

Tourism as a Pathway to Rural Livelihood Diversification: A Study of Mognori Ecovillage in the Savannah Region of Ghana

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ABSTRACT

As a means of mitigating the effects of restrictions arising from the creation of the Mole National Park, a tourism intervention was introduced in Mognori, a village on one of the fringes of the famed park. This study assesses the Mognori Ecovillage Project especially in terms of its anticipated role in diversifying livelihoods. Qualitative research approaches were employed. Instruments such as In-depth Interview schedules were used to elicit information from household heads while focus group discussions (FGD) were used to elicit data from homestay operators and cultural dance troupes. Tourism was found to play an important diversification role in the sense that it provided both full-time and alternative means of income for some residents especially in the dry season. Tourism has become the “life wire” of some locales and the community needs to take steps to attract more tourists and provide a richer but engaging itinerary through improving cultural tourism resources such as the introduction of products like farm tourism and angling in the Mognori River. It is recommended that the homestay providers be trained in visitor reception skills including basic communication in English language to enhance the experience of visitors.

Keywords: Mognori Ecovillage, homestay, livelihood diversification, stipends, canoe safari

INTRODUCTION

The concept, ecovillages, has become popular in the world for some time and such projects are presented as models for a sustainable culture (Strasser, 2013). According

to the Global Ecovillages Network [GEN] (2019), ecovillages are an intentional or traditional community using local participatory processes to holistically integrate ecological, economic, social and cultural dimensions of sustainability in order to regenerate social and natural environments. Notable examples of famous ecovillages around the world include: Irang Ecovillage (South Korea), Ecoforest (Southern Spain), Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage (America) and Bosque Village (Mexico).

In Africa, a promising example of an ecovillage model is the Tlholego Ecovillage and Learning Centre in Rustenburg, South Africa, which was established in 1990 as a rural development project. The work carried out at the Tlholego Ecovillage has been shaped primarily on attempts at bridging long years of historic inequalities, paving economic development and improving livelihoods fostered by the organisation of training workshops for locales in agriculture, especially in permaculture. The facility equally benefits from receipts from over 3000 tourists visiting and staying in the ecovillage annually (Rucour Sustainability Foundation, 2019).

Another popular example of a model ecovillage concept is revealed by the Permaculture Research Institute (2016), known as the Badilisha Ecovillage (Badilisha means, change, in Swahili) in Rusinga Island (Kenya). This project was basically aimed at bringing change to the lives of people living in the island. The locales who had previously faced problems of food insecurity later sought to promote permaculture techniques aimed at enhancing food production. One of the success stories of this ecovillage is that voluntourism (travelling as tourists purposely to render services within one's area of expertise, such as health, education, agricultural extension services, engineering) thrives quite well and is supported by the local people because it generates income which supports the local economy. An important aspect noted in the project is "mutualistic interaction" where the host families learn from the traveller while the traveller tends to likewise learn from the host. Herein, voluntourists get the opportunity to visit rich flora and fauna of the Lake Victoria area aside from accessing other prehistorical sites, like the birds island and peace museum (Permaculture Research Institute, 2016).

In Ghana, the concept is equally not alien. Notable ecovillages include the Xofa Ecovillage Project in Volta Region which served as a unique hideout for vacationers seeking an experience of typical Ewe home touch and is situated between the shores of Lake Volta and the Akuapim-Togo Ranges. However, unfortunate notifications by Bradt Ghana Travel News, reveals that strong tidal waves from the sea, have led to the closure of the facility (Owe, 2012). The Unity Ecovillage at Kobina Ansa, a village about 8kms in the outskirts of Cape Coast is worth mentioning (Unity

Ecovillage, 2014) whilst plans are far advanced to establish the Synergy Ecovillage within the Kwahu environs of Eastern Region (see the Synergy Centre, 2014).

This study centres on the Mognori Ecovillage in the West Gonja Municipality of the Savannah Region, which is about 12kms southwest of the Mole National Park's (MNP) administration. The main attractions in the community include a river safari running from the village through the park, which is of interest to birdwatchers (aviturismo) as well as those interested in viewing the picturesque forest gallery. Other attractions in the community include homestay opportunities and village tours (Briggs, 2014). Ecovillages are encouraged to chart their own development paths, working with the advantages and challenges that each geographical and social situation presents. Many ecovillages have an added advantage of serving as a diversifier of sources of livelihood for local people and one of such diversification modes is resorting to tourism development and keen interest is taken to ensure that tourism activities therein are less injurious to the very environment they depend on for survival (Troy, 2015).

The encouragement for using tourism as a rural livelihood diversification strategy has been a common policy both in developed countries (Cànoves, Villarino, Priestley & Blanco, 2004; Long & Lane, 2000; MacDonald & Jolliffe, 2003; OECD, 1994) and in developing ones (Kinsley, 2000). The benefits of such policies are not far-fetched. For instance, it has been espoused in the literature that, the rural nature of Romania has occasioned the use of that country's countryside by rural dwellers for more robust economic activities whereby some families have embraced the use of tourism as an economic diversification strategy. Oftentimes, cited benefits of such policies include the increment in social contacts, especially in breaking down the isolation of the most remote areas and social groups (Iorio & Corsale, 2010).

Tourism has long been considered a potential means for socio-economic development and regeneration of rural areas through livelihood diversification and mention in particular is made of those affected by the decline of traditional agrarian activities (Iorio & Corsale, 2010). Khieri and Nasihatkon (2016) proffered a view that tourism particularly in rural areas if properly planned can be used for the development of sustainable livelihoods which will see an improvement in the quality of people's lives through creation of job opportunities and this can eventually impact on poverty reduction in the destination area. Thus, by definition: Livelihood diversification is, an attempt by individuals and households to find new ways to raise incomes and reduce risks (economic, environmental and social). These differ sharply by degree of choice (either to diversify or not) and equally further

incorporate activities both on and off the farm that are undertaken to generate additional income (Ajayi, Sanusi, Muhammed & Tsado, 2017).

Notwithstanding all these “goodies” touted about the use of tourism as a livelihood diversifier, studies however show that the introduction of tourism as a livelihood diversification strategy in some communities comes with problems. A case in point is the Merek-Sakteng in Bhutan where in an attempt to ease conflicts arising from the Brokpa people’s overdependence on cattle herding related livelihoods, which heightened conflicts over grazing lands. The opening of that community to tourism as a diversification strategy ended up compounding the problem on grazing lands and this was so, because money earned from tourism related businesses was used to buy more cattle which further intensified the dispute (Suntikul & Dorji, 2016). Oftentimes, rural communities have an array of attractions to offer such as customs, scenery and landscape. Other attractions are leisure, sightseeing, learning and experience including camping at campsites, lodges or homestay facilities, safari drives, visiting craft markets, witnessing cultural displays, walking trails, boating along a river, adventure sports, musical events and heritage sites. All these have been noted to enable rural tourism destinations offer diversified products to their clientele (Dequan, 2006 as cited in Essay UK, 2016).

With all these opportunities that rural areas are often endowed with and those that are brought in, in the form of projects to enable rural destinations take advantage of, one wonders if the Mognori Ecovillage has what it takes to use their own resources (natural, cultural and social) for the purposes of livelihood diversification through tourism. Moreso, coming from the backdrop of the fact that, it is a project aimed at compensating the ecovillagers for the loss of livelihoods due to the gazetting of the park in 1971. The local people had actually depended on this facility spanning several decades for their sustenance until their right to use it was taken away from them. The main aim of this study therefore was to assess the Mognori Ecovillage tourism project instituted in 2007 by exploring the forms of diversification brought in its wake in the advent of tourism’s introduction in the community and its impact on lives of the local people. The study similarly explores insights on tourism’s efficacy as a rural livelihood diversifier and how a richer but pleasurable experience for the visitor in the community can be attained.

Conceptual Framework

The study adapted the sustainable livelihood framework (SL-framework) developed by DFID (1999) to serve as a guide. A modified version of the framework, which

contains six components unlike the original has been brought onboard. Two components, namely background characteristics and livelihood activities are new to the framework and peculiar to the tourism field, hence the basis for the adaption. Others that were maintained are livelihood assets, livelihood outcomes, vulnerability context, including policies, institutions and processes components of the framework (see Figure 1). In addition, the socio-cultural capital in the assets pentagon has been split into two separate capitals (Social and Cultural) whilst an additional capital too possessed by communities, which is the "political capital" has equally been incorporated to the list of capitals. There is a cliché that every geographical area has background characteristics: social, cultural, economic or environmental factors. This gives rise to a peoples' livelihood assets in a community (as noted in the asset pentagon) grouped as physical, financial, natural, human, social, cultural and political capitals, which are often possessed by rural people (Carney, 1998; Ellis, 2000; Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002). The level of assets "in stock" determines the degree (diversity) to which people can improve their well-being either directly or indirectly and thus a justification for the adoption of this framework (Rakodi & Lloyd-Jones, 2002).

Bebbington (1999) argues that a person's assets, such as land are not merely means with which he makes a living. Oftentimes it gives meaning to that person's world. Assets are not simply resources that people use in building livelihoods, they are "tools" that give them capability to be and to act. Assets should not be understood only as things that allow survival, adaptation and poverty reduction. They are the basis of agents' power to act and to reproduce, challenge or change the rules that govern the control, use and transformation of resources. In the case of the study community (Mognori Ecovillage), they possess natural capital (wildlife, landscape, rivers), social capital (friends, family) cultural capital (music, dance, folklore, art and craft, ethnic festivals). Indeed, differences in culture is the main reason accounting for why many travel internationally (Ghosh, 2000). Physical capital (access roads and bridges including markets) and political capital (access to power and power brokers, ability to influence, access to tribal/state government officials) as posited similarly by Lister (2004). Financial capital includes access to financial assistance from credit unions, "susu" groups, banks and other financial institutions. Indeed, Ellis (2000) has indicated that financial capitals jurisdiction within local communities with tourist attractions is sometimes made wider to include monetary resources accrued from fees in addition to those that are obtained through charitable giving and grants. An amalgam of all these assets therefore gives the needed impetus for a rural community's engagement in tourism.

Changing livelihood patterns brought in by a change in climatic patterns, that is, a long dry season including relentless heat coupled with sporadic rains and to some extremes “flash droughts” have had serious repercussions on agricultural productivity (LeVaux, 2017). Others include, seasonality of the agricultural production, overused farmlands in rural Africa (Ellis, 2000) and the fall army worm menace tended to make many a rural household highly vulnerable in agricultural productivity in recent times. In recent times there is decreased relative importance attached to farming with rural folks preferring to go in for other forms of trade (Katera, 2016). These ‘mishaps’ discussed above are classified under shocks in the framework. However, within the public and private domains (policies, institutions and processes), the Ghana Wildlife Division, the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), including Student and Youth Travel Organisations (SYTO) have brought in an intervention (tourism) to serve as an alternative source of livelihood. According to Zhao and Ritchie (2007), in Anti-Poverty Tourism (APT) development, civil society groups can play a positive role in a variety of ways, for example, they seek development funds, campaign for business ethics, amplify the voices of the poor at the policy level and provide free training and guidance. The resultant effect is the potential of tourism enabling the attainment of better livelihood outcomes of more income, improved food security, reduced vulnerability and more sustainable use of natural resources (see Figure 1).

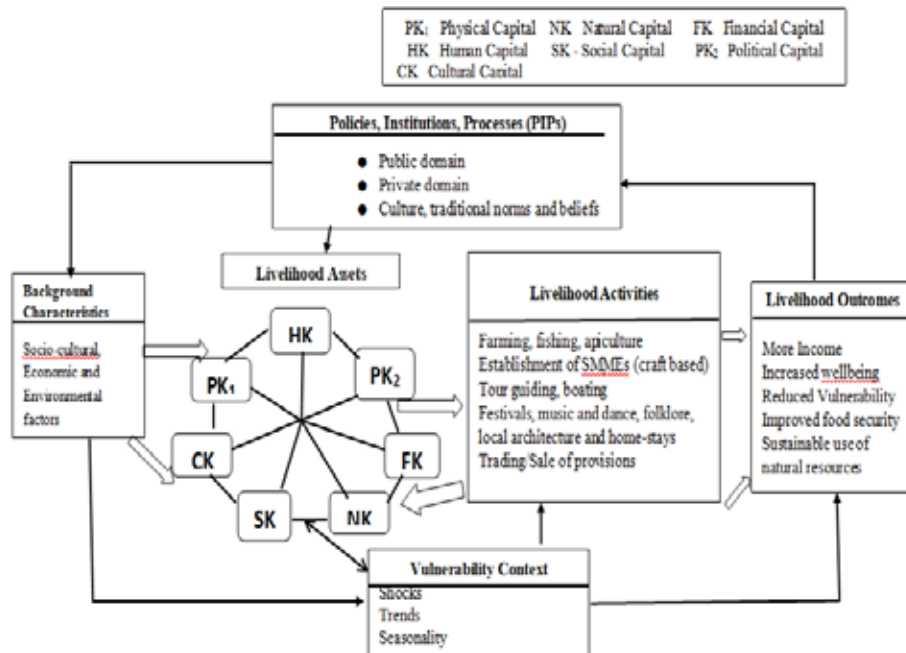


Figure 1: The sustainable livelihood framework.

Source: Adapted from Department of International Development (1999)

METHODOLOGY

Study Area

The study area is the Mognori Ecovillage, one of the fringe communities of Mole National Park, [Ghana's most popular national park in terms of animal stock] (Akyeampong, 2006). Mognori, which in the local dialect (Gonja) means "river bank" had tourism/ecotourism introduced therein as a livelihood diversification enterprise to keep the locales engaged through finding alternative jobs to "pursue" during the long dry season (From October to May) as most of them tended to idle around during the period. The community, located in the West Gonja Municipality of the Savannah Region of Ghana is about 25km from Damongo (the regional capital) and about 15kms from the park headquarters. The main occupation of the people of Mognori is subsistence farming, small scale fishing and bee keeping.

The lack of jobs in the long dry season created fertile grounds for poaching in the park and thus tourism was introduced as an additional source of livelihood and

equally to use tourism as a tool to increase conservation awareness, offer better natural resources management practices and avail the creation of sustainable incentives for community members (Kuuder, Aalangdong & Bagson, 2012). Years after the gazetting of the park, the elephant population started to multiply and expand their foraging range. The farming fields and other agricultural lands surrounding the village were devastated by these foraging elephants and this 'ignited' anger among residents. They felt that one source of livelihood (hunting) had been taken away (through creation of the park) and worse of all, the very animals they could formerly hunt as game (but had now been deprived of the opportunity) became their worst nightmare, as they now destroyed their farm crops (Gousen, 2014). Rather than move away or relocate from the settlement, the villagers obtained some funds from the Ghana Wildlife Division and the MNP authorities to establish the Mognori Ecovillage Project as a place for tourism with a potential to availing an alternative economic livelihood for indigenes.

Research Design

The research design of this study was the case study approach. This approach has been adopted because it was aimed at uncovering the pros and cons of a specific situation in addition to making a detailed and intensive analysis of 'that single case' (Bryman, 2016) – the Mognori tourism project, which was introduced with an intent to support local livelihoods.

The main sources of data for this study were collected from both primary sources mainly from in-depth interview (IDI) schedules and the use of FGD. The target population for this study included heads of households and members of the Tourism Management Committee (TMC). These TMC members include a representative each from the ecovillage chief and elders, dance troupe, the tour guides and homestay operators. The IDI were targeted at heads of households or his nominee whilst the FGD elicited information specifically from the ecovillage dance troupe and the homestay operatives.

The sampling frame for the study comprised all the 57 heads of households in the ecovillage community from which 30 respondents were selected with the aid of the Chairman of the tourism committee. The study sought to cover half of the household heads, the basis for which 30 respondents were taken as benchmark. All the 30 household heads were contacted through in-depth interview schedules. An initial "assessment" revealed most households in the ecovillage had at least a family member venturing into some form of tourism related activity and essentially it was

deemed the best approach to evaluating the impact of tourism at the household level. The household presented the opportunity to source dancers, guides, canoe operators and sheabutter demonstration houses. Included in the sample were the local dance ensemble with membership of 15. Twelve of them who availed themselves (comprising seven men and five women) were selected for the FGD. The operators of the homestay projects were six and all formed another set for the second FGD. The purposive sampling method was used for the selection of respondents, who had “specialised knowledge” about the tourism project.

The IDI schedule (researcher-administered questionnaire) was designed and used for the data collection. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2000, p. 309), “Interviewing... is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy to verify or refute the impression he or she has gained during observation”. It is an important way of finding out what is on people’s mind, what they think or feel about something. The interview schedule (guide) was designed in English Language in both open and closed ended modes and administered by the researcher and two field assistants in the local languages of the area (Gonja and Waale). The interview guide was particularly useful because of the possibility it afforded to meet all situations – easing the solicitation of information, granting the researcher the chance of observing non-verbal behaviour, having the capacity of correcting misunderstanding by correspondents, granting more complex questions to be used since the presence of the interviewer can assist in explaining questions and equally allowing for clarifications to be done (Sarantakos, 1998).

The actual data collection begun from the 24th of November 2017 through to the 24th of January 2018. Contacts were established first with the Chief of Mognori Ecovillage and secondly with the five-member tourism management committee of the community. For the community, opportunities were sought to do a census of households. Mognori is a farming community and most residents left for their farms very early in the morning and returned in the evening. The evening was used as an opportunity to meet household heads for the interview sessions. Upon entry into each house, permission was sought first from the household head and the mission stated. If he/she agreed to respond, the interview was “scheduled” but if he/she felt someone else within the family was better disposed to responding to the issues, the nominee was given the chance.

For the FGDs, the tourism management committee members led the way by organising the groups, (ie, the dance troupe and the operators of the homestay project). In all, two sets of FGDs were conducted. The basic criterion for selecting

the discussants in each group was willingness to participate. Only two groups were selected for the FGD because it was only these two groups that membership fell within the recommended 6-12 cohort which is a principle associated with employing FGD as a data collection tool (Degu & Yigzaw, 2006). For the homestay operators, six participants were obtained while for the dance troupe, out of fifteen members, twelve who were willing to participate were given the opportunity. In all, eighteen discussants were involved in both FGDs.

Data originating from the interview schedules were 'screened' for accuracy and completeness and those that were found worth working with numbered serially, edited and assigned codes. The results obtained from IDI schedules were transcribed to discern meaning. The results from IDI were put into themes and sub-themes and patterns deduced by looking at the research basic question. Data gathered from FGD guides were manually transcribed word for word (verbatim) and analysed with the use of thematic networks technique (Atride-Sterling, 2001 as cited in Adams, 2015). This technique was developed based on the principles of Argumentation Theory (Toulmin, 1958, cited in Adams, 2015), which defines and elaborates the typical formal elements of arguments and implicit meanings in peoples' discourses. The thematic networks technique is simply a way of organising a thematic analysis of qualitative data. Very often, thematic analyses seeks to unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels and thematic networks aim to facilitate the structuring and depiction of these themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001 as cited in Adam, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Three categories of current livelihood portfolios in Mognori Ecovillage are revealed from the findings of this study namely: Direct Livelihoods (tourism generated livelihoods); indirect livelihoods (traditional agricultural livelihoods and Induced livelihoods (contemporary livelihoods) all driven by tourism. How efficacious tourism is in terms of livelihood diversity from the perspective of the entire community is also analysed. An in-depth analyses of what is entailed in each livelihood portfolio and how tourism enhances each category is provided.

Direct Livelihoods (Tourism Generated)

Four categories of direct livelihoods (tourism generated) emerged from the findings of this study, which attract tourists. These are either full time or part time jobs available to the community members and they include opportunities

made available from: (i) river canoe safari, (ii) cultural drumming and dancing, (iii) homestay operations, and (iv) village tours which are designed and developed by the community with the intention to enticing guests to stay and access at a fee. The most popular direct tourism livelihood generated in the community is the canoe safari on the Mognori River. It is most popular because it is the most engaged in by tourists visiting the ecovillage. A head of household and canoe operator asserted:

The canoe safari is the most popular activity patronised by tourists in the community. Even if guests don't stay overnight but they come from the Mole motel or the lodge (Zaina) in the park, partake in the canoe safari to watch birds and crocs and go back to their accommodation in the park. The fee is GHS 25 per visitor (foreign tourist) and GHS 15 per domestic tourist. We are five canoe operators in the community. I am a farmer but this job keeps me busy as a canoe operator and I receive stipends and donations for the work I do and this serves as a source of diversification.

The canoe safari addresses livelihood needs because the high patronage generates stipends to the operators. A sizable sum of this income generated goes to support the tourism fund based on its good patronage. The narration from this respondent is consistent with findings in the literature with respect to studies by Rahut et al. (2014) who indicated that households located in areas with major tourism and hospitality infrastructure such as natural attraction sites usually avail more opportunities for diversification than those far off.

Another direct tourism livelihood generated activity found in this study and developed in the community to entertain visitors is traditional cultural drumming and dance. The performance session is organised in three ways: (i) Performance is done for a fee depending on the size of the visiting group if below ten (ii) performance is done for free if the group size is about thirty visiting for homestay; (iii) opportunities to perform for a fee were available at Zaina lodge (a private accommodation facility in MNP) whenever they hosted a full house. In a FGD with members of the local dance troupe, a response from a male participant and corroborated by fellow dance troupe participants was:

If guests wish to watch our traditional drumming and dancing, we perform at a fee of GHS 70 if the number of tourists is below 5. If you are in a group from 5 to 10, we charge GHS 100 and from 11 to 15 we take GHS 150. Even if you are the only guest visiting but so far as

you can afford the GHS 70, we are eager to perform for the solitary guest. Sometimes we gain opportunities to perform at Zaina lodge and the monetary reward is handsome.

The response in the FGDs specify three key issues with respect to the cultural dance performances. The first is the fee paying part by tourists visiting the community, the second is the free performance when a sizable number of guests came in for homestay and the third being an opportunity to perform at Zaina lodge. The vacationer's interest in local culture is consistent with the findings of Ghosh (2000) who indicated that variations in culture (local dance, local food, local accommodation and local festivals) is that which served as an attraction to tourists and it was mainly due to the differences in culture worldwide that people became motivated to move. This source of diversification, however, has not been effective in addressing livelihood challenges because the performing group size is big and at the end of the session, the amount given to each participating dancer is not much.

The study revealed another finding with regard to the direct tourism livelihood generated activities in the community noted as "community tours," which has been 'branded' into five sub-attractions and developed as a cultural product for visitors. Collectively, the five sub-attractions are tagged as "stopovers". These are revealed in the ensuing narrative by homestay operators in FGD:

The five sub-attractions which are livelihood generation activities include a visit to the chief's palace, the pigeon house, the house of the medicine man, the art and craft house and the sheabutter demonstration houses. The total fee for the village tour is GHS 20 while at each stopover, donations were highly encouraged. There was a guide at each stopover and the donations went to the particular household.

Figure 2 shows a pigeon house in Mognori Ecovillage.



Figure 2: Pigeons on the roof of the pigeon house

Source: Field Data (2018)

Aside from the fees generated through visitor spendings on community tours, visitors often generously donated money at the stopovers. Such donations received were rewarding to the households engaged in tourism. Thus, this FGD report is synonymous with the findings by Ellis (2000), who indicated that financial capitals jurisdiction within local communities with tourist attractions is sometimes made wider to include monetary resources accrued from fees in addition to those that are obtained through charitable giving and grants.

Homestay operations constituted a fourth category of direct tourism livelihood generated businesses offered in the community. In all, there were six homestay facilities in the community where visitors lived with a host-family in a private traditional styled courtyard round huts roofed with thatch and partook in all activities of the household and community. A female discussant in FGD who operates a homestay business in the community had this to say as other colleagues corroborated her views:

When they come lodging in our homestay facilities in the community, some partake in everything we do: farming, harvesting of vegetables and rearing of animals as core activities. They purchase local foods prepared by their hosts. An overnight stay in the homestay costs GHS 30 and some can stay for one week before departure. Very often some are departing by morning while others

are arriving by evening of the same day. We make quite some income from this homestay business here.



Figure 3: Exterior view of a homestay facility in Mognori Ecovillage

Source: Field Data (2018)

Figure 3 shows the exterior view of a homestay facility in the ecovillage. Homestay operations were of value to the vacationer who wanted to experience typical Gonja lifestyle and culture. Homestay business operations were noted to be rewarding based on visitor traffic to the community and the price per night (GHS 30) including the catering related services of GHS 10 per meal served as an important source of income. Thus the above findings in both FGD reports (from homestay operators) on host-guest stay related opportunities in Mognori, that is, partaking in farm work and eating locally made foods bears semblance to Yujiale tourism in China, which usually comprised participation in fishing activities, staying in fishing villages, eating home-made seafood meals and attending the cultural events of the fishing communities. Yujiale is family based and promotes the lifestyles and cultures of fishing communities through facilitating host-guest interactions. Over the years, Yujiale tourism has grown to become a major means of livelihood diversification of many fishing communities in China (Su, Wall & Jin, 2016).

The direct livelihoods (tourism generated) in the ecovillage revealed as canoe safari, cultural drumming and dancing, community tour and homestay business opportunities all relate to the livelihood activities section of the framework drawn from the assets possessed by community. River or canoe safari for instance

is a blend of natural and cultural attractions while the rest, traditional dance, community tour and homestay operations are noted cultural attractions. Thus, direct tourism livelihoods in the ecovillage encompass more of the natural and cultural capitals of the locality and these relate well to the assets pentagon section of the SL-framework (DFID, 1999).

Indirect Livelihoods (Traditional Agricultural Livelihoods)

Farming related sustenance activities in the ecovillage such as food crop farming, animal and local poultry rearing activities, including honey harvesting and trade were enhanced through tourism. Tourists also 'tried' some local foods when they are at the destination. Sheabutter and dawadawa processing activities were noted and found to be enhanced through tourism in the study. A household head in the ensuing transcript, explains how agricultural activities were enhanced:

Some of the main livelihood activities in the community are farming, rearing of animals and local poultry, herbal medicine practice/administration. Tourism enhances the livelihood of the farmer when the tourist buys raw foodstuff, live birds and animals while some bought pure honey to take home and the income received helps in the farming work.

Tourism enhancing the local agricultural industry occurred when the visitors ventured into the consumption of local cuisine of the area. The following account in FGD came from homestay operators about visitors and their quest to eat locally made foods supplied by the local farmer:

The visitors desire our local foods a lot, for instance, boiled yam with cassava leaf stew or local rice with stew. Some cherish our fufu with groundnut soup. Other local foods (menu) that the visitors take interest in is our Tuo Zaafi (TZ) with okro soup. Some cherish 'konkonte' (food made from cassava flour) with groundnut soup. Those who operate homestay facilities prepare these dishes for the visitors at a fee of GHS 10 while the caterers in return source their supplies from local farmers.

Processing of sheabutter and dawadawa which are agricultural related livelihoods were undertaken by women in the community. In recent times, the trade has been enhanced through tourism related visits to the community. The foreign guests do acquire sealed containers of sheabutter as souvenirs for home while the domestic

tourist took interest in dawadawa spices. A female household head confirmed same as follows:

At the beginning of the tourism programme, small sealed calabash containers of sheabutter were given out free to visitors. This philanthropy was exhibited by a woman in the village here but now with visitors making demands and paying for the products, five other women have joined the sheabutter processing and trade in the community and we all compete for the visitor dollar. The domestic visitors to the ecovillage also took interest in buying processed dawadawa popularly known as 'echum' in Gonja, a locally produced spice used in preparing stews and soups.

The findings indicate that visitors (domestic tourists) visiting the ecovillage for homestay purchased raw foodstuff, honey and live animals to send home. Tourism had also brought in an "added value" to sheabutter processing in the locality due to demand for it as souvenirs by foreign tourists. This finding is similar to a study by Mao (2015), who indicated that there was no doubt about tourism contributing significantly to rural agricultural development. According to him, with tourism comes the visitor who provides market for agricultural produce and this is achieved by way of local farmers doing vegetable and fruit production for tourist accommodation facilities. This same finding collated from respondents link to other findings noted in the literature by de Sherbinin, et al., (2008), who stated that rural dwellers in difficult circumstances adopted "livelihood diversification strategies" that may comprise a number of different activities such as farming, herding, engaging in tourism related businesses including several other off-farm employment opportunities. Such other off-farm related activities in Mognori, include processing and sale of sheabutter and dawadawa products (locally called 'echum') listed as livelihood activities and diversification strategies enhanced through tourism aside from farming.

Induced Livelihoods

Two new forms of contemporary livelihood had emerged in the ecovillage due to the introduction of tourism. Liquid soap making was yielding benefits to a select group of women trained in the trade while the emergence of motor taxi business with the target being tourists had sprung up in recent times with an advantage inuring to male youth who possessed motorbikes in the community. The women were trained in liquid soap making by a non-governmental organisation (NGO)

known as Students and Youth Travel Organisation (SYTO). Touching on this newly introduced livelihood in the ecovillage and how it relates to tourism, a female head of household who was a beneficiary of the intervention had some information to share as follows:

About 30 women in this community have been trained by SYTO (an NGO) in soap making and it has equipped us with another source of improved livelihood. With the introduction of tourism and with the visitor influx, the intention is to help us learn skills in producing a sweet scented foamy liquid soap that will meet the demands of our time and be made part of the package for use by homestay patrons.

Tourism has led to another emerging form of business (livelihood) in the ecovillage. Tourists to the ecovillage were “better off” when they arrived and left by their own means of transport. Similarly if it were Damongo market day (Saturdays) visitors easily got a means of transport in and out of the ecovillage. Aside from the two scenarios mentioned, the only option a homestay guest was left with is to take a ride on an okada (motorbike taxi). In the given circumstances, during an IDI, a respondent stated the following with respect to the okada business:

One other business that has emerged in recent times in the ecovillage and particularly favouring the youth in relation to tourism is that of “okada” business (transporting guests on motorbikes) and this has sprung up because we only have Kia trucks coming to the ecovillage on Damongo market days. In this case, when our homestay guests are to depart from the community, it becomes a problem getting a means of transport. Due to the situation, some of the young men in the village have become ‘okada boys’ picking visitors and dropping them at Larabanga at a fee. Moving from the village on this kind of transport cost GHS 10 and this is fast springing up though not very safe.

This component of ‘training’ (that is, soap making) is identified in the literature and noted to be an important medium through which aid is channeled to rural communities. They (civil society) have a common interest in rural development and are able to reach to the poorest of the poor through campaign for business ethics, amplifying the voices of the poor at the policy level and moreover providing free training and guidance (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). The activities of SYTO in training

women in soap making in the ecovillage provides opportunities for livelihood diversification. This help through SYTO in the community can be likened to the PIPs section of the SL-framework whereby the stakeholders (NGOs) help rural communities to meet their developmental needs. The okada business emerging due to tourism development in the ecovillage, confirms the findings of Rogerson (2012b) who opined that tourism in rural areas is now actively used for economic or livelihood diversification and opening up new ways to generate income and employment. It is generally being used as a tool in addressing rural problems in the developing world.

Efficacy of Tourism Related Livelihoods in Mognori Ecovillage

Tourism was found to have impacted positively on the lives of many in the community. Some members of the community received stipends and this enabled a plough-back of proceeds into farming ventures. It came up in the study that tourism became the only alternative source of employment during the dry season. The building of relationships with visitors yielded benefits that similarly impacted on livelihoods. The local people embraced the industry in a positive light, and were working for its longevity and success. The following revelation came to the fore through IDI with a male head of household.

As visitors continue to arrive here for tourism, it makes our community busy. We have four tour guides in the community who aid the community tour and they take monthly stipends. At each of the stopovers, donations were given. There are four canoe operators who take the guests out for the river safari and they receive monthly stipends. We have 24 members of the dance troupe who receive direct cash after each performance session and six homestay operators who often received income. Overseeing the activities of tourism is a five-member committee headed by a chairman and they all receive monthly stipends. We benefit a lot from our interactions with visitors.

Tourism activities associated with the ecovillage had 'blessed' a number of households with some work in the sector within the community. On this issue, a respondent head of household appreciated the diversity that the project had brought in its wake:

I am not into any of the tourism businesses but I am aware of how the business operates and I know the households that are beneficiaries of tourism in the community. Many a community surrounding the park do not have the advantage that we in

Mognori are privileged to in terms of livelihood diversity. Indeed, tourism in our community to me is quite effective especially looking at the four diverse products we have on offer to visitors. A number of households engaged in all these different tourism activities do earn income in the community. We can assess this from the numerous visitors coming into our community here daily or yearly.

From the findings, tourism has become an alternative source of employment and income especially during the long dry season that is mostly experienced in northern Ghana, spanning from late September to end of May. A male respondent head of household in his submission to the discussion on the efficacy of tourism in enhancing local livelihood in the ecovillage came through with this claim:

I can tell you that sometimes in the dry season when there is less work to do in terms of farming, tourism becomes the 'life wire' of the whole community that everyone is looking to. Without tourism which is generating cash to some of us, this community would have been dependent on only sale of farm produce which is a "one way" business. Moreover, the yields from agriculture related activities have been dwindling in recent years making it not that attractive in recent times.

The ability to amass income from tourism related activities found in this study resonates the findings by Zhao and Ritchie, (2007) that, nowadays more stress has been put on the income generation capacity building of the poor in which economic diversification opportunity of using tourism plays a vital incubating role. The case of Mognori with specific reference to the long dry season noted in the agricultural sector further reflects the findings of Amanesh (2013), who points to the disappointments in the agricultural sector and laid emphasis on the quest by rural dwellers to finding alternative livelihood through tourism.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study found tourism to have impacted on the livelihood diversification effort of the indigenes mainly in three "realms", which is, tourism generated livelihoods noted as direct livelihoods. It was noted to have impacted positively on their agricultural related livelihoods (indirect livelihoods). This came to light in the forms of visitors being served with local foods in homestay facilities by local caterers.

Others acquired and took home raw foodstuffs. Domestic visitors took interest in local spices and honey while foreign tourists were interested in sheabutter as souvenirs. Induced livelihoods reflected in training of women in soap making for use by visitors during homestay while some motorcycle owners “ferried” visitors from the ecovillage to nearby transport terminals. Not all households benefited from tourism related activities, even though such households established that arrivals to the ecovillage was on the ascendancy. Thus, tourism was described as the “life wire” of the community during certain periods of the year and to this everyone in the community looked up to.

Based on the findings, the study recommends that more accommodation facilities be added to the current homestay stock in the ecovillage to allow for “expanded” access by visitors travelling in for the purpose of homestay to the community. Secondly, the mode of replication of these facilities should be in the traditional round huts building style roofed with thatch. Efforts must be made by the community’s tourism committee not to depart from such styles, for any such departure in accommodation mode will demotivate the interest of the visitor. The development of other activities of interest such as farm tourism and angling in the Mognori River as additional pastimes should be encouraged. Visitors should be introduced to the vast array of food crops grown in northern Ghana and the methods employed in fishing by the village tour guides while homestay operatives must be taught basic skills in reception of visitors including communication skills in English language by resource persons nominated by the GTA. Exploring folklore as a component of their culture, which can aid in enticing guests to stay longer and immerse more in the community should be considered by the village elders.

With regard to policy implications of this study, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts (MoTCCA) in conjunction with the Ghana Tourism Authority should enact rules that makes it mandatory for community-based tourism projects to set aside portions of proceeds generated to be used in establishing fund for communal use and for their common benefit. These funds may be used in sinking of boreholes, procurement of desks and textbooks for schools, equipment for local clinics and installation of street lights, which would go a long way to improve their living standards. Such ventures would enable the community see tourism as a project worth investing in for their collective good rather than have the proceeds being hijacked by a few powerful elites (cabalts) within their neighbourhoods which can lead to resentments.

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