



PRESS RELEASE

21 WHALES WASHED ASHORE IN GHANA

Takoradi, November 21, 2013. A funeral for a dead whale was held in the Western Region of Ghana. Community members gathered in traditional funeral dresses to farewell the 10,4 meter long sperm whale, decomposing and bleeding out just a few meters from their homes. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) took action to investigate when the ceremony was going on.

The dead whale was found in Domunli in the Nzema East District on Thursday evening, November 14, 2013. Mr. Anthony Hamilton from Unit committee member said he had informed the District Assembly (DA) and traditional leaders about the washing ashore of the whale. He reported it Friday morning. Since then, no action or response had come from the DA or the regulatory agencies. Eric Ndah, a community member, explained that the community was confused on how to dispose of the carcass and they had been waiting for responses from the authorities.

The socio-environmental NGO Friends of the Nation (FoN) mobilized the community to hold a traditional ritual for the whale which took place on Wednesday, November 20. The chief fisherman and elders from nearby Axim and Egyan got together to pour libation and say prayers while drumming and dancing was performed. Community members wearing red and black attire with a red band on, signifying mourning for the dead marine mammal, were singing traditional funeral songs to bid farewell to the whale, calling it "god" and "ancestor" in their local language. Traditionally, the washing ashore of whale is seen as a sign for bumper harvest. Now they rather see it as bad omen as the number of dead whales is causing worries. In the prayers, they were asking ancestors to help unravel the mystery for the surge of the death of the whales and bring bumper harvest to the fishermen and prosperity to the community.

EPA joined on Wednesday to take some samples of the decomposing body which was, after days of laying on the beach, still bleeding out into the ocean. The team was led by Joseph Sefa Debrah of the Fisheries and Acquatic Science Department of University of Cape Coast. His preliminary comments were that the whale could have been hit by a vessel because the vertebrates were broken and it was also suffering from internal bleeding. EPA appeared to the scene after FoN had called the Regional Director of the EPA and reported the incident to him.

Friends of the Nation (FoN) is a socio-environmental, research and advocacy NGO, based in the Sekondi-Takoradi in the Western Region of Ghana. FoN serves as a catalyst for increased action on good governance of natural resources including minerals, coastal resources, fisheries, oil and gas, etc.

The ceremony ended without an actual burial as the equipment for digging a hole was not available. The final report is expected. FoN will further engage.

FOR QUESTIONS, INTERVIEWS AND DONATIONS CONTACT US AT:

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Please join Friends of the Nation's campaign to call upon President Mahama to investigate into the death of the whales in Ghana: <http://chn.ge/1bwoWVT>

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