we receive within the last few years.

WAY FORWARD

- To solicit funds for the training of our youth in the affore mentioned vocational arts of Wall designing, pottery, basketry, canvas paintings etc. for sustainability.
- Keeping our focus on quality production to meet world market standards.
- Exploring ways of partnering with the traditional authorities to institute a traditional festival of arts Day.
- To continue to advocate for a dam to support our work, tree growing and to engage our youth in dry season gardening.

