

Fair Market Report on The Straw Basket Industry in Bolgatanga

By G-lish Foundation, Ghana

“In Unity There is Strength”

G-lish Foundation is grateful to the Australian High Commission in Ghana and the Australian Government’s Direct Aid Program for the grant that enabled this work to be undertaken between 2012 and 2013 in the Upper East Region of Ghana. We thank everyone at the Australian High Commission for their faith and support which enabled us to carry out unprecedented work which has the potential to transform many lives in Ghana’s second poorest region.

This work is about a simple basket. The injustice we observed that became this project and now this report is about the people who make it, the end consumer, the people who trade them, and all the people in between.

Ultimately, it’s about choices: how you choose to spend your money. We hope that this work can be broadened to other crafts and communities so that buyers may take action wherever they make a choice about prices paid to artisans.

We would like to thank the 120 weavers from six weaving villages we visited: Dulugu, Tongo-Beu, Gambigigo, Sirigu, Sumburungu and Nyariga. They shared their experiences in great detail. We have over 2400 hours of recorded interviews in *Frafra* (translated into English) with the 120 weavers across these six communities. The interviews form part of this report.

We would also like to thank the community leaders of these six communities who allowed us to undertake this work in their communities.

We would like to thank the international buyers who participated in the online survey and provided valuable written information about their experiences buying baskets via the survey and in emails. We would like to thank the few basket producing businesses in Bolgatanga who opened up about their processes, prices and experiences working with weavers and international buyers, and agreed to show us all documentation and systems information.

We would like to thank our colleagues in G-lish Foundation, past and present, whose courage and hard work were crucial in making this happen. We intend to continue to undertake advocacy for the weavers of Bolgatanga to ensure they receive fair remuneration for their work. Thank you for taking the time to read this. Contact details are at the end of this report if you wish to stay involved in helping bring about economically *empowering* change for basket weavers in Ghana.

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1. Introduction & Methodology

Introduction

This report is the outcome of research which aims to:

- Make the Bolgatanga basket supply chain that operates through the central market as transparent as possible;
- Increase awareness about fair prices for weavers who weave baskets in the Upper East Region in Ghana;
- Help buyers, traders other players in the supply chain understand basket prices in the Ghanaian context;
- Help buyers and traders understand market dynamics that influence the payment the weaver receives so that buyers and traders can make informed decisions about purchasing baskets and related products.

The research was funded by the Australian High Commission in Ghana's Direct Aid Program. Under this program, G-lish Foundation received funding in 2012 to undertake its Fair Market Project of which this report is one component.

Market day in Bolgatanga. This woman has five baskets she looks like she's trying to sell. Behind her, a trader stacks his vehicle with purchased baskets.



Background

The problem

Over several years living in Bolgatanga, basket weavers often commented to us, the authors of this report, that a weaver could not profit from making baskets. We wondered why this was so. What was impeding their profit-making ability?

In our own work in villages we observed that many weavers were illiterate and not in a position to negotiate prices or selling conditions with traders. We wondered what weavers themselves, across the region, would tell us if we gave them a chance to express themselves about these issues.

We wondered what buyers would do if they knew the conditions around the central market in Bolgatanga.

Would buyers be motivated to find a way to ensure the weaver received a fair price?

We wondered if having a clear picture might bring about change for everyone in the supply chain.

Methodology

The information in this report was compiled in several stages.

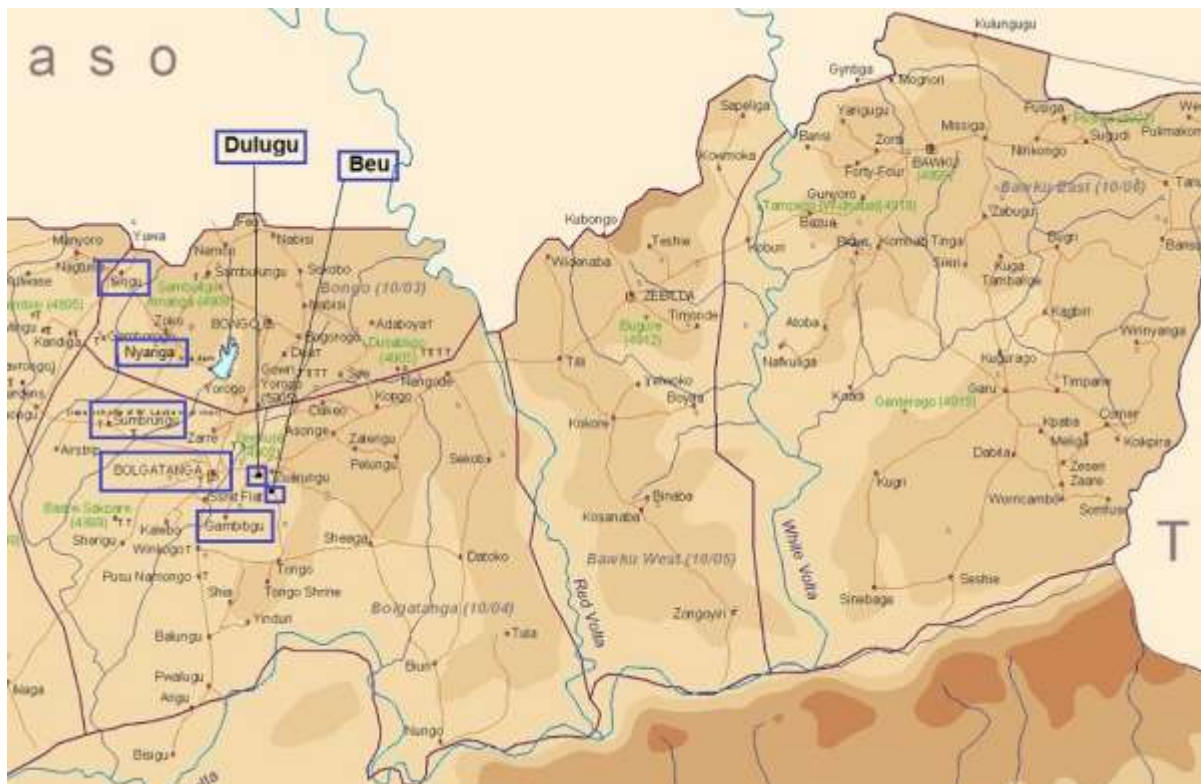
- The first stage (September-November 2012) involved field visits to six weaving communities in Bolgatanga and across the Upper East Region to interview weavers about their experience selling baskets in the local basket market in Bolgatanga.
- The second stage (November 2012-February 2013) involved surveying buyers and traders using Qaltrics, an online survey platform, about their awareness of the relationship between minimum wages and basket making in Ghana, and on their experiences buying baskets from Ghana. Respondents were also invited to comment confidentially. Because confidentiality was a condition of the survey, identities of respondents and identifying information are not included in this report.
- The third stage (January-February 2013) involved returning to the 6 weaving communities to convey a summary of key points learned from the international basket buyers' survey, and from each of the 6 communities during the first stage of interviews, so that they would be informed about each others' experiences and the key points learned from buyers.
- The fourth stage (June 2013) involved an open workshop in Bolgatanga township with 250 weavers from the 6 surveyed communities, and other communities across the Upper East Region, to discuss the outcome of research with buyers and traders, and elicit further feedback and comments from the weavers and basket traders.
- The fifth and final stage involves the production of this report.

Location

The Upper East Region is the northern most region of Ghana, highlighted in pink, below. "A" marks where Bolgatanga, the capital of the Upper East Region, is located. It is 800 kms north of Accra, the capital. The Upper East Region borders Burkina Faso (north) and Togo (east).



This map shows the Upper East Region and the location of the towns which G-lish Foundation visited for the research.



Research Objectives

- Analyse straw Bolga basket market prices against the minimum wage in Ghana;
- Understand weavers' position in the straw basket market by interviewing weavers in six communities across Bolgatanga: Dulugu, Tongo-Beo, Gambibigo, Nyariga, Sumburungu, Sirigu;
- Increase awareness about fair prices for artisans who weave straw baskets in Bolgatanga;
- Help local and international buyers understand basket prices in the Ghanaian context;
- Make the supply chain as transparent as possible;
- Help buyers and traders understand market dynamics that influence the payment the weaver receives so that buyers and traders can make informed decisions about purchasing baskets and related products;
- Influence buyers to pay fairer prices.

Activities

- Assess the prices paid to basket weavers against the minimum wage in Ghana.
- Assess the cost of producing Bolga baskets.
- Interview 6 basket making communities in the Upper East Region twice:
 - 1) To understand the conditions.
 - 2) To relay the results of the first field visits and discuss solutions to problems for final report.
- Interview middle-men traders in the Bolga basket market on prices paid to producers and prices they receive from international buyers. Godwin Yidana went to the market on market day posing as a buyer from another part of Ghana to get the information. This is incorporated in the international buyers' survey.
- Interview international buyers directly on prices paid to traders.
- Hold a large meeting in Bolgatanga showing results of both rounds of meetings and discussing solutions to challenges with weavers.
- Compile this information into a report for international buyers to persuade buyers to pay fairer prices to producers and to influence middlemen traders to pay fairer prices to producers.
- Provide the report to the WFTO for application in craft producing communities globally.

It is important to note that this was not a report about fair trade, as defined by the World Fair Trade Organisation (WFTO). It is about fair prices and meeting the minimum wage in Ghana for time taken to undertake paid work.

Overview of the situation

Basket weaving is considered a secondary activity to help augment family income. It has, however, become the main stay of many families as most men in this area are unemployed and women, generally, carry the burden of getting ingredients such as dry fish, salt and money for milling the maize or millet in order to provide a meal for the family. Every market day hundreds of baskets are traded through the central Bolga basket market and exported overseas to wholesalers and retailers based in the USA, UK, Australia, Canada, mainland Europe and other markets.

This research focused on the baskets sourced via the central basket market, or from traders visiting villages to buy from weavers or weaving groups. There is no regulation or monitoring of the central Bolga basket market. There is no organisation to support weavers' conditions and prices. Further, when foreign buyers visit Bolgatanga or Ghana to buy baskets, they face language barriers, cultural barriers and possibly a lack of experience in Ghana. They are almost always fully dependent on a go-between to explain the circumstances. They may have no way of verifying the truth of the information they hear from traders, particularly about prices paid to weavers.

Currencies used

Currencies are either Ghana Cedis, expressed as GHC, or US dollars, expressed as US\$. An exchange rate of US\$ 1.00 = GHC2.50 is used, based on rates at the time of research. The current average rate is US\$1.00 = GHC 3.20 as of November 2014. Prices and payments are benchmarked using a large market basket, the most widely made basket in Bolgatanga and which most buyers are familiar with. This is an example of a large market basket here.



We asked three key questions in this research:

1. At what price *should* weavers sell their basket?
2. At what price *do* weavers sell their baskets?
3. At what price *can* they sell their basket?
 - Question 1 is answered directly below.
 - Question 2 was answered in the research in 6 communities
 - Question 3 will depend on the response to this research.

At what price *should* weavers sell their basket?

Three basic price points were considered:

1. Sales Price = Cost of Materials
2. Sales Price = Cost of Materials + Labor
3. Sales Price = Cost of Materials + Labor + Overheads

1. Sales Price = Cost of Materials

Imagine a skilled dressmaker selling a one-off creation she has sewn by hand for several days for the cost of the fabric alone. This is the principle behind selling something for the cost of the materials used to make it. This price point would be unacceptable for any craft maker who wished to make a living from their craft.

However, as will be demonstrated in the section on interviews with weavers in 6 communities, this is the most common price point at which weavers who sell through the **central market** receive for their baskets.

2. Sales Price = Cost of Materials + *Labor*

A sales price must include both **cost of materials and time/labor**. That is, if you work for 3 days to make a dress, the time you spent working—the 3 days—should be factored into the selling price of the product. Therefore, at minimum, a fair calculation is: Sales Price = Cost of Materials + Labor

3. Sales Price = Cost of Materials + Labor + *Overhead*

Besides materials and working hours, the cost of overheads could be factored into the sales price of craft products. The dressmaker who makes a beautiful dress must eventually cover electricity, rent, telephone, tax, transport and other costs directly related to the cost of making her products.

There are numerous articles and guides on the internet about how to express this stage of pricing.

One website explains “wholesale price” as:

Materials + Time x 2 = Wholesale Price.

To quote Ink and Spindle:

*“Your wholesale price is your cost price, doubled. Why double it? Because you need to cover all your overheads! Your rent, electricity, equipment, etc. If you were paying someone else for their labor then you'd be making nothing for yourself if you didn't mark up the price. Update - double might not work for everyone, everyone's overheads are different, but the important point is that you need *some* markup here...”* From <http://inkandspindle.blogspot.com.au/2011/09/formula-how-to-price-your-wares.html>

In other words, covering overheads is necessary in order to make a profit. Generally, weavers' overheads include the cost of transport to and from the market, and the cost of phone calls. Some weavers have a small electricity or kerosene bill in order to weave in the night. These costs ought to be included in the sales price of the basket. If not, the weaver is not likely to make a profit.

All traders shops around the perimeter of where the basket market is held, at the end of a market day.



How was a fair price calculated?

1. Select a basket to benchmark

The most widely produced basket, which is colloquially known as a market basket, was selected as the basket against which to benchmark fair prices. This is because almost every community makes this basket and comparisons can be made across communities and with buyers, globally.

The baskets loaded on this trailer are all market baskets destined for the market on market day.



2. Use the Sales Price = Materials + Labor calculation

Calculations were based on the cost of materials plus labour/time to calculate the minimum price a weaver should receive for their basket. This is a useful yardstick for measuring fairness and minimum prices.

3. World of Good's Fair Wage Calculator was used to check

We cross-checked prices with the World of Good's Fair Wage Calculator.

To quote: *"The Fair Wage Guide is a free, online tool that calculates fair wages for 150 countries, empowering workers to support themselves and contribute to their local economies. The Guide generates a localized wage analysis and comparison to international poverty benchmarks. The tool brings transparency to supply chains, giving workers bargaining power and encouraging retailers to source responsibly."* See: <http://fairwageguide.org/> From <http://goodworldsolutions.org>

How was the cost of materials calculated?

The cost of materials was calculated:

- By purchasing the materials in the market where they are sold in Bolgatanga at the time of research in December 2012 and January 2013;
- Conducting controlled experiments on weaving the market basket in real time in the presence of G-lish Foundation staff who recorded times for this research;
- Interviewing weavers about the cost of materials and prices of straw in the market.

We based costs on a **large** market basket, woven in **three dyed** colours.

Costs:

| | |
|--|--|
| Straw (3 bundles of <i>long</i> straw): | GHC 6.00 |
| Dye* (Three different colours): | GHC 1.50 (50 pesewas/colour x 3 colours) |
| Charcoal: | 50 p |
| Levy**: | 50 p |
| Total minimum cost: | GHC 8.50 |

GHC 8.50 was used as **the base cost** of materials throughout this research.

*Dye: Some dyed straw may be leftover for another basket so it can attributed to more than one basket. However some weavers explained they only dye what they need for one basket, thus calculations were based on this. Others mentioned dye as costing up to 80 p per colour. Some weavers use 4-5 colours in one basket so the cost dye varies and we chose to go with the average of 3 colours at 50 p per colour.

**The levy is a per basket fee which is paid to enter the local market to sell baskets on market day. This could be considered an overhead but, for the sake of simplicity, it is included it in cost of materials.

If the cost of dye is applied to **two** baskets, the dye component is halved to 75 pesewas in costs. And the final price of materials would be **GHC 7.75**.

For the survey, GHC 8.50 was assumed.

Transport costs to and from the market were not included, although normally they would be considered an overhead.

How was the cost of labour calculated?

Each step was timed in a controlled experiment over several days, noting the precise start and stop times. The sum of the total minutes for each step was calculated. In this experiment, the weavers who participated were **relatively fast and experienced**. This is known because these weavers have been working with G-lish Foundation since 2009 and are recognised among the fastest in the group. Please bear in mind that *some weavers would take more hours to complete a basket*. Thus they would incur an increase in time cost.

All calculations in this report should be considered minimums, *not averages*.

Time To Weave a Basket:

| | |
|--|---|
| Splitting 3 bundles of straw into two long strips for twisting into twine: | 70 minutes |
| Twisting the two halves of 3 bundles into twine: | 300 minutes |
| Untwisting the straw into single strips for dying: | 20 minutes |
| Fetching water from the bore hole for dying straw: | 25 minutes (minimum) |
| Dying straw in three colours*: | 40 minutes (minimum) |
| Weaving dyed straw into basket: | 690 minutes |
| Total Time (not including transport and waiting in the market): | 1145 minutes = 19 hours, 10 mins |

Total time *including* transport and waiting in market of 180 minutes:** 1325 minutes
= 22 hours and 5 minutes

If colours can be mixed in the same batch (eg. yellow, orange, black). More time would be used if a new cauldron of water is needed when colours can't be mixed in the same cauldron (eg. blue, red and yellow).

We calculated travel and waiting time could as part of labour in order to calculate all labour/time costs in one equation.

Transport As Time Cost

Transport to and from the market is crucial to the business of a weaver. They cannot sell their baskets if they do not travel to the central market (or have someone go for them). Alternatively, from time to time traders visit villages and buy directly from weavers.

For those in more distant villages, travel to and from the market takes the better part of their day. The market takes place every third day, 52 weeks a year. The time and means of transport vary greatly. Some weavers walk, and others catch share buses or taxis. Some cycle and some ride motorbikes. Some of those we interviewed travel as much as 10 kms on foot in each direction, in extreme temperatures, walking up to 5 hours each direction if they can't afford the bus fare. Some catch a bus that takes an hour in one direction. In addition to travel time, they have to wait in the market in queues to sell to a trader. Sometimes they sell the basket quickly. Other times it takes hours. In other words, this time component varies.

A woman and, most likely, her daughter or relative on market day. It looks late in the day and that the baskets carried are unsold. They'll return home without having made any income because there's no guarantee of price or sales in the central market.



Settling on a fair average covering all distances and modes of transport to calculate this time and times spent IN the market was necessary. Ultimately, 3 hours was selected as a fair time component.

Therefore, 22 hours was the total used for calculations of labour/time costs. This equals 2 days and 6 hours.

All time calculations should be considered fastest and minimum.

Minimum Wage in Ghana

- Legally in Ghana (and according to the Fair Wage Calculator) one day of work is considered to be 8 hours for the minimum wage calculation.
- If one day = 8 hours, a basket takes 2.75 days of work and time.
- If transport *to* the market and selling *in* the market is deducted from time, total days for producing a basket = 2.4 days
- However, time taken to travel to the market and waiting time to sell the basket (average 3 hours) has been included.
- Importantly, the value of 3 hours of **time** (GHC 1.68 at the time) is **on par with the average cost of transport fares (GHC 1-3.00)**. We use the **lower** of the two costs.

For those who argue that the 3 hours of time should not be factored into the cost of the business for the weaver (as an overhead), the cost of the transport can be considered a fair equivalent.

This woman has a bundle of baskets to sell on market day, unsold, by all appearances.



How was the minimum price of labour calculated?

As of February 2013, when this research was undertaken, the minimum daily wage in Ghana was GHC 4.48 per day for 8 hours of work:

(http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID:3079568)

Therefore, the calculation to arrive at the MINIMUM cost of labour for one large market basket is:

- Unit of time = 22 hours (explained above).
- 22 hours = 8 hours + 8 hours + 6 hours. (1 day + 1 day plus 3/4 of one day.)
- At GHC4.48 /8 hour day, the value of labour/time = $4.48 + 4.48 + 3.36 = \text{GHC } 12.32$

Thus, the value of a weaver's labour for one large market basket = GHC 12.32

This is the value used in all calculations.

However, if the time of traveling to and from the market was excluded, time would be:

- 1145 minutes = 19 hours + 10 minutes. 19 hours is used.
- 19 hours = 8 hours + 8 hours + 3 hours.
- At GHC4.48 /8 hour day, the value of labour/time = $4.48 + 4.48 + 1.68 = \text{GHC } 10.64$

The difference between these two costs: **$12.32 - 10.64 = 1.68$** .

NOTE: The cost of transport was not included as an overhead. Most weavers would have paid around GHC 2.00 in transport if they travel by vehicle to the market.

Therefore, it was decided that a fair average was to include the value of travel time as an overhead of GHC 1.68 (as per the above calculation) whether it be time, as is used here, or transport itself.

How did we calculate materials + labour/time?

The total cost of producing one basket:

$$8.50 \text{ (Materials)} + 12.32 \text{ (Time)} = \text{GHC } 20.82.$$

At a minimum, a weaver should receive a price of GHC 20.82 per large market basket in 3 colours when they pay for materials used to make it, and when they visit the market to sell it to a trader.

If we were to take the lower materials cost (halving the cost of dye), this would be: **7.75 (Materials) + 12.62 (Time) = GHC 20.37**

Thus, the price of 3-colour, large market basket would have to have fallen between GHC 20.37 - GHC 20.82 in the market. This was the MINIMUM price a weaver should have received to cover time/labour and materials in order to meet the then minimum wage in Ghana, as legislated by the government.

“At a minimum, a weaver should receive a price of GHC 20.82 per large market basket in 3 colours”

Throughout research with communities and international buyers, the magic figure of GHC 20.00 (or more) for market baskets was the number that we were hoping to hear. It was obvious that if a basket weaver received less than GHC 20.37 per market basket in 2013, they were not paid the minimum daily wage in Ghana of GHC 4.48 per day.

At the entrance to the main part of the basket market on market day.



2. INTERNATIONAL BUYERS SURVEY

The next part of the research was concerned with understanding the level of awareness that buyers or retailers of Bolga baskets possessed regarding prices and profits for weavers.

The overall objective was to find ways to enable the weaver themselves to be paid fairly and buyers to be armed with accurate information on which to base their buying decisions.

In order to better understand buyers and traders, we developed and carried out an online survey using Qualtrics.com, a free but sophisticated survey program. We invited 67 individuals directly related to Bolga basket buying or fair trade to participate.

One of the best outcomes from this is the honesty and candidness with which many buyers commented. Many buyers expressed great concern and awareness of the issues raised in here, and a desire to do something about them. We extend our gratitude to the buyers who did comment and helped shape the outcome of this research.

International Buyer & Trader Survey

How survey participants were selected:

We were familiar with some producers in Bolgatanga and many of the middlemen traders in the market. However, we spent a lot of time searching “Bolga baskets” via Google and other search engines, and created a spreadsheet of basket retailers and wholesalers globally. This included over 50 retailers and buyers of Bolga baskets, both foreign and Ghanaian. We invited all by email, twice, to participate in the survey.

The complete survey questions and a selection of responses from respondents follow next. However, where details might reveal the identity of the respondent, we either have not included the response or omitted names and places that would identify the respondent as per the agreement regarding confidentiality and to ensure the most honest responses possible.

Introduction to the Qualtrics survey as it appeared to respondents, online:

“In October 2012, G-lish Foundation received a grant from the Australian High Commission, Ghana, under its Direct Aid Programme. The major objectives of this element of the project are to:

Increase per item income for straw basket weavers in Ghana; Compile the results of research into a report and reference materials to make the market transparent and increase buyers' awareness for long-term benefits to basket weavers. This research falls under the fair market component of the project which aims to develop fairer prices and conditions for straw basket weavers in Ghana. The research will help improve livelihoods for straw basket weavers in Ghana so that they achieve the minimum daily wage in Ghana. Besides surveying international buyers, we have interviewed 120 weavers in 6 communities in the Upper East Region, the results of which have underpinned this survey.

There is space beneath each question for your comments.

Questions are designed to understand connections between buyers who buy from one type of source and their level of awareness about prices and conditions for basket weavers, and buyers who buy from another type and their level of awareness. It will help us understand where we need to focus efforts to educate buyers and which parts of the market are least and most favourable to weavers so we can try and improve those.

It stems from several years of informal research we have undertaken living and working in Bolgatanga producing recycled baskets, and the dozens of reports and stories we've heard from weavers themselves about the poor level of payments straw weavers receive. We decided that we were in a strong position to do something about this and developed the project aimed at improving this situation, of which this research forms an integral part.

A large Market Basket is used as a benchmark against which we measure costs, time and prices. This is an example of a large market basket, although we do not include adding the leather handle in our cost calculations--only the straw portions. Currencies are Ghana Cedis (GHC) or US dollars (US\$). Rate: GHC 1.00 = US\$ 0.52.”

Confidentiality

We do not ask for any identifying information about you, the buyer. If you wish to provide information, it will remain confidential in reporting. Each respondent will receive an identifying letter such as Buyer A, Buyer B, and so on, to be referred to in reporting. Most questions will take less than 30 seconds to answer, but there are three lengthy questions focusing on market dynamics and cost calculations. It is complex, but this is necessary for this research. Your patience and time is appreciated. Thank you."



What follows on the next pages is the survey itself and responses from respondents.

ONLINE SURVEY

PART 1: AWARENESS of COSTS & TIME

A) Weaving Costs: Materials & Time

Q 1: Weaving: Time and Process

The steps for making a straw market basket with coloured straw follows. Of these steps, which are you NOT aware of?

100% of respondents had NO awareness of the following two points:

- 60 minutes travel time to and from Bolgatanga on market days to buy straw. Weavers from Sumburugu, Sirigu, Nyariga, Kongo , Gambibigo and other villages travel more than 5 kilometers from town.
- 120 minutes queuing/waiting/bargaining time to sell baskets and to also, separately, go to the other market to buy straw to weave the next basket.

75% of respondents also had no awareness of the following steps (25% did have awareness).

- Splitting 3 bundles of straw into two thin strips for twisting into twine take 70 minutes
- Twisting the 3 bundles into twine takes 300 minutes
- Untwisting the straw into single strips for dyeing takes 20 minutes
- Fetching water from the bore hole and preparing fire for dyeing straw in three colours takes 25 minutes.

50% of respondents had no awareness of these steps:

- Dyeing straw in three colours: 40 minutes*
- Weaving the dyed straw into basket: 690 minutes
- Total time: 1325 minutes = 22 hours and 5 minutes. We will use 22 hours for calculations.

*That is, *if* colours can be mixed in the same water, such as yellow, orange, black. It will take longer if a new cauldron of water is needed.

Q 2: Respondents were invited to comment on question 1. There were three comments, as follows:

1. *"I am aware of the process but did not know the amount of time for each step. I appreciate and value this information."*
2. *"The issue is how to interest the public or consumer who see a basket as a functional item with an expected price range when in fact these are hand-crafted and many have colour sense or design that could put them into high-end gallery settings as unique pieces. But as they are being made in large quantities, high-end pricing to cover the time is difficult as people may admire them but sadly not pay the price."*

3. *“In fair trade, small fair trade buyers aren't aware of actual times, though they know and appreciate the crafts-personship and detail of individual products.”*

Our comment: One respondent commented that the time to travel to buy straw for one basket should not be included in the calculations, nor the time to sell a basket in the market. We understand this, but the reality is that this is how many weavers, especially those without the benefit of a cooperative or regular buyer, work. They do not earn enough to buy materials for more than one basket at a time.

Because weavers go to the market every three days on market day to buy straw and sell baskets, those hours add up over the course of a year. Even if they only go to the market ONCE a week, for three hours, over 48 weeks that's 48 x 3 hours = 144 hours. That's quite valuable time for an individual who also is likely to do the lion's share of child rearing and household chores, as well as till the land and run a small farm. It may seem pedantic, but this is time that needs to be accounted for.

Q 3: Cost of INPUTS for making one market basket in 3 colours: Which cost of INPUTS are you NOT aware of? Check as many as apply. This is the same as cost of materials.

100% of respondents had NO awareness of:

- Charcoal to boil water to dye straw costs 50 p
- Market levy per basket when selling inside the local market on market day is 50 p

80% of respondents had no awareness of:

- Three bundles of long straw cost GHC 6.00
- Dye cost 50 pesewas per colour. 3 colours cost GHC 1.50 Some dye will be leftover for another batch.
- Total cost (before time) per market basket in 3 colours to the weaver: GHC 8.50 (and up to GHC 1.00 more in transport, depending on location).

Q 4: Respondents were invited to comment on Q 3. One comment:

1. *“Some basket designs may be faster to make, some dyes and colours are more or less expensive - and buying in bulk can significantly reduce number of buying trips/time.”*

Our comment: This is true for those who have bulk-buying capabilities. Our research related to individuals who are not in a position to finance bulk-buying.

Q 5: Weaving Costs: Cost of TIME based on the minimum wage in Ghana. Which of the following elements are you NOT aware of?

- **100% of respondents were *not* aware that:**
As of the time of the survey, the legislated, minimum daily wage in Ghana = GHC 4.48 per day.
- **33% of respondents *were* aware that:**
One day = 8 hours of work
- **16% of respondents *were* aware that:**
For 22 hours work per basket (one day + one day + 3/4 of one day) at GHC 4.48 /8 hour day, the value of time = $4.48 + 4.48 + 3.36 = \text{GHC } 12.32$ in TIME

The minimum wage as of May 2014 is GHC 6.00 per 8 hours of work.

Q 6: Respondents were invited to comment on question 5. One comment:

1. *"I knew the approximate time and pay, but not the exact figures."*

Q 7: The total cost of producing one basket is:

$\text{COSTS} + \text{TIME} = \text{GHC } 8.50 + \text{GHC } 12.32 = \text{GHC } 20.82/\text{market basket. (US\$ } 10.42 \text{ equivalent.)}$
Were you aware that this is the value of costs and time to produce one market basket?

- 78 % of respondents were not aware of this.

Q 8: Total cost of basket to the weaver

Do you understand that if a basket weaver (not the trader or exporter) selling through a trader in the central market receives less than GHC 20.82 per market basket (US\$10.42), they are highly unlikely to be making the minimum daily wage in Ghana per basket?

- 75% of respondents agreed with this statement; 25% did not.

Q 9: Respondents were invited to comment on question 5:

1. *"This is a global issue: workers in craft arts sector generally, but also so many women in factories, struggle to be paid fairly or at least get the minimum daily wage and decent working conditions world-wide, as more products are mass made/and sold cheaply."*
2. *"Basket making in spare time as a supplementary income is different to basket making as a full time income/job. I can imagine making baskets as art, but to sit all day every day (to bring in daily wages) as a primary activity would be hard to sustain physically."*

Our comment: Some weavers do weave baskets as a full-time activity, and some weave part-time while also farming or undertaking petty trading. Levels of physical difficulty are not a consideration to most weavers—they **don't have a choice**. Weaving is one of the few income-earning options open to them.

Farming (bending over with a hoe for hours) is also physically demanding and also not a choice—it's a necessity in order to grow crops for food. Whether full-time or part-time, the TOTAL time taken to produce a basket is remunerated as a fair price to the weaver. When an average time is understood, as we have shown in this report, a price that meets the minimum wage in that country, based on time taken, ought to be paid for that item. In our case, our costs are based on fast times and minimal costs. While we arrived at 20.82, for slower weavers the time would be several more hours.

B) Prices Paid to the Weaver

Q 10: Based on the figures in the table, were you aware of what price a weaver should receive for her basket in order to receive the minimum daily wage in Ghana for her work? (The response to this is on the following page).

This is a summary of the question:

At the time the research was undertaken, the average price a weaver received in the local market for a large market basket was GHC 10.00. Thus, based on the previous information regarding cost of **materials**, to calculate **labour**, if a weaver receives GHC 10.00 per basket:

GHC 10.00 (price) – GHC 8.50 (cost of materials) = GHC 1.50 profit after materials costs.

But what of LABOUR?

LABOUR of 2.75 days = GHC 1.50 profit after costs divided by 2.75 days = **54.5 pesewas per day income**.

Yet, the minimum daily wage in Ghana was GHC **4.48 / day, (or 54.5 pesewas multiplied by 8)**. In other words, if a basket weaver sold her basket for GHC 10.00 in the local market, she received 1/8th of the minimum daily wage in profit based on the time it takes of 2.75 days to make a basket.

The following table shows what a weaver must be paid to reach the minimum daily wage after materials costs.

KEY:

Red: A loss is made

Purple: Below the minimum daily wage in Ghana

Blue: Above the minimum daily wage in Ghana

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Price Received = GHC 8.00: Profit = -0.50 pesewas. | | Income/day = 0.00 Costs not covered. |
| Price = GHC 9.00: | Profit [after materials costs] = 0.50. | Income/day = 18 p |
| Price = GHC 10.00: | Profit = 1.50 | Income/day = 55 p |
| Price = GHC 11.00: | Profit = 2.50 | Income/day = 91 p |
| Price = GHC 12.00: | Profit = 3.50 | Income/day = GHC 1.27 |
| Price = GHC 13.00: | Profit = 4.50 | Income/day = GHC 1.64 |
| Price = GHC 14.00: | Profit = 5.50 | Income/day = GHC 2.00 |
| Price = GHC 15.00: | Profit = 6.50 | Income/day = GHC 2.36 |
| Price = GHC 16.00: | Profit = 7.50 | Income/day = GHC 2.73 |
| Price = GHC 17.00: | Profit = 8.50 | Income/day = GHC 3.09 |
| Price = GHC 18.00: | Profit = 9.50 | Income/day = GHC 3.45 |
| Price = GHC 19.00: | Profit = 10.50 | Income/day = GHC 3.82 |
| Price = GHC 20.00: | Profit = 11.50 | Income/day = GHC 4.18 |
| Price = GHC 21.00: | Profit = 12.50 | Income/day = GHC 4.55* |

*This is the first price point to reach the minimum daily wage of GHC 4.48 per day.
GHC 21.00 = \$8.40 at 3rd February 2013 exchange rates of US\$1.00 = GHC2.50

- 86% of respondents were **not** aware of the price a weaver should be paid to receive the minimum daily wage in Ghana for a 3 colour market basket.

Note: If the 3 hours travel and buying straw time is excluded from the time value, the price needed to make minimum wage and cover materials costs was GHC19.00. However, that did not include any cost of transport or other overheads such as telephone calls. As explained earlier, either travel time or overhead costs should be included.

Q 11: Two comments were made in relation to question 10:

“I don't think anyone would be aware of these specifics, its good information.”

“When producers undercut each other, as they may be desperate to sell their baskets even at less than cost price due to hunger/lack of cash flow/bills etc - some buyers will happily buy at the cheapest price offered and then expect others to also sell at that price. Other issue is a 'market driven' system where the retailer pushes their price down to compete for sales, eventually leaving inadequate margin to cover selling costs.”

Our comments: This is one of the key problems with the system. Weavers are exploited by traders who sense their desperation and need to sell at any cost. Retailers in overseas markets are not necessarily aware of these dynamics and realities.

C) Market Dynamics

Q 12: Awareness: Market Dynamics

Each of the main players in the supply chain are described below. Please check those you ARE aware of:

- Weaver: makes the basket:
 - 100% aware
- “*Bela-bela*”: Colloquial name for middle-men hustlers who intercept weavers when they enter town on market days (every third day) to sell their basket/s.
 - 25% were aware of *Bela-bela*
- Local exporter/buyer or seller: Those sellers who own warehouses in Bolga or elsewhere and stock them with baskets purchased on market days to sell in large quantities to foreign buyers.
 - 62.5% respondents were aware of local exporter/buyer or seller
- Spokesperson or representatives of independent groups of weavers not organised in any NGO or business. There are many community groups organised by area/proximity to each other but not registered as any business or organisation. Usually the group representative is chosen because they are literate and speak English. The spokesperson is likely to take a cut of the price paid to the weaver.
 - 0% of respondents were aware of spokesperson or representatives of independent groups.
- Registered NGOs or community based organisations (CBOs). There are a number of such organisations and businesses that work directly with weavers, paying them directly, and never sell through the local market, but export or market their baskets directly to shops or customers overseas. Some operate as wholesalers, some as retailers.
 - 50% were aware of these.
- Registered fair trade organisations listed in World Fair Trade Organisation's data base—there were 3 Bolga basket producers listed there.
 - 62.5% were aware of these.
- Solo traders: Small time traders with no affiliation to a weaving community who purchase baskets on an ad-hoc basis. Usually have a shop outside the main warehouse/market area.
 - 0% respondents were aware of solo traders
- An importer in your country: Imports baskets from any of these players in Ghana, lands them in your country and sells them to you. They have contacts in communities in Bolga who act like a local trader or *Bela-bela* on an ad-hoc basis—no warehouse or fixed store.
 - 62.5% (5) were aware of these.

Q 13: Comments were made in relation to question 12:

All comments revealed participants' identity and, thus, have not been included.

Q 14: Market Dynamics

This is an outline of a typical market day in the Bolga basket market. Please refer to the first page of the Appendix to see the full question. It explains the role of traders and a typical day selling baskets for a weaver.

Question: Were you aware of these dynamics? Please comment in the space below:

1. *"No."*
2. *"I believe one of the suppliers I have dealt with has purchased baskets at the open market. My other suppliers tell me they pay the weavers when they come to the supplier's compound and if the baskets meet their quality specifications."*
3. *"We were aware of the buying and selling process and that some women walk many hours to sell their baskets. We saw first-hand the pressure that the individual weavers experience from the bela-bela to sell their baskets quickly. We were not aware of the dynamics or processes such as having to pay 50 pesewas to enter the market and the relationships between the basket weavers, bela-bela and exporters."*
4. *"We haven't bought baskets yet but we would only do so through a registered WFTO fair trade org."*
5. *"I am aware that baskets are sold at the markets and that some international buyers either go to these markets themselves to source baskets or they use a local to do the transaction."*

Q 15: How Exporters Fill Large Orders from International Buyers

When an international buyer requests a specific basket with specific dimensions and/or colours, the local exporter (or his *bela-bela*) visits villages to fill the order. They look for a spokesperson in the village through whom they negotiate. At some point the spokesperson will take a cut of the price the international buyer offers, leaving the weaver with the balance. Based on our meetings in six villages (120 weavers), one group was offered GHC 10.00 per two-coloured market basket in this process. Were you aware that this is how local exporters fill large export orders for international buyers? Please comment:

1. *“One supplier said his company has weavers who work exclusively for him. The other suppliers say the weavers come to them.”*
2. *“We were not aware of this process as we purchase from a women's cooperative. It is our understanding that the Cooperatives operate differently than this.”*
3. *“It depends. We know of one organisation in which the representative of the organisation takes a cut himself from the price paid to weavers. This is based on information provided by two different communities we interviewed who were not aware of each other or the situation. This will be outlined in the community interviews below.”*
4. *“There is a Ghanaian who imports baskets and says it's supporting his community - but, in our work have no idea under what conditions he purchases his baskets, so we do not buy through him.”*

PART 2: BUYING PROCESS

This part focuses on you, the buyer, and your process of purchasing baskets. This section will help us understand the situations that foreign buyers face when purchasing Bolgatanga baskets, in Bolgatanga or elsewhere.

A) Dealing with Sellers

Question 16: Which sellers do you normally buy baskets from?

- Weavers themselves: 0%
- Through a spokesperson for non registered weaving community/ies: 0%
- Through a business that works directly with weavers: 20%
- Through a registered NGO that works directly with weavers: 0%
- Through a registered CBO (community based organisation, a legal entity in Ghana) that works directly with weavers: 0%
- Through a warehouse exporter based in Bolgatanga: 0%
- Through an exporter based elsewhere in Ghana: 0%
- Through a solo (small time) trader with a small shop/rooms in Bolgatanga: 0%
- Through a registered fair trade organisation: 80%
- From an importer in your country: 40%
- From a seller based outside Ghana, but not in your country, that exports to your country: 0%

*Some buyers buy from more than one kind of trader.

Q 17. Comments in relation to Q.16, above.

"Bolga Baskets International. They are not fair trade but advertise as 'Fairly Traded' baskets."

Q 18. Do sellers ever give you assurances of the prices they pay to weavers?

- Yes: 70%
- No: 30%

Q 19. The assurance given to you by the seller on the price they pay to weavers is:

- Verbal: 50%
- Written: 15%
- I don't receive any assurances from the seller: 35%

Q 20. Have you ever seen written or digital evidence of payments to weavers by those you purchase from?

- Yes: 30%
- No: 70%

Q 21: Comments in relation to Question 20

"In their brochure they say "Bolga Baskets International firmly believes in fair trade principles that create environmentally conscious, community sustaining and economically advantaged conditions for all of our employees and partners. Families of many generations participate in the communal effort of basket weaving."

"Fair trade practice requires a buyer to ensure they get evidence of how the producers are paid, and this usually would involve seeing how a product has been 'costed', and how the producers are involved/paid."

Our comment: G-lish contacted COFTA in January 2013, which became WFTO Africa in September 2013 <http://www.wfto-africa.org> on basket producers to find out what weavers are paid with the three registered fair trade organisations, as a prospective buyer ourselves, but they did not respond to our questions or emails regarding prices.

Q 22. Was there a signature or thumbprint on the record of payment?

- Signature: 0%
- Thumbprint: 0% (*Note: It's common in illiterate villages to use a thumbprint instead of signature*)
- Nothing: 100%

Q 23: Did the seller show consistent payment records for at least 12 months?

- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

Our comment: While it's disappointing that no buyers have seen written evidence, it's a good point from which to discuss how this can evolve in future.

Q 24: Has the seller provided any other data regarding payment to the basket weavers?

Comments:

- No.
- Some organisations are better than others at record keeping and this is where working with WFTO helping develop fair trade business practice.
- We have not seen any payment records.

It is important to note that business does not have to be certified fair trade in order to be fair or ethical, at least to meet minimum daily wages.

Q 25: Interacting with Sellers

When purchasing in Ghana, have you ever been accompanied by an independent person with no interest or connection to the straw basket business, in a capacity to observe? For example, a *Frafra* person or local who understands whichever language you're dealing with, with no interest in the financial outcome of the transaction?

- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

Our comment: We asked this because we believe this might be one of the few solutions to ensuring weavers are paid fairly in a transaction with a foreign buyer who has no one to advocate or speak for them. Someone with no financial or direct interest could accompany the buyer to help them know what is happening, what is actually being said in villages and ensure fairness to weavers.

Q 26: Do you think an independent observer might be helpful during a transaction or visit to buy baskets?

- Yes: 100%
- No: 0%

Q 27: Comments relating to question 26.

- *“As an international buyer, knowing who to trust when you buy products is the hardest thing to establish - especially with language and cultural barriers.”*
- *“It is nigh on impossible for a foreign buyer to understand what truly goes on at the grass roots level - I've found that one person tells you one thing and then another tells you the opposite. An independent person could be helpful ... what could also be helpful is once the results of your survey are known, that you produce a list of 'preferred sellers' and maybe distribute that amongst international buyers that you know of or on-line somehow.”*

Our comment: We appreciate these comments and will make a list of preferred sellers. We'll also establish a private, online forum whereby those interested can join and discuss their experiences openly so as to exchange information and better understand traders and buyers.

Q 28: If you have purchased medium to large-sized market baskets, please cite those.

If you purchase other types of baskets, please check the “other” box and write the basket name in space below. Please limit your response to one type of basket. Which type of basket did you buy? Check one.

- Market Basket: 100%
- Other: 0%

Q 29: What is the name of the basket you purchased?

- Large Bolga Basket: I buy it wholesale for \$13, Medium for \$11, Small for \$6.
- Round Markets of all sizes, and a range of other baskets.
- Large Bolga market basket with leather wrap on handle - usually traditional round shape (best seller), although have also had the large rectangular ones in past
- I buy a range of different styles of baskets as follows - in USD: Standard round large basket in traditional designs - \$10 (slightly more expensive for block colours – think they're \$11?).

Q 30: When did this purchase happen? Please write the date.

- January 2013
- October 2012
- December 2012.
- 2011

Q 31: How many baskets were included in the purchase?

- **Responses:** A few to hundreds

Q 32: How much did you pay per basket? Any currency is acceptable.

- Prices were on average \$12 - \$26

Note: Based on calculations above, if a weaver must be paid GHC 20.82 per basket, they must receive US\$10.41 per basket. If the buyer pays \$12, there is no way the weaver was receiving \$10.00. At \$26.00 it is possible.

Q 33: Dealing with Sellers

Who did you purchase from in this particular transaction?

- Weavers themselves: 0%
- Through a spokesperson for non registered weaving community/ies: 0%
- Through a business that works directly with weavers: 15%
- Through a warehouse exporter based in Bolgatanga: 0%
- Through an exporter based elsewhere in Ghana: 0%
- Through a solo (small time) trader with a small shop/rooms in Bolgatanga: 0%
- Through a registered fair trade organisation: 30%
- From an importer in your country: 55%

Q 34: Were you told how much would be paid to weavers in this particular transaction?

- Yes: 15%
- No: 85%

Q 35: If so, how much was quoted as payment to the weaver?

There was one response to this.

- *"I met with women, they are extremely outspoken and they said what they were paid. I didn't see the banking records on that occasion in the 'field', but came away understanding their key concern was more orders - they needed ongoing work."*

Q 36: Did you see evidence of this payment to the weaver?

- Yes: 0%
- No: 100%

Q 37: No comments.

Q 38: If you can include the name of your seller/s to help us map the supply chain and its dynamics in more depth, please do. This is one of the keys to understanding where weavers are most vulnerable.

No respondents commented here.

Q 39. Does the seller you buy from give any kind of support to weavers besides paying for baskets?

- Yes: 75%
- No: 0%
- I don't know: 25%

Q 40. If so, what? And how do they demonstrate this to you?

"Overseas Connection supports the non-profit Every Basket Helps foundation"

"Bolga Baskets International does not give any information other than they "help" the villagers."

"Provides supplies for weaving baskets including grass and dyes. Weavers are paid up front for their baskets as soon as they are woven. They are not expected to go to market to try and sell their own baskets."

"I'm told they are also providing micro-finance to weavers (but I don't know if this is true)."

Q 41. How many years or months have you been dealing with your seller?

- About 5 years.
- 3+ years

- 6 years

Q 42. In which communities are the weavers who make your baskets located?

- *Bolgatanga*
- *Gambibgo, Soe, Nyariga*
- *3 Communities, each a few kilometers from Bolgatanga.*
- *Bolgatanga - not sure of the location of the 5 cooperatives*
- *Not sure of specific communities - but all around Bolga*

Q 43. How often do you visit Ghana to buy baskets?

- *Never*
- *never*
- *Once every three years*
- *Once a year*
- *Been once in five years—now by email.*

Q 44: Below is space for you to write extra comments. We plan to highlight the best basket sellers in our final report and connect them with all the buyers we've contacted.

If you are one of the Bolga-based organizations that pay at least the minimum daily wage to weavers, are you willing to show evidence of these practices in written, documented form so we can highlight you to buyers as preferred and trustworthy sellers?

- *"Since I buy from a US importer, I can't personally know what they are paying to the weavers or who they are buying them from."*
- *"Because I am a small retailer, I don't have the resources to travel to Ghana. But I am very concerned about fair wages for the talented artists who weave the beautiful baskets. I am willing to pay more for a basket when I am convinced the weavers receive the benefit of the higher price. But it is difficult to compete with other retailers who purchase much less expensive baskets and price them way below my baskets. I have encountered this many times and even though customers admire the finer quality, they still want to pay as little as possible."*
- *"Like you, I am concerned about the vulnerability of the women."*
- *"We have found dealing with our supplier has been a positive experience and from what we have seen and what our supplier tells us, we are confident that the women are being supported and paid a fair price. It is our understanding that a sustainable living is possible for the women with the support of a cooperative environment."*

- *“Sounds great - would like to see the possibilities for future trade.”*
- *“I really look forward to the outcomes of this research - and I suppose my particular interest would be to have some independent advice regarding my supplier. I'm not sure that it would be possible to buy baskets from Ghana without using an intermediary” - it takes a lot of to-ing and fro-ing to finalise orders. I just hope that the benefits flow through to the entire supply chain.”*

3. INTERVIEWING WEAVERS IN BOLGATANGA

Introduction

A key part of this research involved field visit interviews with 120 weavers across 6 villages in and around Bolgatanga. These were Tongo-Beo, Dulugu, Gambibigo, Sirigu, Sumburungu, Nyariga. See the map on page 5 for location of these villages around Bolgatanga.

The objective of this research was to understand the weavers' experiences of:

- prices received for their large market basket in the Bolga market
- time taken to undertake this work
- working processes
- awareness of fair prices and profits
- dynamics of the central basket market
- working with buyers
- how their experiences compared with our timed experiments

We do not identify the weavers. We do have images from all meetings, but they will not accompany this report because confidentiality was assured during interviews and traders have been known to become nasty or aggressive when their processes are made public.

The following is the introductory script we explained at each village and the questions follow below. We met 15-30 weavers at each village, across 6 villages, with the total being 120 weavers. We nominated a date, time and place to meet with weavers. The weavers were selected on the basis of weaving straw baskets for sale in the Bolgatanga market.

We met under trees in the village in question. The women mostly sat on stools in a semi-circle. We passed from weaver to weaver with a Dictaphone asking each weaver the same set of questions. They were all recorded. We have the original recordings on file, and the translation follows below. Almost every weaver answered every question.

We noticed during the interviews that though each weaver had to wait her turn in the group, while the one was being asked questions, no one moved or left the group during the interviewing. After completing the 6 field visits and 120 interviews, it seemed that the reason for the good attendance was that the weavers were intent on ensuring their voices were heard and, for many, this was the first chance they had had to express themselves outside their community on these issues.

A key point to bear in mind when reading this section is that the majority of these weavers are illiterate. Most do not speak English, the national language, nor read or write in *any* language. Most *speak* several local languages. We kept the questions as simple as possible and culturally appropriate. We conducted interviews in *Frafra*, the main language of Bolgatanga. The interviews were conducted by Godwin Yidana and translated by him into English. He is fluent in *Frafra* and several other Ghanaian languages as well as English.

In response to many questions, weavers gave qualitative responses, elaborating on the question asked. We have included those comments throughout the responses as well, as they are meaningful and quoted directly from the weavers themselves. It is their best chance at being heard and we felt it was important to include their own words in this report, in addition to the data we aimed to collect.

We had a script and introductory explanation to explain the three sets of questions we asked the weavers.

Script Spoken Prior to Interviewing

The script which was read in *Frafra* at each community prior to beginning the individual interviews:

“Good morning, and welcome to our discussion. My name is Godwin Yidana. On behalf of G-lish Foundation, I would like to thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to hear your opinions and ideas on the supply chain of straw baskets, and how the prices paid to producers compare with fair prices for craft production and the minimum wage in Ghana.

The purpose of this study is to analyse the traditional straw Bolga basket market against fair prices to influence international and local buyers to pay fairer prices for woven baskets made by straw, thus increasing incomes for thousands of individuals across the Upper East Region.

The specific objectives of this study are:

- Assess the gap between prices paid by international buyers to middlemen, and prices paid by middlemen to producers, through a series of interviews in basket making communities, with buyers internationally, and in the basket markets in the region.*
- Hold workshops with basket making communities to educate them about fair prices and related issues.*

We will not associate your names or images with this interview.

We would like to record the focus group discussion so that we can make sure to capture your ideas accurately for our report when we translate it into English.

You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at anytime.

We understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. We will ask participants to respect each other’s confidentiality.

If you have any questions now or after you have completed the discussion, you can always contact a study team member like me, or you can call the G-lish Foundation project team leaders whose names and phone numbers are on this form.

Do you have any questions before we begin?”

Each interviewee provided consent on her own form in a thumbprint or signature.

Interview Questions

Part 1: Process of Baskets Production

1. *How long have you been weaving baskets?*
2. *What type of baskets do you weave?*
3. *Where do you get the straw for your baskets production?*
4. *How many bundles of straw do you use to produce one standard traditional Bolga Basket?*
5. *How much does one bundle of straw cost you in GH¢?*
6. *How long does it take you to split one bundle of straw?*
7. *How long does it take you to twist one bundle of straw?*
8. *How many colours (dye) do you use in making one basket?*
9. *How much does one colour (dye) cost you in GH¢?*
10. *Where do you get the colours (dye) from?*
11. *How long does it take you to coloured (dyed) the twines for weaving?*
12. *How much do you spend on fuel wood for the colouring (dying) of the twines?*
13. *How long does it take to weave a complete standard traditional Bolga Basket?*

Part 2: Transportation of Baskets to the markets

14. *Where do you go to sell your baskets?*
15. *How far is the market place from your home?*
16. *Could you please share with us how you get to the market?*
17. *How long does it take you to get to the market and back home?*
18. *Could you please share with us how much money you spent on travelling to the market and back home?*

Part 3: Sales of Baskets

19. *Could you please explain the process you go through to sell your baskets in the market?*
20. *Can you please tell us how much you normally sell your basket for?*
21. *How are the prices of your baskets determined?*
22. *Who gets the final say in deciding the price of your baskets?*
23. *Could you please tell us who you sell your baskets to?*
24. *Could anyone please share your experiences with us if you have ever attended a tradeshow or another market in Ghana?*
25. *Do you work in a group or as an individual?*
26. *Could you please share with us their experiences working in a group or a cooperative?*
27. *What are differences between working in the group and working as an individual?*
28. *Could you please share with us some of the services your group benefits from apart from sales of baskets?*

Transforming the data from the interviews:

Six focus group discussions were conducted by the research team across six selected basket making communities in the Upper East Region. The communities included Sumbrungu, Sirigu, Nyariga, Tongo-Beo, Dulugu and Gambebigo. The communities were selected on the basis of having a strong basket weaving community there. There are numerous others, but the funding was limited to 120 weavers.

While we have an excel spreadsheet which captures this data across the six villages, for the purposes of this report we have broken down the results by village, rather than across the six villages combined, so that each village can be more clearly understood in its own right.

We spent hundreds of hours (far exceeding the scope of the funded activities) transcribing the recorded comments from *Frafra* to English and capturing those comments in an Excel spreadsheet and writing this

report. We cannot include all comments here as the report will run to hundreds of pages, but we have included as many as possible. (We may create a separate document with all comments by all weavers recorded.)

Overview of responses:

Q1: 120 women we interviewed have 2431 combined years of experience weaving baskets.

The average is 20 years per woman, with the least experienced having 2 years and the most over 50 years. We account for the understanding that, culturally, some people do not know their age or how many years they've been weaving. The figures are likely to be guesses, in some cases, particularly among older women. For women under 40, the estimation is likely to be more accurate. Nonetheless, the figures represent the responses and are considered by the researchers to be near accurate as it is the one cultural practice that almost all rural woman around Bolgatanga practice from their early childhood.

Q2: All interviewees weave the market basket. However, some concentrate on other basket types such as "Gambibigo" basket or "Shopper".

Q3: 100% of respondents purchase their straw from the general Bolgatanga central market. It's not the same as the basket market. In Bolgatanga proper, there is a food market where vegetables, fruit and meat and other locally produced items are sold. It's here that straw is also sold every third market day. This is where the weaver buys the straw from.

Q4: The average quoted was 3.5 bundles per basket. Some mentioned as much as 5 and as little as 2. But the majority said 3-4. Our figures calculated 3.

Q6: Seven weavers wildly overestimated their responses. If these seven are removed, the average is 2.3 hours. Interestingly, only one weaver quoted less than one hour to split one bundle. Given that our experiments took 70 minutes for 3 bundles, without stopping, we believe weavers don't measure the time it takes. We also understand they do not do this step continuously, but between chores and interruptions from children and family. The responses to this question highlight the need for training for illiterate producers on the basics of costing time.

Q7: The response to this was average 7 hours. We began to suspect that the interviewees believed us to be potential buyers and that the interview was just a test. We suspected the responses were given to make the process seem longer than it is so we, as potential buyers, may pay more.

Sirigu Community Responses

PART 1) Process of Baskets Production

1. Years of experience in basket weaving
 - 66.7%: 3 years of basket making experience
 - 6.67%: 4 years
 - 6.67%: 5 years
 - 13.33%: 6 years
 - 6.67%: 10 years
2. Type of basket you weave
 - 100% weave the traditional Bolga market basket.
 - 40% weave other baskets besides market baskets
3. Where you buy the straw for their baskets from
 - 100% of the participants purchase from the Bolga market.
4. How many bundles do you use to make one basket
 - 86.67% of the participants, said that they use three bundles of straw to complete weaving one traditional Bolga market basket.
 - 6.67% use 2 bundles to weave one standard traditional basket
 - 6.67% use 3.5 bundles to weave one basket.
5. Could you share with us how much you buy one bundle for
 - 100% buy one bundle of straw for GHC 2.00
6. Please share with us the amount of time you spent splitting one bundle of straw
 - 13.33% spent 2 hours
 - 6.67% spent 3 hours
 - 6.67% spent 6 hours
 - 53.33% spent 24 hours to split one bundle of straw.
 - 13.33% spent 48 hours
 - 6.67% said that they do not know the time they spent to split one bundle. They said they do not time their activities.

Weaver's comment: "We don't really timed ourselves when splitting the straw. We don't know the concept of time so we just sit and split till we finish or stop if we have to do something like cook"

7. Time spent twisting one bundle of straw
 - 6.67% spent 2 hours to twist one bundle of straw.
 - 6.67% spent 6 hours to twist one bundle of straw.
 - 26.67% spent 24 hours to twist one bundle of straw.
 - 60% spent 28 hours to twist one bundle of straw
8. Number of colours used per basket
 - 6.67% use 2 colours for one basket.

- 66.67% use 3 colours per one basket
 - 26.67% use 4 colours per basket
9. Cost per Colour (GHC)
- 100% spent GHC 0.50 on one colour of dye.
10. Where they buy their colours from
- 46.67% buy their colours from the Bolgatanga Market.
 - 20% buy their colours from either Zorko Market or Bolgatanga Market
 - 6.67% buy their colours from the Zorko Market.
 - 13.33% buy their colours from the Sirigu Market
 - 13.33% buy their colours from either the Sirigu Market or the Bolgatanga Market.
11. How long it takes to colour straw twines for one basket
- 13.33% spend 2 hours to dye/colour the twines for one basket.
 - 6.67% spend 3 hours
 - 6.67% spend 4 hours
 - 6.67% spend 5 hours
 - 13.33% spend 6 hours
 - 53.33% spend 24 hours
12. Amount spent on fire wood for colouring Twines
- 100% spend GHC 5.00 on fire wood for dying one basket's twines.
13. Number of days it takes to weave one traditional Bolga Basket
- 6.67% spend 3 days
 - 53.33% spend 4 days
 - 40% spend 6 days

Our comment: It is important to note here that time is not measured by daily activities. The reference to days here (and in subsequent communities) does not reflect the actual time it takes to complete one basket. It takes 19 hours weaving time on average to complete a basket. This was confirmed by our controlled weaving experiments where a relatively fast weaver was timed throughout the process of weaving baskets.

PART 2) Transportation of Baskets to the Markets

14. Where They sell The Baskets
- 100% sell their baskets at the Bolgatanga Market to various buyers, including the '*BelaBela*', local exporters and foreign buyers.
15. Distance between Home and Market
- 86.67% do not know the distance they travel between their homes and the market
 - 13.33% said the distance between their homes and the market where they sell their baskets is 12 miles.
16. How the Women Travel to the Market
- 93.33% get to the market by boarding trotros

- 6.67% walk to the market to sell their baskets

Weaver's comment: "I don't know how far it is. I board a trotros to get to the market. It takes 3 hours."

Our comment: If you're on a motorbike it would take about 30 minutes, but trotros are vehicles like buses and they don't leave until they're full. So you might be sitting in one waiting for an hour or two for other passengers before it leaves. These are the most common mode of transport in Ghana. Most women don't have a vehicle so they have to use this public form of transport and incur the waiting time, or walk.

17. How Long it takes to get to the market and back home

- 13.33% take 2 hours
- 26.67% take 3 hours
- 40% take 4 hours
- 13.13% take 5 hours
- 6.67% take 6 hours

18. Cost of Traveling to the Market and back Home

- 60% spend GHC 5.00 on travelling to the market and home
- 6.67% spend GHC 6.00
- 33.33% spend GHC 7.00

PART 3) Sales of Baskets

19. Process You go through to sell Your Baskets

- 100% pay a market toll of GHC0.50 per basket before they are permitted to go into the market to sell their baskets.

20. How the Prices of the Baskets are Determined

- 100% negotiate and haggle with the buyers to determine the final prices of their baskets.

Weaver's comment: I sent one traditional basket to the market recently. I told the buyer I wanted GHc 10.00 but he said he'll pay GHc 8.00 and I insisted on GHc 10.00 so he finally paid me GHc 10.00.

21. Who decides the final price of the basket?

- 73.33% said the buyer decides the final price
- 26.67% said they themselves decide the final prices of their baskets.

Our comment: The majority of respondents explained that they do not always get the prices they would prefer and that it is what the buyers deem as the value that they receive as the price.

To quote one respondent: *"The man with the purse is the powerful person so he decides the final price of my basket but that does not mean that I'm happy with it. I take the money because if I don't, my children will not eat that day."*

22. Who do you sell your baskets to?

- 40% of respondents usually sell their baskets to the highest bidder — whoever offers the most in the market
- 20% sell their baskets to local exporters
- 13.33% sell to either foreign buyers or local exporters
- 6.67% sell their baskets only to the middlemen ('BelaBela')
- 6.67% sell to either the middlemen ('BelaBela') or local exporters
- There are different categories of buyers in the baskets market: middlemen ('BelaBela'), local exporters, and the foreign exporters (visitors).

Weavers' comments: "EXPORTER NAME used to bring us straw for us to weave and they'll come for the baskets but refuse to pay us so we stopped working with them."

"We don't get any services. EXPORTER NAME bought the straw and colours for us but after the work they didn't pay us nor gave us any order to produce baskets from them."

*"We don't get any services at all. Even the baskets that **exporter name** gave us orders to produce they didn't pay us for them."*

"We only get orders to weave baskets. At times they don't even pay us for the baskets we produce."

Our comment: Godwin Yidana was interviewing the women one-by-one at this point. Gayle Pescud was present and observing. Each time we arrived at this question she noticed a shift in body language of the female "representative" of the group who did the negotiations with the exporter. She stopped Godwin while he was interviewing one woman to clarify what was being said and then understood the situation and reason for the clearly anxious representative.

We then asked the group to elaborate on what happened with this exporter. We learned that this woman represented the weavers. The weavers were only paid GHC2 per basket each, for the two baskets. They were paid nothing for subsequent two baskets. None of them said that the representative took a cut—she was sitting there in front of them so it was unlikely they would say so. We did not have to guess that she failed in her role to represent the weavers in receiving a fair price for their baskets. The exporter who ordered but did not pay for the baskets exports globally and is well known in Ghana and abroad.

Our comment: Middlemen pervade the market, living off the efforts of the weavers. They buy the baskets cheaply from weavers and sell them off to local exporters or foreign exporters for higher profit margins. They are the main challenge to the weavers, especially older weavers who live out in the rural areas with no knowledge of how the basket market system works and who lack the confidence to bargain with the middlemen.

The local exporters are local businessmen and businesswomen who probably were once middlemen but have made enough money off the backs of the weavers and have upgraded to the level of exporters. They have an arrangement with the middlemen in the market who buy from weavers and then sell them off to the local exporters for profit, who then export or sell to tourists at very higher prices.

They collude with the middlemen to exploit weavers who do the hard and skilled work of weaving the baskets and walking several kilometers with the hope of making money to help take care of their families.

23. Tradeshow Experiences

- 80% said that they have been participating in an annual tradeshow programme organised by SWOPA, a local NGO. Most of them, however, said that they hardly make any sales at the SWOPA annual tradeshow.
- 13.33% have participated in trade-show events at the Craft Centre in Bolgatanga. Some of them said that they were able to sell their baskets while others said that they were not able to sell their products.
- 6.67% have never been to any tradeshow.

24. Work in a Group or Alone

- 93.33% work in an informal group
- 6.67% work alone as individuals
- 50% of the 93.33% of respondents who said that they work in a group also indicated that they work as individuals during periods when their group does not have orders from buyers.

25. Share your experiences in your group with us

- 40% said that they weave baskets in their group and offer advice and assistance to each other.
- 26.67% weave baskets in their group and also strategise on how to improve their living standards by holding regular meetings to discuss issues that affect their living conditions and how to address them collectively.
- 13.33% only weave baskets in their group.
- 13.33% weave baskets and contribute money regularly to help each other in times of need in their group (It must, however, be noted that the amount they contribute monthly--GHC 0.50 (25 cents)--is inadequate to make any sustainable change in these women's lives.)
- 6.67% of respondents could not share their experiences of working in group with us because they had just joined their group.

26. Share with us the differences between working in a group and working alone

- 66.67% said that the difference between being in a group and working alone is that the group fosters unity, provides a peer learning platform and promotes happiness, whereas working alone does not provide these benefits.
- 20% of the participants said that working in a group promotes healthy competition and reduces laziness whereas working alone increases laziness.
- Only 13.33% of respondents said that the group enables them to discuss common issues and shared ideas on how to address such issues, which promotes happiness. One participant said:

“The group is very helpful because we come together and advice each other on how to handle family matters. The group also enables us to live in unity and this makes me happy.”

27. Please Share with us any other benefits groups get apart from orders

100% said they do not benefit from any training or services apart from receiving orders to produce baskets from various buyers and organisations.

Our comments: Four of the weavers said that some organisations within Ghana failed to pay them after they produced the baskets and handed them over to the organisation. In this case, it was a business in Ghana which exports baskets in bulk. They said that the organisations provided them with the straw to produce the baskets in large quantities, but after they produced the baskets, the organisations did not pay them. The organization's reason for not paying was that the quality of the baskets was low, but the baskets were accepted by the organisation nonetheless.

Of not being paid by the local business that took their baskets, one respondent said: *“They are only adding to our plight because the little that we have they come here and deceive us and take that away from us. They are the ones reaping the benefits of our toils while we continue to wallow in poverty even though we work very hard daily.”*

28. How much do you normally sell your large market baskets for?

- 1 person usually sells for GHC8.50
- 1 person usually sells for GHC 9.00.
- 1 person usually sells for GHC 9.50
- 4 people usually sells for GHC 10.00
- 2 people sell for GHC11.00
- 3 people sell for GHC 12.00.
- 1 person usually sells for GHC12.50.
- 2 usually sell for GHC13.00

We know the figure we seek to ensure the minimum daily wage in Ghana is met is 20.82 GHC at this time.

We know from our attempts to sell a large market basket in the Bolga market at this time that the most offered price was GHC 10.00; sometimes 11.00 or 12.00 and sometimes less than 10.00. As the earlier calculations demonstrated, this is barely a profit over cost of materials. This did not include the cost of transport to get to the market, which is at least 1.00. At these prices, the weaver does not cover the cost of time nor make the minimum wage in Ghana if they are purchasing their own materials, which they do when they sell in the open market.

Nyariga Community Responses

1. Years of Basket Weaving Experience
 - 20% of the respondents said that they have been weaving baskets for 30 years
 - 20% 35 years
 - 15% 40 years
 - 10% 45 years
 - 15% 50 years
 - 10% 55 years
 - 5% 60 years
 - 5% 70 years
2. Type of Basket Woven
 - 100% can weave the market basket
 - Up to 35% can weave various other styles of baskets
3. Where do you buy straw from?
 - 100% said that they buy their straw from the Bolgatanga market.
4. Number of bundles of straw use to make one basket?
 - 90% use four bundles of straw per one basket
 - 10% use three bundles of straw.
5. Cost of One Bundle of Straw
 - 80% buy one bundle of straw for GHC 4.00 (longer ones).
 - 20% said one bundle of straw costs them GHC 2.00 (shorter ones).
6. Time spent in splitting One Bundle of Straw
 - 5% said that they spent 1 hour to split one bundle of straw.
 - 5%: 1.5 hours
 - 15%: 2 hours
 - 10%: 2.5 hours
 - 20%: 3 hours
 - 15%: 3.5 hours
 - 5%: 4 hours
 - 10%: 6 hours
 - 10%: 24 hours
 - 5% said that they do not know how many hours they spent in splitting one bundle of straw
7. Time spent in Twisting One Bundle of Straw
 - 40% of the participants said that they spent two hours to twist one bundle of straw
 - 10%: 2.5 hours
 - 10%: 3 hours
 - 30%: 24 hours
 - 5%: 48 hours
 - 5%: 72 hours
8. Number of colours used per basket
 - 40% use three colours

- 45% use four colours
 - 15% use five colours
9. Cost per colour/dye (GHC)
- 90% said GHC 0.50 per colour
 - 10% said GHC 0.60 per colour
10. Where do you buy your dyes/colours from?
- 90% buy their dyes/colours from the Bolgatanga Market.
 - 5% buy their colours/dyes from either the Bolgatanga Market **or** from Nyariga Junction
 - 5% of them said that they buy their colours/dyes from the Nyariga Junction
11. Amount of Time They spent in Colouring/Dying Basket Twines
- 20% spend 2 hours in colouring/dying one basket's twines
 - 35% spend 3 hours
 - 15% spend 4 hours
 - 10% spend 6 hours
 - 5% take 8 hours
 - 10% spend 10 hours
 - 5% take 24 hours.
12. Amount Spent on fire wood for Colouring/Dying Twines (GHC)
- 10% spend GHC 2.00
 - 10% spend GHC 3.00
 - 60% spend GHC 4.00
 - 20% spend GHC 5.00
13. Number of Days spent on Weaving One Traditional Bolga Basket
- 15% spend 2 days
 - 5% spend 2.5 days
 - 35% spend 3 days
 - 30% spend 4 days
 - 15% spend 5 days
14. Where They sell Their Baskets
- 100% sell their baskets at the Bolgatanga Market.
15. Distance between Their Homes and the Market
- 25% of the respondents said that they do not know the distance between their homes and the Bolgatanga Market
 - 20% said 4 miles
 - 5% said 6 miles
 - 5% said 6.5 miles
 - 10% said 7 miles
 - 5% said 8 miles
 - 10% said 10 miles
16. How do you get to the market?

- 95% said that they get up early in the morning and walk to the market to sell their baskets. They explained that the transport system is not reliable and also that they cannot afford the transport fares.
- 5% said that they usually board a trotros to the market to sell their baskets.

17. Number of hours you spent getting to the market and back home

- 15% spend 4 hours to get to the market and back home.
- 5% spend 4.5 hours
- 10% spend 5 hours
- 45% spend 6 hours
- 10% spend 7 hours
- 10% spend 8 hours
- 5% spend 10 hours

18. How much do you spend going to and from the market from home?

- 95% of respondents said they do not spend any money travelling between the homes and the market because they walk to the market.
- Only 5% of the participants said that they spent GHC 3.00 to get to the market and back home.

Weavers' comments: "I don't know. I walk. 6 hours."

"I walk. When I leave early in the morning at 6:00am I get to the market by 9:00am"

Our comment: The unreliable nature of the transport system in the rural areas and fares could explain why most interviewees walk such long distances to the market and back home. Most of the women said that they do not have any money by the time they had finished weaving their baskets so the only option for them is to walk to the market. And after selling they chose to walk home because the transport of GHC 1.50 (US 75 cents) is exorbitant and they cannot afford the fares.

19. How do you sell your baskets at the market?

- 90% pay a gate toll of 0.50 p at the entrance before they are allowed into the market to sell their baskets.
- Only 10% of the respondents said that they pay GHC 1.00 per basket as gate toll before being allowed into the market to sell their baskets. They complained that this amount is too high.

Weavers' comments: "When I get to the entrance of the market I pay a levy of GHc 0.50 per basket and then go into the market to sell my baskets to the buyers."

"When I get to the market, the ticket people will make me leave one of my baskets with them then I'll be allowed to go into the market and sell the other baskets. When I finish selling those that I have been permitted to sell, I'll have to come back to them and pay GHc0.50 per basket before I get to take the other basket into the market to sell."

Our comments: They said that if they don't have money on them, they leave one basket as security at the entrance and go and sell the other baskets and then come back and pay the toll before being allowed to re-enter the market to sell the last basket. They explained that this adversely affects them because by the time they return to the market with the last basket, buyers would have left, making it difficult to find market for that one basket.

20. How the prices of the baskets are determined

- 100% said that they bargain and negotiate the prices of their baskets with the buyers.

21. Who decides final price of baskets?

- 80% said that the buyer decides the final prices of the baskets. One participant said: *“The buyer has the final say because the amount I want I'll not get it so whatever he says he's willing to pay that is what I have to take.”*
- 20% said that the producers decide the final prices of the baskets.

22. Who producers sell their baskets to:

- 70% sell to the middlemen (*'BelaBela'*) alone
- 15% sell to either the middlemen (*'BelaBela'*) or the local exporters
- 10% could not say who they sell their baskets to. They only referred to them as the market people
- 5% sold to either the middlemen (*'BelaBela'*) or to any foreign buyers who visit the market on Bolga Market Day

Our comment: The significant issue here is that majority of the producers do not get direct access to their actual buyer, even in the open market. There is a chain of middlemen, locally referred to as *'BelaBela'*. They're informal assistants for traders who cannot cope, individually, with the volume of baskets on market day. This reduces the time pressure on the main trader when he outsources his work to *BelaBela* who then take a cut of 1-2 GHC per basket, even though the *BelaBela* have done the least amount of work and made least investment in this process.

One woman said: *“It's the “BelaBela” who control the market. Do we have any option?”*

23. Tradeshow Experiences

- 90% said that they have never participated in any tradeshow event, while 10% have participated in a tradeshow at the Bolga Arts Centre.

24. Working in a Group or Alone

- 95% said that they work in a group, while only 5% of them said that they work both in a group and as individuals.

25. Experiences working in a group

- 90% weave baskets and farm during the wet season in their group, while only 10% of them said that they only weave baskets in their groups.
- Farming activities in the northern part of Ghana are dictated by the weather. There is only one short raining season, starts in May/June and ends in September/October. The weaving of baskets supplements the long dry season.

26. Difference between working in a group and working alone

- 40% of the respondents said that working in a group promotes peer teaching and learning. *“Because we work together if you don't know something someone else will teach you.”*
- 30% said that working in a group promotes unity and love among its members whereas working as an individual does not foster unity because it keeps the women apart.
- 25% of the participants said that working in a group enables them to offer advice to one another and also assist each other to solve their personal or family problems, whereas working at an individual deprives one of these benefits.
- Only 5% of the respondents said that working in the group enables them to access raw materials for weaving their baskets from buyers who pre-finance their orders, whereas working as individual does not provide one with the group guarantee necessary to access materials in bulk for production of baskets on a pre-finance basis.

27. What other benefits do buyers give you besides orders?

- 100% said that they do not get any benefits or assistance from buyers except occasional orders to produce baskets.

28. How much do you receive per basket?

- 10% for GHC 8.50.
- 25% GHC 9.00
- 10% GHC 9.50
- 20% GHC 10.00.
- 10% GHC 10.50
- 20% GHC 11.00
- 5% GHC 12.00

Sumburungu Community Responses

PART 1: Process of basket production

1. Years of experience in basket weaving:
 - The majority of weavers in the Sumburungu community have an average experience of 20 to 25 years in basket making
 - The majority have been weaving baskets since their teens
 - One eighty year-old woman said “I have been weaving baskets since I was 13 years old.”
2. Type of basket woven
 - 100% of participants can weave the traditional Bolga market basket
 - Up to 45% can weave other types of baskets
3. Where do you buy straw from?
 - All the participants in this community buy their straw from the Bolga market.
4. Number of bundles use to make one basket
 - 75% of participants use between 4 to 4.5 bundles of straw to weave one standard traditional Bolga market basket
 - 15% use between 3-3.5 bundles
 - 10% use an average of 5-5.5 bundles
5. Cost of one bundle
 - 85% said they purchase a bundle of straw for GHC 2.00-2.50
 - 10% for GHC 3.00-3.50
 - 5% for GHC4.00-4.50
6. Time spent to split one bundle
 - 30% said 1-1.5 hours to split one bundle of straw
 - 55% said 2-2.5 hours
 - 5% said 3-3.5 hours
 - 5% said 4-4.5 hours
 - 5% said 5-5.5 hours
7. Time to twist one bundle of straw
 - 55% said 1 day to twist one bundle of straw
 - 45% said 2 days
 - 15% said 3 days
8. How many colours do they use to dye the straw?
 - 5% use 4 colours
 - 75% use 5 colours
 - 20% use 6 colours
9. Cost per colour (dye) to participants
 - 100% of participants said they buy one colour of dye for GHC 0.50.
10. Where do you get colours from?

- 85% of participants purchase their colours from the Bolga market
- 10% purchase colours from the Nyariga junction.
- 5% purchase their colours from the Zorko market.

11. How long it takes to colour the twines for one basket?

- 65% didn't know the time the spent to colour their twines.
- 10% spent between 2-2.5 hours in colouring their twines.
- 10% spent between 3-3.5 hours in dying their twines for weaving
- 10% spent between 4-4.5 hours to dye their twines for weaving.
- 5% spent between 5-5.5 hours in dying their twines.

12. How much spent on fuel wood for dying twines

- 5% spent GHC 3.00 on fire wood for dying their twines.
- 50% spent GHC 5.00
- 20% spent GHC 6.00
- 10% GHC 7.00
- 15% spent GHC 10.00

13. How long it takes to weave one basket

- 10% spend 3 days to weave a basket.
- 5% spend 6 days
- 40% said 7 days
- 5% said 12 days
- 25% said 2 weeks
- 15% said 21 days

Our comments: The weavers might consider days as in the number of consecutive days in which some part of those days was spent working on the basket, not full days, as we calculated. Almost none of the weavers we met knew of the concept of putting value on time spent on work done. The women generally do not consider time in their daily activities. The amount of time they spend on basket work depends on the amount of household chores and other family responsibilities that the women have to do. This is a patriarchal society where women have to do all the household chores, work on farms during the rainy season or attend funerals, in addition to working to earn money to support the family. This is partly why it is difficult for the women to put time to their basketry activities.

PART 2: Transportation of Baskets to the Markets

14. Where do you sell your baskets?

- 85% sell their baskets in the Bolga market
- 15% sell their baskets at the Nyariga junction (to traders who take them on to the Bolga market)

15. How far is your home from the market?

- For 35%, the distance from their homes to the market is 7 miles
- 25%: 8 miles
- 5%: 9 miles
- 15%: 10 miles
- 10%: 12 miles
- 5%: 13 miles
- 5%: 20 miles

16. How do you get the market?

- 45% walk on foot to the market to sell their baskets
- 35% take a trotro to the market to sell their baskets
- 20% take the trotro when they have money but walk on foot when they don't have money.

17. How long to get to the market and back home?

- 5% spend 1 hour to get to the market and back home.
- 20% spend 2 hours
- 10% spend 4 hours
- 15% spend 6 hours
- 35% spent 8 hours
- 5% spend 10 hours

One woman said, "I walk to the market and come back home in a trotro. If I wake up and start my journey at 6:00am, I'll be in the market by 10:00am. I think I'll spent less amount of hours to get back home from the market.

18. How much money do you spend getting to market and back home?

- 20% spent GHC 3.00
- 5% spent GHC 3.50
- 10% spent GHC 4.00
- 50% of participants spent GHC5.00
- 5% spend GHC 7.00
- And 5% spend GHC 10.00

PART 3: Sales of Baskets

19. Process of selling basket in market?

- 65% pay a market toll of GHC 0.50 per basket at the entrance of the market before they're allowed into the market to sell their baskets.
- 35% pay 1 GHC

One woman said, "I pay a levy of GHc 0.50 per basket at the entrance of the market before I'm allowed into the market. When I enter the market and there are no visitors on that day, the middlemen will take my basket and ask me to wait around while they go around to try to sell it for me. If I try to follow them they will say just stay there we'll bring your money for you."

Another said, "After paying a levy of GHc 0.50 and entering into the market, the "BelaBela" will come for my basket and go round the market till they get a profit on top of my asking price. When they get the profit, they take that profit as theirs and give me my money but if they don't get any profit on top of my asking price they bring the basket back to me with an excuse that people are not interested in my basket."

20. How do you determine price of your basket?

- 90% complained that the middlemen use tricks on them to get them to lower the prices of their baskets so that the middlemen get their cut when selling to the exporters.

One of the participants said: *"In my community basket weaving is the only work that women do. When I go to the market to sell my basket the "BelaBela" will come for the basket and ask me how much do I want? I'll say GHc 15.00 and he will say, if you go into the market and see how baskets are everywhere you'll not say that you want GHc 15.00. Then he will take the basket away and come back later with GHc 10.00. If you say your basket is worth more, he will say, 'well, that is how much they have bought it for so if you'll take the money take or else I'll go and bring back your basket for you.' If you take your basket back what will you and your children back home? So I'll take the GHc 10.00 but I know that I've been cheated."*

Another said: "It's the "BelaBela" that are killing us. You'll sit down and suffer to weave a basket and then when you get to the market they come for your basket and go round the market with it and come back with an excuse that there are no buyers just so they can get you to lower the price for them to make their cut."

Another said, "When the "BelaBela" takes my basket, I tell him that I want 12.00 and he'll say he will pay 10.00. Then he'll take the basket away and come back with GHc 8.00 and say the market is not good today or that the exports didn't like my design so I'm forced to take the GHc 8.00 even though I know my basket is worth GHc 12.00."

Another said, "The quality of the baskets differs. When I take my good quality basket to the market and the "BelaBela" approached me I tell him I want GHc 12.00 for the basket. He'll say ok and take the basket and go and sell it to the exporters and come back to me with GHc 10.00 with the excuse that they didn't like my design. At that point, it'll be difficult for me to take the basket back and try to sell it myself because most of the exporters know the "BelaBela" and will not buy directly from me at my asking price of GHc 12.00. They will insist on paying me the GHc 10.00."

21. Who gets the final say in deciding the price of your basket?

- 65% mentioned the buyer as having the final say in deciding the price of their basket
- 35% of them said it's the "BelaBela" who gets the final say in deciding the price of their baskets.

Our comments: There are no guarantees that a woman going to the market with a basket will sell it. They accept prices quoted by the middlemen and local exporters because, if they do not, their families will not have anything to eat that day or for the entire week. One of the participants said: "The one who has the money speaks the truth". This means that the rich person, or more specifically, the middlemen and local exporters wield the truth and power as far determining the final price of a basket is concerned.

22. Who do you sell your baskets to?

- 50% said they sell their baskets to the local exporters.
- 35% sell their baskets to middlemen ("BelaBela").
- 10% said they sell their baskets to the foreign buyers (visitors).
- 5% did not know who they sell their baskets to. They simply categorized them as buyers, implying that they sell to anybody in the market who is ready and willing to buy their baskets.

23. Share your experience of attending a tradeshow or visiting another market with us

- 90% of the participants have never attended any tradeshow
- 10% of them said that they have attended a trade show event.

One of the women who participated in a trade-show said: "I have participated in a tradeshow organised by the Christian Mothers Association of the Catholic Church. The venue was Ho and they bought my baskets. I really enjoyed the experience. I saw what other people were doing in their own villages too and interacted with them. This made me happy."

24. Work as an individual or in a group

- 70% of the participants work as individuals. They sit at home and weave the baskets and when finished they take them to the open market on market days to sell to various buyers. These include middlemen, local exporters and foreign buyers.
- 30% of them said that they work in a group. Most of these women said that their groups take orders from individual local exporters and foreign buyers, through their local community representatives, and work together as a unit to deliver those orders. However, if they do not have any orders, they weave individual baskets for the open market.

25. Share your experiences of working in a group with us

- 30% of participants who worked in groups were asked to share their experiences working in groups with the rest of the participants. The following were some of the things shared:
 - *"We take orders and weave the baskets in a group".*
 - *"Our group is a women's weavers group that take orders from visitors and work together to deliver the orders. We also contribute monthly dues. However, these days we hardly get orders so we do individual weaving too"*
 - *"In the group they give us orders and weave but when we don't get the orders we weave our individual baskets and go to sell them in the open market".*
 - *"In the group we use unity to bring everyone together and do get orders from the white people to weave baskets together for them. We also contribute monthly dues in the group".*
 - *"In our group we take orders from buyers who want uniform baskets and we work together as a group to deliver the orders".*
 - *"We have a basket weaving association and we have leaders who go around and bring us orders and we work as a group to deliver the orders".*
 - *"We weave baskets in a common place. People bring us orders and we work together to deliver them".*

26. Share with us the differences between working in a group and working as an individual

- The 30% of participants who said that they worked in a group were asked to share some experiences:

"Working in a group helps me know different designs and styles of baskets."

"In our group we pay dues so it's not everybody who wants to pay the dues. When we get a big order we call those who are outside the group to help us work to meet deadlines. The group is helpful because we're able to get big orders with guaranteed prices."

"The difference between working in a group and working alone is that in a group you benefit from large orders with guaranteed prices while as an individual weaver you sell in the open market with no guaranteed prices."

"If you're in a group you get to learn how to weave different types of baskets. It also helps you save money on transport and paying levies because you don't go to the open market to sell."

Also, when you learn how to weave different types of baskets, when the market price for one basket has fallen you can always shift to the ones with better market prices”.

“As a group all the buyers know as one unit so when they need baskets they inform our leaders and they tell us and we work to deliver the orders. The buyers pay guaranteed prices for the baskets but in the open market there is no guaranteed prices”.

“Working in a group enables us to share our burdens as women. Maybe, I don't have salt in my house but I have to cook, so I can just ask one of my colleagues in the group for the salt but if I'm not in a group I can't ask for that help”.

27. Please share some of the benefits your group gets with us apart from sales of baskets

- The 30% of participants who worked in groups said that they do not get any other benefit or services as a group except the orders that they occasionally get from various buyers.

“In our group we have not received any assistance apart from the orders”.

“We have asked for soft loans to buy a lot of our weaving materials like straw but we have not yet received any help apart from the occasional basket orders”.

“They do give the best weavers some awards but not collective assistance or services to the group”.

“In my group it's only baskets orders that we get”.

28. How much do you normally sell your basket for

- 5%: GHC 8.00-8.50
- 15%: GHC 9.00-9.50
- 30%: GHC 10.00-10.50
- 25%: GHC 11.00-11.50
- 10%: GHC 12.00-12.50
- 10%: GHC 13.00-13.50
- 5%: GHC 14.00-14.50

Tongo-Beo Community Responses

1. Years of Basket Weaving Experience
 - 5%: 2 years of basket weaving experience
 - 5%: 3 years
 - 5%: 6 years
 - 10%: 8 years
 - 5%: 9 years
 - 10%: 10 years
 - 10%: 15 years
 - 30%: 20 years
 - 15%: 30 years
 - 5%: 40 years

3. Type of baskets respondents weave
 - 70% weave only the traditional Bolga market basket
 - 15% of them said that they weave plates.
 - 10% weave the Pot-like baskets
 - 5% weave the Modern/Shopper baskets

4. Where Participants buy their Straw from?
 - 100% buy straw from the Bolgatanga Market.

5. Number of Bundles of Straw that Participants use per Basket
 - 70% use 3 bundles of straw to weave one basket
 - 30% of them said that they use 4 bundles of straw per basket

6. Cost of One Bundle of Straw (GHC)
 - 25% buy one bundle of straw for GHC 2.00
 - 60% for GHC 4.00
 - 10% for GHC 5.00
 - 5% for GHC 6.00

7. Number of Hours use to Split One Bundle of Straw
 - 15% spend thirty minutes to split a bundle of straw
 - 55% spend 1 hour
 - 5% spend 2 hours
 - 10% spend 3 hours
 - 5% spend 7 hours
 - 5% spend 6 hours
 - 5% said that they do not know how long it takes them to split a bundle of straw.

8. Time Spend twisting One Bundle of Straw
 - 10% take 30 minutes to twist one bundle of straw
 - 10% spend 1 hour
 - 45% spend 2 hours
 - 10% spend 3 hours
 - 10% spend five hours to twist one bundle of straw.
 - 5% spend six hours to twist one bundle of straw.
 - 5% of them said that they spend seventy-two hours (three days)

- 5% of the respondents said that they do not know how long it takes them to twist one bundle of straw.
9. Number of Colours participants use per Basket
- 45% use 3 colours of dye per basket.
 - 50% use 4 colours per basket
 - 5% use 5 colours per basket.
10. Cost per Colour of Dye
- 55% said that they spent GHC 1.00 on one colour of dye.
 - 25% spend GHC 0.80.
 - 20% spend GHC 0.30.
11. Where Participants their Dyes from
- 100% buy the colours of dye for their baskets from the Bolgatanga Market.
12. Time Spent to Dye Twines for One Basket
- 50% of the respondents said that they spent one hour to colour the twines for one basket
 - 25% take 2 hours
 - 10% spend 3 hours
 - 5% spend 4 hours
 - 5% of them said that they spent 6 hours
 - 5% of the participants said that they do not know the time they spent in dying one basket's twines
13. Amount Participants Spent on Fuelwood for Dying a Basket's Twines
- 55% spend GHC 2.00 to buy fire wood for colouring basket twines
 - 35% said GHC 4.00
 - 10% spend GHC 5.00
14. Number of Days Participants spent on Weaving One Traditional Bolga Basket
- 20% said one day to weave a traditional Bolga basket.
 - 45% of the respondents said that they spent two days to weave one traditional Bolga basket.
 - 20% spend three days
 - 10% spend four days
 - 5% spend seven days
15. Where Participants sell Their Baskets
- 100% said that they sell their baskets at the Bolgatanga Basket Market.
16. Distance between Participants Homes and the Bolga Market
- The distance between the Beo community and the Bolga Market, where participants go to sell their baskets and transact other business activities, is three miles.
17. Means of Transport use by Participants to the Market
- 85% said walk to the market to sell their baskets
 - 15% catch a *share bus* to the market

18. Number of Hours Participants spend getting to the Market and back Home

- 10% take 2 hours
- 30% spend 3 hours
- 40% spend 4 hours
- 5% spend 6 hours
- 5% spend 7 hours
- 10% spend 9 hours

19. Costs Incurred by Participants to Get to the Market and back Home

- 85% spend GHC 1.70
- 15% spend GHC 1.00

20. Process Participants go through to sell Their Baskets at the Market

- 100% pay a market toll to enter the market to sell their baskets.

“When I get to the market I take the basket to one buyer and if his/her price is not good, I take it to another buyer. I'll go round till find a good price. The buyers are many in the market.”

“When you get there and a buyer buys the basket and you don't like the amount you have to give it to the middlemen and they will go and sell the basket and take their cut.”

“When you get to the market and your baskets are four or five, you'll have to pay a levy at the gate. If you don't have money, the ticket man will seize one of your baskets and let you into the market to try to sell the rest. When you enter the market and they buy your baskets and you are happy with the amount you take it but if you're not, you move onto another buyer. When you are done selling those baskets that you took into the market with you, you have to go back and pay levy at the gate before your other basket is release to you so you can then go back into the market and sell that one too.”

21. Process of Determining the Prices of the baskets at the Market

- 75% of the participants said that they usually negotiate the prices of their baskets with the buyers until they arrive at a good price.
- 25% of the respondents explained that they give their baskets to the middlemen (BelaBela) to sell for them. They explained *“If we go round and approach the buyers ourselves, we will be offered the same price as the middlemen will offer so we prefer to save energy and get the same price.”*

Another respondent said: *“The “BelaBela” normally rush on me, take my basket and go into the market and sell it, take their cut and bring me whatever they think I deserve.”*

“We bargain and negotiate and if the buyer's prices are not good, I move to another buyer but if the prices are good I accept them and take my money.”

“When to the market the buyers come to me and ask me how much I want for my baskets. When I quote my prices for them, they don't pay me those prices. Rather they tell me the market is bad today and then offer to pay me less than my preferred prices. I don't have an option at this point but to take their prices because if I take the baskets to the next buyer, I may not even get that amount.”

“When I get to the market, the “BelaBela” will come for my basket and ask me how much do I want. When I tell them the price of my basket, they'll say wait around while we try to sell it for you and take the basket away. They'll bring back later, saying that they're not buying it at the price that I quoted. I can't also take the basket back home because I need the money so I'll tell to take it back to the exporters and try and get me any amount. They will take it away and then return with money and

hand it over to me and then demand change, which I give. I'm not always happy with this but what can I do?

22. Who decides the final Price of the Baskets at the Markets

- 95% of respondents said that it is the buyer who decides the final price of their baskets. They explained that the buyers are the ones with the purchasing power and so wield power. One participant said:

"The buyer forces you and gets the final say because he/she will never pay you the fair amount that you know your basket is worth."

Another respondent said: *"The buyer gets the final say. If I refuse the price that the buyer wants to pay me, I'll be the loser because if I take the basket back home, what will I eat?"*

5% said that they negotiate and decide the prices of their baskets together with the buyers. They indicated they take a collective decision with the buyers on how much their baskets are worth. One participant said: *"The buyer and I normally bargain and negotiate the prices of my baskets."*

"I always tell the buyer I want GHc 15.00 but he will pay me GHc 12.00 or GHc 10.00, so, he gets the final say."

23. Who Participants sell their Baskets to:

- 40% of the participants said that they sell their baskets to the local exporters.
- 40% to 'BelaBela'.
- 10% sell to both exporters and the middlemen.
- 10% sell to anyone

24. Trade fair Experience of Participants

- 100% of participants said that they have never been to a trade fair and as such have no experience to share with others.

25. Participants mode of Working

- 55% of respondents said that they work alone
- 20% work in a group
- 25% of participants said that they work both as individuals and in a group. They explained that they usually work alone, however there are times that buyers bring them a big order through a contact person and they work as a group to meet the order deadline.

26. Experiences of Participants who work in Groups

- The 20% of participants who work in a group all shared their experiences working in a group.

Comment: One of them said that they learn from each other in a group and that the group promotes healthy competition among them. Another explained that if a member has a problem with the husband, the rest come together and counsel her on how to deal with the issue. Another participant said that they pay monthly dues in her group and when a member has a financial problem, other members contribute money to support them financially.

On the issue of the large basket company which exports, and which was mentioned in the Sirigu group, we received this comment from the Tongo-Beo group:

“They came and lied to us that they'll lend us money to buy straw and weave so they'll come and buy but they never did. They gave us straw to weave a basket each and they paid GHc 2.00 per basket. It's been two years now since they made that promise to lend us money to buy straw in bulk and weave so they'll come and buy.

Our children came and informed us that NAME was coming to hold a meeting with us. They actually came and held the meeting with us and told us that they're going to help us by providing us with money to buy straw in bulk and weave baskets so they'll buy. They gave us straw to weave one basket each so they'll see whether we can weave or not. We weaved those baskets and they came and collected them and paid us GHc 2.00 per basket. This went on for some time and then they told us to hold a meeting because some visitors were coming to speak with us.

Meanwhile, these supposed visitors were their officials in Accra. They came and told us to provide them with our passport size photos of all members in the group because they were going to give us credit so we can buy straw in bulk and weave baskets so they'll buy. We agreed and provided them with the photos but they never brought us any money.

Once we enquired and they told us that our docs are still in Accra. So some of us were disappointed and left the group. However, they came again and some of us tried for the 2nd time. They gave us the straw and we weaved the baskets. They came and took those baskets but didn't pay us the GHc 2.00 each. We went ahead and took straw from them for the 3rd time and weave the baskets but they failed to pay us the GHc 2.00 for the second time-running and also they didn't give us the money they said they were going to lend us.

They called us to their office in Bolga and said the money was ready but never gave us the money up to date. We have heard that they have given credit to some other women in the different communities but we don't know which communities. We have their contact, anytime we call them they cut the call. We were about 60 people.”

The Tongo-Tongo-Beo community members were also promised basket weaving training and had their passport photos taken by this business, as well as having signed consent forms to participate in training. The business never returned to conduct the training.

“One Sunday a middleman on behalf of an undisclosed buyer in town gave us an order to weave traditional basket for GHc 9.00 per basket. We had to buy our own straw. We believe it was an international buyer as this is what the middle-men normally do when the foreigners come to buy.”

27. Differences between working in a Group and as an Individual

- The 20% of respondents who work in a group shared their thoughts on the differences between working in a group and working as an individual.
- One of the respondents said that working as a group has enabled them to improve their weaving skills and techniques. She added that if she was working alone she would not have been able to improve her skills and techniques regarding colour combination and design styles of the baskets.

28. Other Benefits Participants' Groups get apart from Orders

- The 40% of respondents who work in groups said that the only benefit they get from buyers are orders. They explained that this is not on a regular basis. One woman said:

“We only get orders from different buyers from time to time.”

29. Amounts Participant normally sell Their Baskets for (GHC)

- 5% sell for GHC 7.50
- 5% sell for GHC 8.00 per basket35% of respondents said that they usually sell each basket for GHC9.00
- 10% sell for GHC 9.50
- 15% of them said that they normally make GHC 10.00 per basket on a good day.
- 5% sell for GHC 11.50
- 10% of them said that they normally make GHC 11.00 per basket
- 5% sell for GHC 12.00 per basket
- 10% sell for GHC 13.00.
- The highest amount a woman makes per basket is GHC13.00.

Dulugu Community Responses

This is the community G-lish works with making recycled baskets. It was informal discussions and meetings with the weavers of Dulugu in regards to experiences selling straw baskets that prompted this research. In our own work, we often heard the weavers complaining about poor prices in the market or the traders coming to the village trying to rip them off. Knowing the community as well as we do, we were able to confirm and deepen the information gleaned at previous villages here to see whether they had had similar experiences.

1. Years of Basket Weaving Experience

- 5% for 4 years
- 10% for 6 years
- 15% said for 10 years
- 5% for 11 years
- 5% for 13 years
- 10% for 15 years
- 20% for 20 years
- 15% for 25 years
- 10% for 30 years
- 5% for 50 years

2. Type of Basket That Participants Weave

- 50% of respondents said that they weave the Traditional Bolga Market Basket.
- 25% the Modern Basket (U Shopper)
- 25% the Traditional Market and the Modern Baskets

3. Where Participants Buy the Straw for their Baskets from

- 100% buy the straw for their baskets from the Bolga Market.

4. Number of Bundles of Straw that Participants use per Basket

- 90% of respondents use three bundles of straw to weave one basket. 10% use four bundles of straw per basket.

5. Cost per One Bundle of Straw (GHC)

- 85% of participants said that they buy one bundle of straw for GHC2.00.
- Only 15% of the respondents said that one bundle of straw costs them GHC 4.00.

6. Number Hours Participants Spend to Split One Bundle of Straw

- 35% of respondents said that they spend an hour splitting one bundle of straw
- 10% spend 1.5 hours
- 25% spend 2 hours
- 15% spend 3 hours
- 10% spend 4 hours
- 5% spend 8 hours

7. Number of Hours Participants use to Twist One Bundle of Straw

- 10% spend two hours to twist one bundle of straw.
- 10% spend three hours to twist one bundle of straw.
- 5% of respondents spend four hours to twist one bundle of straw.
- 15% spend five hours to twist one bundle of straw.

- 10% spend six hours to twist one bundle of straw.
- 5% spend nine hours to twist a bundle of straw
- 15% spend eleven hours to twist one bundle of straw
- 5% spend twelve hours to twist a bundle of straw.
- 5% spend fourteen hours to twist one bundle of straw.
- 5% spend twenty-four to twist one bundle of straw
- 10% spend forty-eight hours to twist one bundle of straw
- 5% of participants said that they spend seventy-two hours to twist one bundle of straw

8. Number of Colours Participants use per Basket

- 40% of respondents said that they use 5 colours per basket
- 40% use 4 colours
- 20% use 3 colours

9. Costs per One Colour

- 80% of respondents buy one colour of dye for GHC 0.50.
- 10% buy one colour for GHC 0.30.
- 10% for GHC 0.20 (the quantity is smaller)

10. Where Participants buy their dyes from

- 100% of the participants said that they buy their colours from the Bolga Market.

11. How long does it take to dye the twine?

- 5% spend 1 hour to colour their twines
- 45% spend 2 hours
- 5% spend 2.5 hours
- 5% take 3 hours
- 15% take 4 hours
- 10% take 5 hours
- 5% take 6 hours
- 10% spend 8 hours

12. Amount Participants Spent on Fuelwood to Colour Their Twines.

- 5% spend GHC 1.00
- 50%: GHC 2.00
- 40%: GHC 3.00
- 5%: GHC 4.00

13. Number of Days Participants take to Weave a Basket

- 10% said they spend 2 days to weave a basket
- 15%: 3 days
- 5%: 4 days
- 25%: 5 days
- 10%: 6 days
- 25%: 7 days
- 5%: 10 days

14. Where Participants sell their Baskets

- 100% said that they sell their baskets at the Bolgatanga Market. One of the reasons for this could be because the Bolga Market is the closest to this community. Another reason could be because the Bolga Market is the only market where they can sell their baskets.

15. Distance Between the Market and Home

- 45% of the respondents said that they do not know the distance between their homes and the market.
- 25% said the distance is three miles
- 25% said the distance is four miles
- 5% said the distance is six miles

16. Participants Means of Transport to the market

- 75% said that they walk to the market on Bolga Market days to sell their baskets
- 10% use bicycles to travel to the market to sell their baskets.
- 5% travel to the market in trotros, a local public transport service.
- 5% ride motorbikes to the market to sell their baskets
- 5% go in taxis to the market to sell their baskets.

17. Amount of Time Participants spend Getting to the Market and Back Home

- 5% said that they spend 30 minutes
- 65% said that they spend an average of two hours getting to the market and back home.
- 15% take 1 hour
- 15% take 3 hours

Our comment: We know that those who ride motorbikes can do the journey to market in 10 minutes. We know those who walk will spend at least an hour in each direction and up to an hour in the market.

"If I board a taxi, it takes an hour but if I walk it takes 2 hours."

"If I don't have money I walk but if I have money, I board a taxi. From 8:00am to 9:00am."

18. Amount Participants spend Traveling to the Market and back Home

- 5% of participants said that they spend GHC 0.90 on transport to the market and back home
- 35% spend GHC 1.00
- 5% spend GHC 1.20
- 40% spend GHC 2.00
- 15% spend GHC 3.00

19. The Process Participants go Through to Sell their Baskets

- 95% said they pay a levy of GHC0.50 per basket at the entrance of the market before they are allowed into the market to sell. When they enter the market, they walk around the various buyers with their baskets and bargain and negotiate the prices of their baskets.
- 75% of the 95% said that they hardly get to sell directly to the buyers as the various middlemen hijack the market and make it hard for them to have direct access to the actual buyers.
- 5% of the participants said that they have never been to the market even though they weave baskets. They said that they usually give their baskets to others going to the market to sell for them. They, however, said they agreed with the statements of the others since they hear this from those who go regularly.

Weavers' comments: "When you arrive at the market, the ticket people will make you pay the levy before they allow us into the market. When you enter the market, the BelaBela will come and say that they'll buy the basket at a certain price and if you say no and take the basket to the exporters, they'll not buy it more than what they BelaBela had said they'll pay you. So, you'll then have to bring back to the BelaBela who will go and sell it for more and take their cut."

"I pay a levy of GHc 0.20 at the gate and proceed with my basket into the market and go to the exporters to sell my basket. When I get there I greet them and they'll ask me how much do I want for my basket and if I want GHc 15.00, I tell them that I want Ghc 15.00 but if they buy it for GHc 14.00, I always accept the price."

20. The process of Determining the Prices of the Baskets in the Market

- 100% of the participants said that the prices of their baskets are determined in the market through a process of negotiation and bargaining, where they bargain and negotiate with various buyers. They said that they often get the same price quote from various buyers because the buyers usually set a common price for the baskets. They said they only get to sell at the prices they want when they are lucky enough to come across a new buyer who does not know the existing dynamics of the basket market, in which buyers and middlemen collude and rob them by paying little for their efforts.

Weaver's comment: "Some of the buyers are always constant in the market. But there are others who come from time to time and we call them the visitors. They buy the basket at better prices than the constant exporters in the market. If it's the visitors they can buy my basket up to **GHc 14.00**, but if it's the constant market-base exporters, they'll buy it for up to **GHc 12.00**."

21. Who Decides the Prices of the Baskets?

- 95% of the participants said that it is the buyers who determine the final prices of their baskets. They only have two options in the process: refuse the prices quoted by the buyers and go home without money, or accept the low price from the buyers so that they can go home with at least some money for their families. One participant said:

"The basket is yours so you should get the final say but the buyers have the money so they get the final say in deciding the price of my basket."

- Only 5% of participants said that they decide the final price of their baskets.

22. Type of Buyers that Participants sell Their Baskets to

- 60% of participants said that they sell their baskets to the exporters. Some said they would prefer to sell to visitors or new buyers because they make more money by selling to the new buyers than the local exporters. However, they do not have easy access to the new buyers because the local exporters control these buyers once they get to know them.
- 25% of the respondents said that they sell to both the exporters and visitors. They said they sell to the visitors if they are lucky enough to come across them early enough in the market. However, they generally sell to the local exporters.
- 10% said that they sell to only visitors.

- 5% sell to both the '*BelaBela*' and local exporters. The '*BelaBela*' is the local name for the middlemen in the basket market who work closely with the local exporters to exploit the weavers by setting common prices across board.

23. Participants Experiences of a Trade show

- 90% said that they have never attended a trade show and do not have experience on the subject to share.
- 10% said that they have attended a trade show and that they were able to sell their baskets for better prices than they would have sold them for in the open market.
- One participant said: *"Yes I attended a trade show at the Arts Centre last year and they bought my basket. The price was higher than what I would sold it was in the normal market. I was happy and wished such shows were held more frequently."*

24. Do Participants Work in a Group or Alone

- 100% interviewed said that they work alone in regards to making straw baskets.

28. How much Participants sell Their Baskets for

- 5% said GHC8.00
- 5% said GHC9.50
- 50% said GHC 10.00
- 10% said GHC11.50
- 15% said GHC12.00
- 15% said GHC13.00
- 5% said GHC14.50
- 5% said GHC15.00 per basket.

Our comments: When asked if there was ever any trader that paid fairly, Dulugu weavers said they produced for "Mr Gregory" (of Baba Tree Baskets) and were paid over GHC 18.00 per large basket some years ago. They mentioned him as being the only foreign buyer they had worked with and who paid fairly. This was not through the central market, but at villages to which he traveled to work with weavers. We had heard this in meetings with other communities as well.)

Gambibigo Community Responses

The sixth community where we conducted a focus group discussion (FGD) with weavers is Gambebigu, one of the oldest basket weaving communities in the Bolgatanga Municipality.

Gambebigu is about 3 kilometres from Bolgatanga, the Municipal capital and the capital of the Upper East Region.

1. Participants' Years of Basket Weaving Experience

- 15% have 5 years of basket weaving experience
- 15% have 6 years
- 20% have 7 years
- 15% have 8 years
- 5% have 9 years
- 10% have 10 years
- 5% for 12 years and
- 5% for 15 years.
- 5% for 20 years
- 5% for 25 years

2. Type of Baskets that Participants Weave

- 90% said that they weave only the traditional Bolga Market Basket
- 10% weave a Gambebigu basket as well

3. Where Participants Buy Their Straw from

- 100% said that they buy the straw for making their baskets from the Bolga Market.

Our comments: They said they buy from here because it is the closest market to the community, it is also the main market where they get all the basket production materials, including the straw and colours for dyeing the twines. Also, it is where they sell their finished baskets it is easy to purchase the production materials once you are in the market.

4. Quantity of Straw the Participants use per Basket

- 60% said that they use 4 bundles of straw per basket.
- 40% use 5 bundles of straw to weave one basket.

Our comments: The variation in the number of bundles used could be due to the size of a bundle, the quality of the straw and the size of a weaver's basket. The women, however, explained that they said four and five respectively because, often straw breaks off as they twist them into twines.

5. Cost per Bundle of Straw

- 95% said that a bundle of straw costs them GHC2.00,
- 5% of them said that they buy one bundle of straw for GHC4.00

6. Amount of Time Participants Spent Splitting a Bundle of Straw

- 55% of participants interviewed said that they spend 1 hour to split a bundle of straw
- 35% spend 2 hours
- 5% spend 3 hours

- 5% said they do not know the time it takes to split a bundle of straw because they normally give out to someone else to split for a fee.

7. Amount of Time Participants Spend Twisting One Bundle of Straw

- 85% said that they do not know how long it takes to twist a bundle of straw because they usually give out the straw to others to twist for a fee of GHC 1.00.
- 10% of them said that it takes two hours to twist a bundle of straw.
- 5% of participants said that they only give out the straw to be twisted by someone for a fee if they are busy but if they are not busy, they twist it themselves and it does take them an hour to twist one bundle of straw.

Our comments: The 85% of participants, who give out their straw to be twisted by someone for a fee, explained that the older members in their community cannot weave baskets anymore, so they have to find a way of lending a helping hand by giving them the straw for a fee. They added that the community has to cater for everyone, including the aged, especially those who do not have grown up children to look after them.

One reason for this is that this is a patriarchal community where women are burdened with child care and household chores, as well as working on the family farm during the rainy season. If a woman wants to get a basket into the market in the next three days, she will have to hire the services of a twister to help with the twisting or else she will not be able to complete weaving the basket in time for the market day.

Another reason that could be responsible for the letting out twisting to other individuals is that the family system in the community is extended, where all the uncles and aunties live with their children and grandchildren. It is the responsibility of these women to look after the old men and women, so they give out the twisting to the older men and women, who cannot weave baskets anymore because of old age, to twist and earn some money. One could say it is the women's way of keeping the aged in the community active, economically and physically.

8. Number of Colours That Participants Use per basket

- 80% said that they use 4 different colours per basket
- 15% of them said that they use 3 colours
- 5% of participants, however, said that they use only 2 colours per basket.

9. Cost per Colour to Participants

- 85% of participants said that one colour costs them GHC 0.50
- 15% of them said that they spend GHC 1.00 per colour.

10. Where Participants Buy Their Colours from

- 100% said that they buy the colours for dyeing their twines for weaving their baskets from the Bolga Market.

11. Amount of Time Participants to Dye Their Twines

- 30% of participants interviewed said that they spend 1 hour to dye the twines for one basket
- 10% of them said that they spend 2 hours in dyeing the twines of one basket.
- 25% of them said that it takes them 3 hours to dye one basket's twines
- 5% of them said that they often spent 5 to dye the twines of one basket.
- 5% of them said that they spend 6 hours to dye one basket's twines and yet another
- 5% of them said that it takes them 8 hours to dye the twines of one basket, another
- 20% of participants, however, said that they normally start in the morning with the dyeing of the twines and end in the afternoon. They could not say how many hours they spend. They added that they do not time their activities.

12. Amount that Participants Spend on Fire Wood to Dye Their Twines

- 5% said GHC1.00
- 70% said GHC 2.00
- 10% said GHC2.50
- 10% said GHC3.00
- 5% said GHC 4.00

Our comments: Participants, however, indicated that they often dye enough twines for more than one basket during the colouring process in order to save cost and maximise the colours. They do not just dye twines for one basket as this wastes the colour.

13. How Long Participants Take to Weave One Basket

- 30% said 2 days
- 40% said 3 days
- 20% said 4 days
- 5% said 5 days
- 5% said 7 days

14. Where Participants Sell Their Baskets

- 100% said that they sell their baskets at the Bolga Baskets Market. The reasons include the proximity of the Bolga market to their community. They also said there is the possibility of meeting visiting buyers, who normally pay higher than local exporters.

15. Distance between Participants' Home and The Market

- The average distance between participants' homes and the market where they go to sell their baskets is 3.25 kilometres.

16. Participants Means of Transport to the Market and back Home

- 75% said that they walk to the market and back home each time they had to go and sell their baskets.
- 10% said they ride a bicycle each time they had to and sell their baskets.
- 5% said they usually board a trotro, the local transport service, to the market to sell their baskets.
- 5% usually board a taxi
- 5% use a motorbike

"If I get out to go and there is no car I walk but if there is a car I board the car: 2 hours."

17. Number of Hours Participants spend to get to the Market and back Home

- 5% spend 30 minutes
- 15% spend 1 hour
- 65% spend 2 hours to get to the market and back home
- 15% spend 3 hours

18. Costs to Travel to Market and Back Home

- 5% spend GHC 0.90
- 15% said GHC 1.00
- 5% said GHC1.20
- 40% said GHC 2.00
- 35% said GHC 3.00

19. Process Participants go through to sell Their Baskets in the Market

- 90% normally pay a levy of GHC 0.50 per basket at the gate before they are allowed into the basket to sell their baskets. In the market they go through a process of haggling, bargaining and negotiating the prices of their baskets with the various buyers. Some of them end up selling their baskets to the “BelaBela”, others to the local exporters and others to the foreigners.
- 10% said that they do not go to the basket market to sell their baskets themselves. They explained that they often give their baskets to family members to go and sell for them.

20. Process Participants go through to determine the Prices of Their Baskets in the market

- 100% said that they would normally haggle, bargain and negotiate the prices of their baskets with the various buyers.

“When you enter your basket, the buyer will ask you how much you want for your basket and you’ll say GHc 12.00 and they’ll say that they will pay GHc 6.00. We go back and forth with them and finally you’ll give up and take GHc 8.00 or GHc 8.50.”

Weaver’s comments: “If your basket is of high quality and attracts the attention of the buyer, you could get a good price. However, if your basket is of poor quality or fails to catch the eyes of the buyers, you will be forced to sell it cheaply,” said one of the participants.

Our comments: They also explained that they often consider making a profit of GHC 2.00 as a very good price as one hardly makes that profit margin. They said that the buyers are ripping them off and that often they hardly cover the cost of producing of the baskets.

21.

Who Decides the Final Price of Participants’ Baskets?

- 90% said that it is the buyer who decides the final prices of their baskets. They explained that the buyers have the wherewithal so they call the shots. They also said that the buyers are more united and have the numbers that give them an upper hand in the bargaining process.

“The power is the money and it’s the buyer who has the money so they get the final say,” said one of the participants.

“I always quote GHc 20.00 and they’ll ask me to reduce and I’ll say GHc 18.00 but they will insist I reduce the price further and finally they pay me GHc 10.00.”

“I always quote GHc 20.00 but the buyers will say GHc 14.50 and I’ll take my money. If it’s the “BelaBela”, they’ll say GHc 8.00 and if you sell the basket at GHc 8.00 you won’t be able to cover your costs of producing the basket.”

Our comments: It was obvious to us that the women in this community we interviewed were better educated and better aware of their entitlements than in other communities. They were also much more confident negotiating in the market.

- 10% of participants interviewed, however, said that they decide the final prices of their baskets and not the buyers. They explained that, even though the buyers have a huge influence on the final prices of their baskets, they do not decide the final prices because weavers have the option of not taking the prices quoted by buyers if they are not happy with such prices.

It is significant to note that this 10% of participants were the young and educated interviewees. This suggests that youth, education or both enable these weavers to be more informed and aware of their rights as producers than the older and illiterate interviewees.

22. Type of Buyers that Participants sell Their Baskets to

- 60% sell their baskets to local exporters.
- 5% of them said that they often sell their baskets to either the 'BelaBela' or the local exporters.
- 10% of them said that they often sell their baskets to the foreign buyers such as tourists or foreign importers.
- 25% of them said that they often sell their baskets to either foreign buyers or local exporters

One weaver said *"If the visitors come you will sell to them and be happy but if you get to the market and it's full of the exporters you'll sell to them and cry all the way home."*

23. Participants Experience of a Trade Fair Event

- 85% said that they have never been to a trade event. They explained that they have never experienced an event like that and therefore cannot share anything with the researchers on the subject.
- 15% of participants, however, said that they have attended trade fair programmes. One of them said that she attended a trade fair event at the Bolgatanga Arts Centre and that it was an interesting experience for her. She said that she met other weavers from other communities and was able to share her challenges as a weaver with them. She added that she was happy that she did attend the event because her basket sold for a very good price.

24. Working in a Group or as an Individual

- 100% said that they work alone as individuals in their various homes. However, 5% of them explained that they tried working as a group in past and it did not work because there was no cooperation from members.

25 – 27 Gambibgo weavers have not worked as part of a group and had no response to the questions.

28. Amount Participants sell Their Baskets for

- 5% said that they often make only GHC 8.00 per basket.
- 5% sell for GHC 9.50
- 40% sell for GHC 10.00
- 15% sell for GHC 11.50
- 10% sell for GHC 12.00
- 5% sell for GHC 12.50
- 15% sell for GHC 13.00
- 5% sell for GHC 14.50
- 5% sell for GHC15.00

4. BOLGATANGA WORKSHOP WITH 250 WEAVERS FROM THE UPPER EAST REGION IN JUNE 2013

Duration: 3 – 4 hours

The main objectives were to:

- Provide weavers across the region with a forum to meet each other and relay more experiences and information, particularly around pricing and selling.
- To explain the concept of minimum wages so weavers may be able to better negotiate prices that provided a minimum daily wage in Ghana when they sold their baskets in the central market.

Advertisements were made over the local radio for two weeks prior to the event giving notice of the time and place of the meeting. Market traders were also invited to attend. Held on the 21st of June, 2013, at VAG Hall near the main basket market in Bolgatanga, the workshop started 10:00 am.

Ambrose Atogyake, the Manager of G-lish Foundation in Ghana, facilitated the discussions. The workshop included:

1. A summary in point form of the field work undertaken between November 2012 and February 2013 and the communities in which that work was undertaken.
2. Summary of key responses from international buyers to the survey undertaken with them on prices and market awareness.
3. Our data on time needed to make a basket, based on timed experiments.
4. Information on the average cost of making a basket, the price received, and profit
5. Information and an explanation of the minimum price a weaver should receive to make the minimum wage in Ghana, based on average costs.
6. Responses from the community themselves on these issues.

A summary of questions asked in communities, above, was provided to the attendees. Outcome of survey with international buyers was disseminated in this workshop.

TIME AND MONEY

Specifically, we explained it takes 22 hours on average, or 2.75 days, to complete a large market basket, including time to and from the market to sell it. We explained it takes roughly 19 hours not including travel time. This was surprising to most women who don't time their process and don't think in terms of continuous, unbroken time. We explained the concept of timing processes based on adding the hours together to understand how long they take to make pieces.

MINIMUM WAGES

The minimum wage for an 8 hour working day was GHC4.48. The concept of an 8 hour day and the law in Ghana regarding minimum wage was explained. On how much a weaver should be paid to earn a minimum wage in Ghana, the facilitator explained that if they worked 22 hours or almost three days to make a basket, it means that they will be earning GHC4.48 for 8 hours—the first day, GHC4.48 for 8hours—the second day, and GHC3.36 for 6 hours – the third day.

Being a qualified accounting teacher (formerly a teacher at high school in Ghana), he drew the calculation for the weavers to see.

This will total GHC 12.32.

He explained that if this is added to the cost incurred in making one basket (GHC8.50) **then they should be earning GHC20.82 for one basket.**

At this point all 250+ attendees were asked to raise their hand if they had sold a basket more than GHC 20.00 **IN THE CENTRAL MARKET. No one raised their hand.** We suspected this would be the case, based on our research and experience, but the question had to be asked.

Ambrose relayed to the attendees that most international buyers do not know the minimum daily wage in Ghana and how it translates to prices for labour in Ghana, but that we were attempting to educate buyers about the market system, *bela-bela* particularly, about prices and minimum wages in Ghana.

COST

On the cost incurred in making a basket, he explained that if it cost them GHC 6.00 to purchase three bundles of straw, GHC 1.50 for dye, Charcoal 50p and a market levy of 50p, then it will cost **GHC 8.50** to make one complete basket for the market. At this point one woman raised her hand. She said it cost more than this:

She said she incurred costs in buying kerosene as she has to work into the night (overheads). She added that if a basket is sold for GHC10.00, then her profit will be GHC1.50. She said that even the cost of a blade (razor blade to cut the straw ends off) or light bill is not even included in the cost and time they incur in making a basket. It however means that they will earn 50p a day and this is very much below the minimum wage paid in Ghana.

It was clear to us that this woman understood the concept of daily wages, time and overheads. After her comment, other attendees expressed the similar sentiments, and many nodded. We were pleased as it was clear the one of the key objectives and messages we wanted to impart to the communities of weavers was about costs and profit. The general assent in the room at this point suggested there was agreement on this issue.

WEAVER'S COMMENTS

One woman said that she had produced baskets for Trade Aid (USA) but it was a long time ago. She said she bought the straw and materials herself and was paid GHC 20.00 for each standard basket she produced for them when they came to visit in the community (not in the central market). She realised that this was a fair price given that it was some time ago. However, no other attendees there had had this experience.

PRICES PAID TO TRADERS BY BUYERS OF MARKET BASKETS

Although we had explained this during the second round of community meetings, there were many from other communities present at the workshop. To reinforce the original information and for first-timers, Ambrose explained that we asked the buyers to tell us how much they actually pay traders for market baskets. He relayed to weavers that

US\$ 12.00-58.00

Average: US\$ 24.00-28.00

The workshop attendees expressed surprise about how much buyers actually pay to traders. None of them had been exposed to dealings between buyers and traders, other than overhearing negotiations in one distant community when a trader negotiated in English with a buyer from overseas. In that instance, the women could not understand English and did not know what was happening.

HOW CAN WEAVERS RECEIVE A HIGHER PRICE?

Ambrose asked the participants what they think they can do to receive a larger portion of the payment for the work they themselves did.

Their response to this question was that all traders within the Bolga market have a union and that they call for meetings and discuss issues. One woman explained that straw sellers themselves have meetings and always agree at a price to sell a bundle of straw. And the so-called '*BelaBela*' boys hold meeting and decide on a price to buy a basket on some market days.

This woman explained that it is **only basket weavers themselves who do not have associations or a union**, and nor do they hold or call any meetings. The speaker pleaded with her fellow weavers to stand up and speak together, especially in terms of prices paid to them.

Regarding had anyone ever met or sold directly to an international buyer, the hall was quiet and none had this experience.

Based on our feedback and emails received directly from buyers overseas, Ambrose explained to weavers that international buyers DO want to buy baskets from them at fair prices, and that weavers themselves can take a role in this by organising into unions or groups where they represented themselves to buyers, or had a good intermediary to negotiate better prices for them.

We also explained that most of the non-Ghanaian buyers did not know of '*BelaBela*' in the basket market, how the market operated or about the entry fee to the market.

5. PRICES AND PAYMENTS

In February 2013

If weavers were paid GHC 10.00-12.00 on average, in early 2013, and the price to meet minimum wages was GHC20.82, the difference between what they were paid and the minimum wage was roughly GHC 10.00. The US\$ exchange rate was, on average, US\$1.00 = GHC 2.50.

If GHC 10.00 was needed to cover the difference between what weavers received in the market and what they should have received to meet the minimum daily wage, in US\$ that was US\$4.00 for a large market basket.

US\$4.00 was the difference between minimum wage and no minimum wage for almost three day's work.

One key point we identified in discussions with buyers during the research, and since, is that buyers may be paying more profit to middlemen than to weavers. ***The challenge is to find a way to distribute more of the payment to weavers, not middlemen.***

One INTERNATIONAL survey respondent identified this problem:

“A buyer pays a fair price to the organization, but one of the problems is that it does not reach the producer because, in-between, people take cut of the payment, so what's leftover is what is paid to the weaver.”

We believe the weaver should receive a much greater profit and proportion of the income from the product she or he makes.

Comparison with G-lish Foundation:

A straw basket weaver selling a market basket in the central basket market received between **GHC 0.00 –GHC 1.50** profit, on average, **after 19-22 hours** work in February 2013.

A G-lish recycled basket weaver received **GHC 14.50** profit **after 16 hours work** at the time of doing this research. In addition, G-lish recycled plastic cutters and twisters, and recycled cloth cutters and twisters, received **GHC 7.00, on average, per 8 hours** in February 2013.

This was a time when the minimum legal wage in Ghana was **GHC 4.48 per 8 hours** of work. This was also considered a fair wage by the Fair Wage Calculator and World of Good.

Unskilled people (cutters and twisters) working with G-lish Foundation received more profit than *skilled* straw basket weavers who sold their products in the central basket market.

Those who join us in the private online forum will be able to see G-lish Foundation's documentation and payments to better understand what you can expect traders to be able to show you in future.

We will also give participants a “cheat sheet” to understand fair prices and comparisons across baskets styles. We'll email participants with a link to the forum.

In November 2014

Minimum Wage:

As at October 2014, the minimum legislated wage in Ghana is:

- GHC 6.00 per 8 hours;
- GHC 12.00 per 16 hours;
- GHC 18.00 per 24 hours.

Exchange rate:

US\$1.00 = GHC 3.20.

Price for large market basket:

As of the first week of November 2014, the prices offered on market day in Bolgatanga were:

- Market baskets (large size): **Ghc 12.00 - Ghc 16.00**

Straw Cost:

The cost of straw is now:

GHC 4.00-5.00: large bundle

GHC 2.00-3.00: small bundle

It takes 3 small bundles or 2 large to make = GHC 6.00-9.00.

Cost:

Labor/Time: 2.75 days or 22 hours: GHC 16.50 at GHC 6.00/8 hours

Straw: GHC6.00-9.00 depending on how many bundles and which sizes

Dye: GHC 2.00

Charcoal: GHC1.00

Total Cost: GHC25.00-28.00

Income:

Price: GHC12.00 – 16.00

Cost: GHC25.00-28.00

Profit: -GHC 9.00-16.00, depending on range

**It is clear, again, that the weaver is not remunerated for their time.
Time = GHC16.50 at current minimum wages in November 2014.
A weaver should receive GHC25.00 per basket, minimum. She's
receiving GHC16.00 maximum, but more likely around GHC14.00.**

19 hours = 2.4 days at GHC6.00 per day minimum = 14.40 payment for time over 2.4 days

22 hours = 2.75 days at GHC6.00 per day minimum = 16.50 payment for time over 2.75 days

Exchange rate: US\$1=GHC3.20

GHC28.00 = US\$8.75

GHC27.00 = US\$8.44

GHC26.00 = US\$8.13

GHC25.00 = US\$7.81

GHC24.00 = US\$7.50

GHC23.00 = US\$7.20

GHC22.00 = US\$6.88
GHC21.00 = US\$6.56
GHC20.00 = US\$6.25
GHC16.00 = US\$5.00
GHC12.00 = US\$3.75

To receive the minimum wage in time, after materials costs, will cost somewhere in the range of US\$3.00-\$5.00 extra to the weaver, per basket.

Given that these baskets routinely retail around the \$50.00 mark, there is no reason not to increase the price by the gap and pass on the minimum wage to these weavers in Ghana.

Late in the day on market day, Bolgatanga. These women will return home with unsold baskets.



To better understand this, go to
<http://fairwageguide.org/>

Select Ghana in the drop-down menu

Input the US\$ price for the payment

Use paid by the piece

Use either 19 or 22 hours. The calculator will show how much lower or higher than the minimum wage this sits.

Women and girls waiting to sell their products on market day.



6. PROBLEMS & SOLUTIONS

A range of core situations were identified in this research project. Each is outlined here with its attendant problems and potential solutions.

Situation 1: Weavers arrive every third day at the central basket market and hope for a fair price.

Problems:

1. Weavers have no control over the price.
2. Weavers have no other outlet through which to sell their baskets.
3. There is no union or institution to represent the weavers for fair prices.
4. Most weavers are illiterate, preventing access to written resources or knowledge about fair prices, and are thus “captive audiences” in the supply chain.

Solutions:

1. Short-term: Weavers stop producing baskets until better prices are paid;
2. Short-term: Weavers find an alternative outlet through which to sell their baskets;
3. Short-mid-term: Weavers create a union to represent their needs in negotiations with buyers;
4. Short-mid-term: Buyers purchase from a different supplier – one who can show fair prices paid—until the current supplier is willing to show evidence of their payments and practices;
5. Mid-term: Weavers increase their skills to produce better quality baskets and new sales channels;
6. Mid-term: International buyers demand to see transparency in pricing and payments to weavers or find an alternative supply of product;
7. Long-term: All weavers undergo literacy-sensitive training to understand fair prices, options and rights.

Situation 2: Market traders know that hundreds of weavers will come to the market to sell their basket every third day.

Problems:

1. The traders know that weavers are ignorant of what a fair price is.
2. Traders know that weavers often lack the confidence to bargain or negotiate.
3. Traders know that the weavers' dependency on them creates a "captive audience" in which the traders have the negotiating power.
4. Traders interface with foreign buyers so traders control the flow of information between the buyer and the weaver, creating an opaque barrier through which neither can know anything about the other.

Solutions:

1. Short-term: Traders' payments to weavers are observed by an independent third party;
2. Short-term: Weavers find an alternative outlet through which to sell their baskets;
3. Short-term: Buyers find an intermediary to document the payments to weavers;
4. Short-term: Buyers stop buying baskets traded through the central market;
5. Short-term: Weavers create a union to represent their needs in negotiations with buyers – and that representative oversees payments on market day to ensure weavers are paid fairly;
6. Short-term: Information on the reality of the market is provided to buyers to break down the wall between buyers and weavers and create transparency about what actually happens.
7. Long-term: Weavers come to traders empowered with knowledge on fair prices;

For example, during the field visits, two different villages mentioned a bad experience with an employee of one of the large basket traders. This employee refused to negotiate prices in front of weavers in a language they could understand. We do not know if he was doing this in his capacity as an employee of the large trader or if he was conducting his own side business – it was not clear from the interviews and when we pressed the weavers to clarify this they were not sure. What we do know is that he is well known in Bolgatanga, and he was employed by a reputable basket producer at the time we did the work. We also know he should have been openly conversing in the weavers' language with weavers when prices were mentioned, but he would not.

Weavers were fully excluded from price negotiations and we understand this is common practice. They are simply used as tools to give a trader a product, irrespective of the impact this use of their physical self has.

Situation 3: Weavers selling in the central market receive prices that are unprofitable.

Problems:

1. Prices paid to weavers in the central market are too low;

Solutions:

1. In some cases, prices may have to be increased if they're extremely low or below minimum wages. However, we do not think this is the sole solution.
2. Instead, we believe the long-term solution is to ensure that **a greater proportion of total price being paid by the buyer** is given to the weaver—and not to a chain of middlemen. If buyers are paying what they quoted in the online survey, it's feasible to pay the weaver a fair price based on those prices.

Situation 4: Buyers of straw baskets overseas are prevented from knowing about the conditions weavers experience in the central Bolgatanga basket market.

Problems:

1. Buyers have no way of knowing how the central straw basket market operates;
2. Buyers have no way of knowing what payment a weaver receives for her basket;
3. Buyers have no way of knowing how much a weaver spends in materials and time to make a basket, and thus what a fair price is.

Solutions:

1. Short-term: Information on the reality of the market, weaving and prices is provided to buyers to break down the wall between buyers and weavers and create transparency about what actually happens;
2. Short-term: Buyers seek advice from an independent third party about an alternative supply of baskets;
3. Short-term: Buyers request documentation about prices paid to weavers;
4. Short-term: Buyers read this report.

For instance, if a buyer came to G-lish Foundation with their own *Frafra* speaker, G-lish is happy for that speaker to listen to and relay our payments to weavers to the buyer. The same should be expected of all basket suppliers and traders. Just ask.

Situation 5: It is common practice in Ghana that a “connector” between a buyer and a producer receives a cut or payment—not just in the basket industry. When a “connector” helps a trader find weavers in a village, the connector will (many times) get a share of the price paid, much like *bela-bela* do in the market. This person is usually chosen because they speak English and can read or write. They appear to be a guide or interpreter for groups when foreign buyers visit. Often, however, they take a cut of what the buyer pays to the weaver, but the buyer never knows this. Again, lack of literacy and education prevent the weavers from taking an empowered position in negotiations with buyers and traders.

Problems:

1. The spokesperson may not interpret everything the buyer says, particularly price negotiations.
2. If an international buyer is physically present, they have no way of knowing what is said in the local language.
3. Weavers’ and buyers’ naivety and vulnerability to these middlemen/cut-takers.

Solutions:

1. Short-term: Buyers do not use a spokesperson or intermediary from the village – avoid them altogether if possible;
2. Short-term: Buyers hire an independent interpreter when they visit basket weaving communities and negotiate prices;
3. Short-term: Buyers take advice from the likes of G-lish Foundation or others with no stake in the transaction about prices;
4. Short-mid-term: Buyers and weavers reduce their vulnerability to middlemen traders by arming themselves with information and knowledge to make informed decisions for all to benefit.
5. Short-term: Information on the reality of the market, weaving and prices is provided to buyers to break down the wall between buyers and weavers and create transparency about what actually happens. (This work is a step in that direction.)

For example, in the process of carrying out this research, when we made telephone inquiries to each of the 6 villages to arrange to meet the 120 weavers, in villages where we did not have a personal name or contact, men soon traveled from those villages to our office to meet us. They wanted to negotiate their cut because they believed we were coming to buy baskets. They phoned us many times a day. No matter how many times we explained that we were not coming to buy, they persisted. It made us realise, yet again, the predicament that international buyers might find themselves in if they were in the same situation. And it made us better understand weavers’ position in this industry.

In summary, the structure of the industry and the structure of the central market is set up so that weavers become passive objects, manipulated and used, rather than active agents in their own work towards economic self-sufficiency.

Situation 6: Most buyers are isolated from each other and have no direct contact with producers.

Problems:

1. Buyers cannot compare experiences or information;
2. Buyers are as vulnerable to the traders as weavers are.

Solutions:

1. Short-term: Create a platform where buyers can talk to each other and discuss the issues around their suppliers to better understand the situation;
2. Short-term: Invite all buyers and suppliers to participate in discussions about these issues.

Traders buying up baskets on market day, below



7. RECOMMENDATIONS TO WEAVERS AND BUYERS

Summary of Recommendations to Increase Prices Paid to Straw Basket Weavers who Sell Baskets in the Central Market

WEAVERS NEED:

- Weavers need a simple calculation sheet showing daily minimum income, costs, and a total price for baskets they weave: a “cheat sheet” for weavers.
- Capacity building on fair prices across the region should be a priority.
- More in-depth analysis of prices should occur over a range of basket styles.
- Weavers should organise themselves in a group to traders in negotiations. Quite simply, if weavers refuse to weave, there is no product; they have the power to negotiate.
- Weavers refuse to work with *bela-bela* and refuse to have their portion of their profit given to *bela-bela*.
- An independent observer ought to be present and to record the payments to weavers so they can be verified by others in future, for some time, **until consistency and transparency in the process is established.**

BUYERS NEED TO:

- Request evidence that demonstrates fair prices—a verbal assurance is not good enough.
- Ask for recommendations about fair paying basket producers.
- Talk with other buyers about their experiences and outcomes.
- Buy only from traders who pay fair prices—this is not limited to fair trade organisations. There are some producers (G-lish included) that are not fair trade but pay fairly and are willing to show evidence of this.
- If your trader is noted for paying poorly, stop buying from them.
- If you wish to keep buying from them, please demand transparency and accountability regarding numbers and prices paid: That means a breakdown of the costing so that you can see where the money is being spent and how much the trader is taking.
- If they refuse, that’s a strong sign they’re not paying fairly and you should stop buying from them;
- When foreign buyers come to place orders, they need to listen to representatives of weavers, as well as the trader, with an independent third-party unconnected with either interpreting for them.
- Buyers should understand what a fair price is in relation to the minimum wage and negotiate with the weavers themselves.
- Use an independent intermediary (not from the trader’s business or family) to accompany you to villages and negotiations to act as **your** advocate. The intermediary would interpret **for you**, and relay the parts of conversations you’re usually prevented from hearing. The intermediary may also be present (if agreed on) when weavers are paid and document this if you’re no longer in Ghana.
- G-lish Foundation are happy to assist with providing someone to help you clarify your traders’ situation.

8. CONCLUSION

After completing this research it is difficult to conclude that selling straw baskets in the central Bolgatanga straw basket market serves straw basket weavers' interests in any form whatsoever.

If any interests are served, they are those of the middlemen traders, exporters and others in the supply chain who profit.

One thing that is clear from this research is that it is **not the straw basket weavers** who profit from their work.

Far from helping weavers profit, the prices paid for straw baskets sold **in the central Bolgatanga basket market** do not cover the cost of a weaver's time and, thus, do not meet the minimum wage in Ghana.

The middlemen traders, the exporters, the shipping companies, and international buyers profit on the back of the humble basket weaver's time and skill.

However everyone, including the weavers themselves, could benefit if the straw basket weavers were remunerated for **their costs and time**.

Whilst this research benchmarked one basket—the round market basket – those who work with baskets and observe prices paid for other styles of baskets in the **central market** will know that no baskets are fairly remunerated.

In addition, the work takes a physical toll. And, whilst it is outside the scope of this project, it is obvious to those who have spent significant time working in projects in basket weaving communities, that not being fairly remunerated for straw baskets also takes a psychological toll.

You can imagine how a weaver must feel when, after walking several kilometers in the hot sun to the central market and spending the better part of 3 days working to weave a basket, she is offered a price which is barely enough to cover the cost of straw for another basket, and ingredients for half a meal. Sadness and hopelessness descend.

And so they cycle begins again, every three days, as long as the weaver weaves and sells her basket in the central market, where wholesalers buy it and sell to retailers globally.

This endless cycle of weaving a basket every three days in exchange for barely enough income to purchase ingredients for half a meal will continue unless this cycle is broken.

This cycle will be broken when weavers are fairly remunerated for the time they spend doing the work they do.

This will happen when everyone involved in the business works to find ways to ensure the weaver is paid for her time, not just her materials. This may mean educating weavers about fair prices and how to

Basket weaving is a highly skilled craft, but baskets are marketed as cheap products.

It is vital that the weaver's time to weave a basket is paid for.

price a basket based on materials cost and time. It means buying from a supplier who is prepared to be transparent about their payments and prices to weavers.

It may mean educating the consumer about the value and time in making a basket. It may mean marketing baskets or woven products as highly skilled craft and art.

Basket weaving *is* a highly skilled craft form, but baskets are marketed as cheap products. This perception devalues the work of the weaver, and everyone else involved, and lowers prices.

Marketing woven products – baskets, bags, hats, fans – as highly-skilled and quality craft is fundamental towards changing perception of woven work and its value.

Another step is to increase the perceived value of the product so that the extra US\$4 - 5 in price could be passed on to the weaver in order to, then, meet the minimum wage.

The traders control the market just as they control prices when they visit villages to purchase baskets on behalf of foreign buyers.

However, the true strength lies with the weavers: without their basket the traders have no product.

As the structure currently exists, the two are mutually dependent.

It was obvious from the survey that only a few of the international buyers had been given a clear or honest picture of the central basket market and had minimal understanding of the power imbalance in that system, or the financial loss weavers make when they engage in business there.

The traders clearly do not pay fair prices to weavers. Weavers are at the mercy of traders. Weavers do not have access to buyers. Access that they do get is almost always filtered through a go-between. Managers, bosses, whatever you like to call them, are usually present when buyers meet weavers directly. There is no way a weaver will speak negatively of their seniors (for their own survival and also cultural reasons) while those seniors are present. The truth will be hidden.

The structure of the market also restricts the weavers' access to traders. The structure excludes weavers' from having an equal role in its processes.

This partly explains why the majority of the people engaged in basket production do not make a profit or the minimum wage based on time, and continue to live in poverty, even though their products are high quality and much sought after in overseas markets.

We surmised that there needs to be much more information provided to buyers in order to make a fair and clear assessment of the value of the goods being purchased.

Writing this in late 2014, we believe this will not change without buyers taking active steps to learn the reality within Bolgatanga's central market system, and what constitutes a fair price.

To that end, to help buyers, weavers and traders demystify this situation, and so that this work does not end with this report, we will establish a **private, online forum** where anyone can share experiences, ask questions of those directly connected with weaving communities—and share information with each other. Commercial confidentiality can still be maintained in this context.

We attempted to contact the registered fair trade basket producers and other organisations that claim to pay fairly to weavers to find out what prices they actually paid. None of them responded except for Baba Tree Basket Company which showed us all documentation and prices paid, as well as explaining processes in detail.

Platitudes and rhetoric on basket traders' websites about "fairly traded" or "ethically traded" and "helping community" are misleading unless supported with evidence.

If this report does not make clear that there is a major disconnect between the image projected via traders' websites and verbal claims made by traders when buyers visit, and the actual practices unseen and unheard (or not comprehended), which occur within communities in Ghana, then the report has failed. We hope, however, this report has done the opposite and that the fog (or perhaps it's the Harmattan dust in everyone's eyes) is finally beginning to lift on the Bolga basket market.

We also hope this report gives weavers the voice they deserve and that their voices are heard and action is taken by buyers and traders to respond to the weavers and make real, lasting and transparent change happen.

Next Steps:

We will begin intensive advocacy on this issue as part of G-lish Foundation's focus on fair income generation for weavers in the Upper East Region. Please contact us at the addresses below if you're interested in being part of a working group on this issue.

Contacts:

Hashtag: [#BasketGood](#) to comment on this

Twitter: [@gaylepescud](#) [@godwinyidana1](#) [@G_lishGhana](#)

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/GlishFoundationGhana>

Email: Gaylepescud@gmail.com Godwin@G-lish.org

Site: <http://g-lishfoundation.org>



9. APPENDIX

*From page 27, above: Market Dynamics
Summary of a typical market day.

1. There are two main players in the market to whom a weaver might sell. These are:

Bela-bela: They are unemployed men who hustle in markets as middle-men, usually hired by higher level buyers—warehouse owners/exporters. The warehouse owner/exporter names a price he will pay for a basket (based on what he has negotiated with foreign buyers, or thinks he can get based on recent prices) and sends the *bela-bela* out. The *bela-bela* intercept weavers as they approach the market. If the warehouse owner/exporter is offered GHC 15.00 per basket by an outside buyer, he'll take his cut, and name a capped figure to the *bela-bela*. If the price is GHC15.00, the capped figure is likely to be around GHC 10.00—the exporter takes 5.00 for himself. The *bela-bela* is free to haggle with the weaver for whatever he can get. If he agrees on a price of GHC 8.00 with the weaver, he'll take GHC 2.00 for himself.

Local Exporter: They participate in purchasing directly, but they do not have the means to deal with individual weavers or community group spokespersons on market day, so they hire others to help them: *Bela-bela*. In some cases, the warehouse owner/exporter offers the *bela-bela* GHC 1.00 as payment for every basket he brings in, and will set a cap on how much he'll pay for the basket. For example, he'll set a cap of GHC 10.00, and give the *bela-bela* a handful of money with which to buy baskets at GHC 10.00 each. When the *bela-bela* returns, the buyer will give him GHC 1.00 (or whatever he promised) per basket. Again, the *bela-bela* has an opportunity to profit in this transaction.

The weaver loses significantly in this system.

2. What happens:

Market day occurs every third day, continuously, public holidays included. The basket market is located in an open square surrounded by warehouses off the main commercial road in the centre of Bolgatanga. Weavers head to this point from villages as far as 40 kilometres away, sometimes on foot, to sell their baskets.

When weavers arrive in town they are approached by *bela-bela* who tell them stories such as there is oversupply of their type of basket today, so they had better sell to them now—it's the best price they'll get. Many weavers are nervous in the presence of *bela-bela* and agree to lower prices, fearful that it's the best they'll get on that day, not having any information as to what is in demand. Also, they may have no money on them and be worried about the toll they have to pay at the market entry point, so find it easier to just sell the baskets to the *bela-bela* on the spot.

However, if they make it to the market entry point, this is what happens: They pay a toll to enter the basket market—50 pesewas per basket. Nothing if they only have one basket. If they don't have money on them, they leave a valuable at the market gate. If they don't have a valuable, they leave one basket as security. After this, they enter the basket market to sell their baskets.

Weavers who are more familiar with the market, or have more confidence dealing with exporters, deliberately pass *bela-bela* to deal directly with the local exporter. Weavers arrive at the market by 7 am to deal directly with the exporter. They usually mill about and wait to be called by the buyer. Some approach buyers. This can take hours or be fast. We use 2 hours as an average wait time.

After selling the baskets on hand, they return and pay the toll. If they left a basket as security, they now try to sell it. The problem is that it's usually late by the time they return for it. They often don't get to sell that last basket. This explains why we see many weavers walking back home with one basket in their hands on market day.

10. WHO WE ARE

Godwin Yidana:

Godwin Yidana was born in Dulugu, Bolgatanga, and raised in the heart of a basket weaving family. As a child he helped his mother split and twist straw so she could make baskets to sell in the central market. He finished high school in the Upper East Region and went on to university in Ghana.

Godwin completed a BA (Honours) in Population and Family at the University of Cape Coast in 2007 and worked as a program manager for Young People We Care on migration issues and for Abusua Foundation on income generation and HIV projects before meeting Gayle Pescud in 2008. He recently graduated from the University of Sydney with a Masters of Peace and Conflict Studies focusing on the Bawku conflict and women's agency in peace-building.

His passion for this project was borne out of personal experience and a deep desire to help family and the broader community engaged in basket weaving in the Upper East Region earn money to alleviate the poverty that most find themselves in.

Godwin Yidana is currently working in Cambodia for the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies on a project relating to conflict transformation in Myanmar.

Gayle Pescud:

Gayle has eighteen years work experience in research, trade, international development and the non-profit sector. She has worked in Australia, Ghana, Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan.

She worked for Japanese government and business from 1995-2005 in Australia. Her interest in fair trade and craft production was ignited when she volunteered with Global Mamas www.globalmamas.org in Ghana in 2005. During that time she was fortunate to secure a position working with Traidcraft www.traidcraft.co.uk in South East Asia on two craft producing projects relating to fair trade and market access for Cambodian and Vietnamese craft producers between 2006-2007. She returned to work for Global Mamas' Cape Coast office from 2007 to 2009.

She met Godwin Yidana and moved to Bolgatanga in 2009, whereupon they discovered how to transform plastic drinking water bags into twine and make recycled Bolga baskets and their organisation, G-lish Foundation, was born.

The combination of their unique skills and experiences living and working in weaving communities over years provided a solid and informed basis from which to develop this project, and underpinned their motivation to try to change the status quo on transparency and prices paid in the central Bolga market for straw baskets.

Gayle Pescud is currently working in Sydney developing new projects for G-lish Foundation and finding ways to raise awareness about fair prices for craft producers in developing countries.

11. USEFUL LINKS

Australian High Commission in Ghana's Direct Aid Program

<http://www.ghana.highcommission.gov.au/acra/AusAidinWestAfrica.html>

World Fair Trade Organisation

<http://www.wfto.com/>

Fair Wage Guide

<http://fairwageguide.org/>

Upper East Region information from Ghana Government official site

<http://www.ghana.gov.gh/index.php/about-ghana/regions/upper-east>

Upper East Region as documented on Ghana Districts

<http://www.ghanadistricts.com/region/?r=8>

G-lish Foundation on Facebook

<http://www.facebook.com/GlishFoundationGhana>

A man left standing with his baskets, unsold, at the end of market day. He'll go home without the hoped for income to whomever made these baskets. You can see a trader's shop on the right hand side with baskets amassed from purchasing on market day.

