

**NAME OF THE ELEMENT:** TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP OF MORTAR MAKING (“WADURO”)

**DOMAIN:** TRADITIONAL CRAFTSMANSHIP

**COMMUNITY:** SEFWI CAMP, SEFWI ASAWINSO, SEFWI DWENASE

**REGION:** WESTERN NORTH REGION

**DESCRIPTION:** The traditional craftsmanship of mortar making, locally known as “WADURO”, stands as a evidence to the rich cultural heritage of the Sefwi community in Ghana. This Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) element is predominantly practiced by local wood carvers in specific locations such as Sefwi camp, Sefwi Asawinso, and Sefwi Dwenase. The mortar, a circular wooden object with a distinctive well-shaped base, serves as a pivotal tool in the preparation of local meals like fufu and palm nut soup, as well as the creation of herbal medicines.

**THE PROCESS OF THE CRAFT:** The process of crafting these mortars involves a meticulous series of steps, beginning with the selection of hardwood logs from the forest. Men aged between 18 to 45 years are the primary practitioners, utilizing traditional tools like axes, hoes, and cutlasses. The craftsmanship requires precision, with the use of a handmade wooden ruler and nails to draw the curve of the mortar on the log. The depth of the mortar is determined by creating a hole in the outlined shape, and the final touch involves smoothing the surface with sandpaper for an attractive finish.

The characteristics of this ICH element extend beyond the wood carvers themselves. Blacksmiths and farmers in the community play supporting roles, contributing tools and resources like Axe, Hoe, Cutlass, Nails, Measuring Tape, Sandpaper and tricycles ("Aboboyaa") used in transporting materials. Language also plays a vital role in the transmission of this cultural practice, with Sefwi and Twi being the primary languages involved. The communal engagement goes beyond the direct practitioners, encompassing a diverse group that facilitates the practice, including those involved in preparing stages, costumes, and training.

Furthermore, the traditional craftsmanship of mortar making is not limited to a solitary purpose; it intertwines with other aspects of daily life. Mortars are integral in the preparation of traditional meals and medicines such as fufu, palm nut soup and pounding herbs for medicines, highlighting the mutual relationship between cultural practices and practical, everyday needs. Interestingly, the transmission of this craft occurs through both formal and non-formal means. It can be learned in schools and through apprenticeships, ensuring the continuity of this cultural heritage across generations. In essence, the craftsmanship of mortar

making in the Sefwi community captures not only a skilled practice but also a profound connection between tradition, utility, and community involvement.

The traditional craftsmanship of mortar making, a significant Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) element in the Sefwi community, faces several threats that jeopardize its continued enactment and transmission. Deforestation poses a substantial risk, as the availability of hardwood logs crucial for the craft diminishes. Obtaining permits to cut down trees becomes increasingly challenging, adding another layer of difficulty to the sustainability of this cultural practice. Moreover, the lack of advanced equipment hinders the efficiency of the wood carvers, potentially discouraging the younger generation from engaging in this labor-intensive tradition. The threats extend to the transmission of the craft, with educational pursuits and the allure of quicker income from alternative jobs contributing to the declining interest and willingness of the youth to learn this intricate art form.

The sustainability of tangible elements and resources associated with mortar making faces obstacles, including the slow deterioration of tools and challenges in accessing wood logs due to illegal mining ("galamsey") and deforestation. These issues not only impede the current production of mortars but also raise concerns about the future availability of essential resources for this cultural heritage. Despite the challenges, there are currently no specific safeguarding measures in place. The complex interplay of these threats underscores the need for attention and potential interventions to preserve the viability of this ICH element. In alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 4 (Quality Education), and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) – addressing these challenges becomes not just a cultural imperative but a step towards broader socio-economic and environmental well-being.

**Consent:** SEFWI CAMP, SEFWI ASAWINSO, SEFWI DWENASE

**Submitted by:** National Folklore Board