

Revitalizing Performing Arts as Cultural Identity and Educational Tourism Attraction in Sendangsari Village

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Abstract

Sendangsari Village in Kulon Progo, Special Region of Yogyakarta, has a rich tradition of performing arts as part of its intangible cultural heritage. Most of these performances have been closely associated with ritual and ceremonial events, with limited documentation and preparation for educational tourism. This community service program aimed to revitalize local performing arts, strengthen the village's cultural identity and enhance its capacity to provide educational tourism services. The program was implemented from 2023 to 2025 using an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. The project began with the inventory and documentation of cultural resources. The following year, the program focused on rehearsals and skills development for Tari Kenyo Sendangsari and Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng dance drama. In the last stage, the team collaborated with the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis) to integrate these two performances into local tourism programs and prepare standard operating procedures for services. The project produced a reference book, standard formats for the performances, and opportunities for the two performances to be presented at community events. The 2025 data showed the use of structured guest and financial records, an increase in the number of homestays from 8 to 13 units, and reported homestay revenue after program implementation of IDR 25,000,000. These statistics provide an early indication of operational and livelihood enhancement, but do not establish a direct causal link with the performing arts initiative. The Sendangsari case suggests that preservation and revival of culture, as well as integration of culture into tourism activities, can work together to support heritage continuity and local livelihood opportunities. The program also aligns with the village's ongoing development in the Cultural Independent Village (Desa/Kalurahan Mandiri Budaya) program.

INTRODUCTION

Cultural tourism has evolved from a passive act of sightseeing into an experiential journey in which visitors seek authenticity, learning, and meaningful encounters with local ways of life. Within this shift, intangible cultural heritage (ICH), including performing arts, oral traditions, and ritual practices, has become an important feature that differentiates one destination from another. These cultural expressions are not merely tourist attractions but living practices sustained by communities (Richards, 2018; UNESCO, 2020). It's worth noting that the protection of ICH is not only about promotion but, more importantly, it includes the showing of community stewardship, intergenerational transmission, and culturally appropriate ways of presentation (UNESCO, 2003).

The rapid growth of tourism in Indonesia has led to the extensive development of tourism villages, which in turn has brought up the issue of how to present cultural resources in a way that is both respectful, with a leading role played by the community, and based on local knowledge but still marketable and feasible (Idrus & Akib, 2023; Prayudi, 2022). When governance and service systems are poorly developed, performances often stick to ceremonial functions only, lack proper documentation, are staged with different, and rather low, standards, and are not woven into any sustainable tourism packages (Prandodo & Mustikarani, 2024; Soeswoyo et al., 2021). Former studies on the performance of rural communities for tourism also show that "recreating" performing arts for tourists is a demanding process that involves balancing between the demands of authenticity, local meanings, and tourism expectations; otherwise, cultural expression might end up turning into a spectacle rather than a lesson (Soewarlan, 2019).

This challenge is located within a formal policy ecosystem in which the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) explicitly links cultural safeguarding and village-based tourism development, and community-based cultural development, embraced by the crafted Desa/Kalurahan Mandiri Budaya regional framework. Also, the district chief regulation on Pokdarwis and Desa/Kampung Wisata clearly identifies the community organization that is in charge of managing the tourism services and experiences at the village level (Pemerintah Daerah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2020a, 2020b). In the DIY context, performing arts therefore face two related demands. They must remain culturally meaningful to local communities while also being supported by clear documentation, defined roles and responsibilities, and operating standards. These arrangements are needed to ensure that performances can be delivered consistently in educational tourism settings.

Sendangsari Village in Kulon Progo has made progress in developing its village tourism activities. Although the village is well known for performing arts traditions such as Gejog Lesung and classical dance, it still faces several practical challenges. Opportunities for younger generations to sustain these traditions remain limited, visual and written documentation is still scarce, and performance formats suitable for visitors have not yet been standardized. This is as it may be, the case of community-based tourism in Indonesia is reflected in a wider context, where cultural resources are likely to be the main means of attraction, but yet the management, marketing, and local value chains are still weakly developed (Fahmi & Inayah, 2025; Novandi & Adi, 2021). This local challenge is consistent with community service experience in other Indonesian cultural tourism villages, where limited regeneration among young cultural actors has prompted skills training and broader community participation (Tandiyono et al., 2021).

It is in this program of community service that the voids are very well attended to, with a focus on the safeguarding of culture, and at the same time, the creation of value. The objective is not merely to safeguard the arts but to revive them as the core of Sendangsari's educational tourism identity through (1) academic documentalism that bolsters handovers and narration, (2) practical revitalization raising the performance to a higher level, and (3)

community participation and institutional integration, making possible the continual running of partnerships with the local tourism authorities. By associating revitalization with tourism readiness, the program is looking forward to creating a synergistic relationship in which the continuance of the culture will benefit the local people in terms of income, while at the same time the tourist visits will ensure the survival of practices for years to come (Agus et al., 2021; Raharjo et al., 2024). Related work also identifies young people as change agents when training, field practice, collaboration, and digital promotion are linked to local cultural preservation and sustainable tourism (Aryasa et al., 2025).

IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

The program was conducted at Sendangsari Village, Pengasih District, Kulon Progo Regency, Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY) over the period of three years (2023–2025) in connection with the documentation of the village's culture. Place of the program was chosen because the village was considering a tourism village and it had a lot of cultural stuff but these were not developed into the kind of touristic education activities yet.

Program design and approach

The strategy embraced by the project is based on the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model, which puts the focus on local strengths that are owned, cultural capital, and the community ties as the sustainable development bedrock (Harrison et al., 2019; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). From the UNESCO safeguarding perspective, the program treated local performing arts as living heritage. It prioritized community custodianship, community control over access to cultural resources, intergenerational transmission, and culturally appropriate methods of documentation and presentation (UNESCO, 2003).

Because Sendangsari's educational tourism delivery is institutionally linked to village tourism governance, the program was also aligned with the regional policy ecosystem that regulates Pokdarwis and village tourism operations, as well as the broader cultural village development framework in DIY (Pemerintah Daerah Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta, 2020a, 2020b).

Participants and beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries were members of local art communities (paguyuban seni), the Tourism Awareness Group (Pokdarwis), and local youth. A total of 30 participants were directly involved in the intensive training and workshop sessions.

Implementation phases (2023–2025)

The program was implemented through three linked phases, with the output of each phase providing the basis for the next. As shown in Figure 1, cultural asset documentation conducted in 2023 was followed by performing arts revitalization and capacity building in 2024, before the performances were integrated into village tourism operations in 2025.



Figure 1. Stages of the community-based performing arts revitalization program
Source: Authors' elaboration based on annual program reports.

Phase 1: Asset inventory and documentation (baseline, 2023).

This part was devoted to the analysis and depiction of the local art forms, and the identification of key cultural narratives and performance contexts. The information from the documentation was transformed into written references to decrease the limit of memory so that, at the same time, it could be a reliable source for storytelling in the context of the cultural tourism industry. The whole exercise of documenting came as an enhancement of that more general data gathering about the village culture that was being done at the beginning of 2023 and developed as the main part of the following phases (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2023).

Phase 2: Revitalization workshops (capacity-building, 2024).

In the revitalization phase, structured rehearsing was implemented through operationalized procedures (cycles) and guiding the practice to enhance prioritization efficiency and quality of outputs. The Tari Kenyo Sendangsari (welcome dance) and Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng (dance drama that integrated folklore and traditional music) were the two main performances. The attendees working in the workshops were prepared for the performances by the performing standards, scheduling, and giving different roles and tried and tested the "showcase" mode in local tourism contexts (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2024).

Phase 3: Tourism packaging and operational standardization (service readiness, 2025).

In order to turn cultural revitalization into educational tourism value, the program teamed with Pokdarwis to fuse the two performances and the village Live-in and EduTourism packages. As the very next step, SOPs for guest reception and cultural show performances were created and enacted; the timing for the performances in the village was built in. Regular performance launching in the village was further systematized through training and time assignment for the performers. Monitoring practices consisting of the proper dispatch of guests and finances, as well as the service report, contributed to a reliable provision of services and the charting of initial results early (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2025).

Monitoring, documentation, and reporting

Throughout different stages of the project, the advancement of the program and its outcomes were both traced through yearly documentation and monitoring data, which recounted (1) the deliverable items, (2) the training execution and the trainees' numbers, and (3) the operational readiness indicators including the adoption of the SOPs and the service logs provided in an organized and structured manner (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2023, 2024, 2025). The monitoring approach has been predicated on the argument that educational tourism will only be sustainable if the cultural attractions are an integral part of service systems and governance practices and not as one-time events (Andari, 2023).

Ethical considerations

Local coordination and community agreement were the driving factors that allowed participation. When taking on the documentation (photos/ videos used for reporting and promotion), it was made sure that it was under the community's consent and with the proper credit of the concerned party, observing the living heritage principles as stated in the UNESCO 2003.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**Documentation of cultural assets as safeguarding and tourism-readiness**

The initial documentation stage produced six foundational books that map Sendangsari's cultural, social, agricultural, tourism, and economic assets. Their covers are presented in Figure 2(a), while the principal content of each publication is summarized in

Figure 2(b). More specifically, the books document the village's cultural profile and local wisdom; the types, rules, educational values, and preservation of traditional children's games; agricultural and livestock resources; the rules and character-building values of Dam-daman; village attractions and visitor information; and the profiles and products of local microenterprises. Together, these publications preserve community knowledge, provide educational materials for younger generations, and serve as practical references for cultural interpretation, tourism development, and local economic promotion.



Figure 2. Documentation outputs for Sendangsari cultural assets: (a) covers of the six foundational books and (b) mind map of their principal contents. Source: Project documentation and authors' synthesis, 2025.

Expanding from the basic, the ongoing initiative chose to narrow down the focus to inscription of performing arts that were previously communicated mainly through oral tradition. The transmission through the oral tradition can keep the living heritage but, at the same time, it increases the susceptibility to variation, loss of detail and inconsistency in the performance when it is converted into an educational tourism-oriented performance.

Documenting the project in the light of the protection principles is a means for the project to keep the lifeblood of the community and the project to be at the heart of the community, passed down from one generation to another but also transported to modern urban places for tourist edutainment (UNESCO, 2003).

Throughout the process, the team took significant measures to help in the production of a customized reference book entitled "*Desa Sendangsari Sebagai Laboratorium Seni Pertunjukan*" which aimed to be multifunctional by (a) providing the young with a roadmap for their recovery and, (b) allowing the guides to build the spirit and the message of the performances for the tourists through storytelling. These roles of storytelling device are supported through the perspective which resonates with the fact that storytelling will add the value and interpretability factors of the role of the performing arts in the contexts of cultural tourism (Mazlan et al., 2024). Figure 3 presents the cover and table of contents of the resulting reference book. The book contains structured information on the village profile, local performing arts, performance narratives, principal characters, movement sequences, musical accompaniment, costumes, and supporting cultural activities.



Figure 3. Cover and table of contents of *Desa Sendangsari sebagai Laboratorium Seni Pertunjukan*. Source: Project documentation, 2025.

Revitalization of Performing Arts

The revitalization stage was made up of synchronized rehearsals and collaborative practice. The initiative involved a sum of thirty youthful artists. Fourteen participants consisting of seven male and seven female artists attended the rehearsal series of Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng. The Sendratari group rehearsed twice a week for one month, while the Tari Kenyo Sendangsari ensemble members took part in separate weekly rehearsals on Saturday. All participants completed the rehearsal phase and had opportunities to perform throughout the program. For Tari Kenyo Sendangsari, the number of dancers presented in each event was flexible and changed according to the space limitation and program requirement. Some moments had a larger cast, others only two dancers.

Trainers' weekly observation records indicated that both groups made observable progress during the rehearsal period. In the first rehearsals the performers often needed help to remember sequences of movement, to keep to tempo, to coordinate movement with musical accompaniment, and to arrange their positions on stage. As the rehearsals progressed, the performers required fewer cues and were able to complete longer performance sequences more independently. In the Sendratari group, corrections became less frequent once the performers could present the dance drama as a complete sequence rather than as separate sections. By the end of the rehearsal period, both groups showed greater autonomy, more stable tempo, better coordination with the musical accompaniment, and more orderly stage formations.

These observations indicate improved readiness for group performance. However, no standardized pre-test, post-test, or individual performance rubric was used. The findings therefore represent qualitative evidence derived from trainers' observations rather than a quantitative measurement of individual skill development. The observations focused on movement sequences, tempo, musical coordination, stage formation, and performance autonomy. Costume preparation and make-up were not included in the assessment.

Tari Kenyo Sendangsari as a welcome dance.

The project revitalized Tari Kenyo Sendangsari as a distinctive welcoming dance that reflects the hospitality of the local community and the cultural identity of the village. Performers were trained to maintain consistent choreography and tempo and to coordinate their stage formations. The dance was accompanied by selected gamelan instruments to reinforce its character and atmosphere. The rehearsal and performance preparation activities are illustrated in Figure 4.



Figure 4. Rehearsal and performance preparation for Tari Kenyo Sendangsari as a village welcoming dance. Source: Project documentation, 2024.

Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng as a dance drama.

The program also developed Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng as a narrative-driven tourism attraction rooted in local legend. Unlike traditional Gejog Lesung that centers on percussive rice-mortar rhythms, this sendratari integrates folklore with a composed musical arrangement that blends Gejog Lesung percussion with melodic instruments to build dramatic tension and support narrative flow. This redesign illustrates a standard "tourism translation" mechanism: re-creating a rural performance so it remains locally meaningful while becoming legible and engaging for visitors (Soewarlan, 2019). Figure 5 presents the rehearsal activities for Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng, including movement practice, role interpretation, coordination among performers, and practice with traditional musical instruments.



Figure 5. Rehearsal activities for Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng.
Source: Project documentation, 2025.

Impact on educational tourism

From a service delivery perspective, performing arts can contribute to village tourism when combined with accommodation, guiding and transaction systems. Monitoring data in 2025 showed a rise in the number of homestays from 8 to 13 units, an increase of 62.5%, and homestay revenues of IDR 25,000,000 after program execution. These figures should not be attributed solely to the performing arts activities. Instead, they may be interpreted as early indications that cultural performances, when supported by operational

standardization, can contribute to a more functional village tourism value chain (Soeswoyo et al., 2021).

The integration of revitalized arts into tourism packages was centered on Sanggar Among Lare, the village's cultural hub. Figure 6 presents Sanggar Among Lare, whose spatial and aesthetic design reflects the cultural ambience of Javanese Mataram. It supports immersive educational tourism experiences, consistent with the view that learning-oriented tourism benefits from a coherent setting that reinforces meaning and visitor engagement (Andari, 2023).



Figure 6. Sanggar Among Lare. Source: Project documentation, 2025.

At this venue, visitors are welcomed by Tari Kenyo Sendangsari before experiencing the main attraction, Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng. The performances are presented not merely as entertainment, but as interactive educational sessions through which visitors can observe and appreciate the artistic process and develop a better understanding of Sendangsari's intangible cultural heritage. Figure 7 presents the two performances as part of the village's educational tourism activities.



Figure 7. Art Performance "Kenyo Sendangsari Dance and Sunan Geseng Dance Drama".

Source: Project documentation, 2025.

Early institutionalization is indicated by program monitoring: Tari Kenyo Sendangsari was staged at village events more than three times, and the community delivered a full sendratari performance once at the "Sambanggo" cultural event organized by the Kulon Progo Regency Tourism Office in Sendangsari (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2024). Although infrequent, these deployments suggest the performances are beginning to shift from "training outputs" into routine village cultural-tourism practice. The key outputs, measurable indicators, supporting evidence, and data sources across the program phases are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Program outputs and measurable indicators, 2023–2025.

Output/indicator	Evidence (value)	Data source
Documentation outputs	Six baseline books documenting Sendangsari's cultural assets	Annual program report 2023 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2023)
Tourism packages	Four village tourism packages were prepared and simulated for guests	Annual program report 2023 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2023)

Festival-ready performance	Sendratari rehearsal cycle involving fourteen youth (seven male, seven female) over one month; Kenyo dance rehearsed weekly (Saturday)	Annual program report 2024 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2024)
Digital promotion	Two cultural videos (traditional games) were produced, featuring six children, two cameramen, and two students.	Annual program report 2024 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2024)
Service standardization	SOP for homestay management and structured guest and financial logs	Annual program report 2025 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2025)
Homestay growth	Homestays increased from 8 to 13 (+62.5%); reported omzet after program: IDR 25,000,000.	Annual program report 2025 (Kuswarsantyo et al., 2025)

Discussion: what changed, why it matters, and what must be improved

Taken together, the findings indicate a coherent mechanism of change that progresses from cultural documentation and safeguarding to performance standardization and regeneration, tourism packaging and integration, and early community-level outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 8.



Figure 8. Mechanism of change from cultural documentation and safeguarding to early community-level outcomes. Source: Authors' synthesis based on project reports, 2023–2025.

As shown in Figure 8, documentation outputs, including the baseline books and the ISBN-registered performing arts reference, strengthen cultural continuity and interpretability. Revitalization workshops then transform cultural assets into standardized, consistent, and visitor-ready performances. Finally, integrating these performances into village events and tourism services aligns cultural identity with service readiness, increases community visibility, and creates initial livelihood opportunities.

At the same time, standardizing performances for tourism introduces a recognized tension. Performances must be kept under community control and keep their local meaning but also be understood by visitors. The program mediates this tension by grounding narratives in local epic folklore, preserving the sonic identity of Gejog Lesung while carefully developing its musical arrangement, and formalizing storylines for guides. Therefore, tourism adaptation is seen as a regulated process and not as a loss of authenticity (Soewarlan, 2019; UNESCO, 2003).

Finally, the economic indicators reported in 2025 (homestay growth and omzet) are promising but should be treated as early signals rather than proof of impact. Future work should strengthen outcome measurement through systematic visitor feedback (e.g., satisfaction, perceived learning, willingness to recommend), routine attendance and

transaction logs, and a clearer attribution framework linking performance to package uptake.

Limitations.

This study reports a practice-oriented community service program using descriptive monitoring records across 2023–2025. Several limitations should be noted. First, the evidence primarily relies on annual program documentation and routine logs, without a comparison group or experimental design; therefore, causal attribution between performing-arts revitalization and economic indicators cannot be claimed. Second, the homestay omzet and growth figures should be interpreted as early signals and may be influenced by external factors (e.g., seasonality, broader village tourism initiatives, and promotional activities) that were not isolated in the current monitoring system. Third, visitor-level evidence remains limited (e.g., satisfaction, learning outcomes, repeat visitation, and conversion from performance experience to package purchase), which constrains conclusions about the effectiveness of educational tourism. Finally, documentation-based indicators may be subject to reporting bias and variation in the completeness of logs. Future work should strengthen measurement by using standardized visitor feedback instruments, consistent transaction records, and a clearer attribution framework that links performance to package uptake.

CONCLUSION

The revitalization of performing arts in Sendangsari Village demonstrates a practical connection between safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and improving tourism service readiness. The program treated cultural preservation as more than a symbolic agenda. It produced a reference book with an ISBN to support cultural transmission and storytelling. It also standardized two flagship performances, namely Tari Kenyo Sendangsari and Sendratari Gejog Lesung Sunan Geseng, so that both could be presented more consistently in educational tourism activities.

The program also strengthened the operational foundation of village tourism. The 2025 phase report documented the implementation of service SOPs and the use of structured records for guests, finances, and program monitoring. During the same period, the number of homestays increased from eight to thirteen units, while the reported homestay revenue after program implementation reached IDR 25,000,000. These findings should be interpreted as early indicators rather than evidence of a causal impact. Nevertheless, they suggest that placing performing arts at the center of village identity, supported by operational standardization and integration into tourism packages, can contribute to a more functional and sustainable village tourism value chain.

There is still room to improve how the program's outcomes are assessed. In the next phase, visitors could be asked directly about their satisfaction, what they learned, and which parts of the performances they found most meaningful. Online promotion and booking channels also need more attention, particularly if visitor demand is expected to continue beyond individual events. Any further development should remain under community control. The performances need to be presented in ways that local people consider culturally appropriate so that wider promotion does not gradually weaken their meaning. The experience in Sendangsari points to three practical stages: documenting cultural assets, revitalizing the performances, and incorporating them into tourism operations. Other villages may adapt these stages to their own cultural resources and local conditions.

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