Report on Assessment of Fishing Grounds in the Nzema East and the Ahanta West Districts

September, 2010
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Cover Photo: Coastal lagoon

Cover Photo Credit: Friends of the Nation – Ghana
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1.0 Background

A rapid appraisal conducted in nine (9) main landing sites in the Nzema East and Ahanta West districts between 14th and 21st September 2010.

The communities visited were, Ankobra (Sanwoma), Apewosika (suburb of Axim), Miamia, Princess Akatakyi, Cape Three Points, Akwidaa, Dixcove, Busua and Butre.

The purpose of this assessment was to ascertain primary information of the spawning and fishing grounds among others.

The research team was made up of two persons; a staff of the Western Regional branch of the Ghana Canoe Fishermen Association and a staff of the Friends of the Nation. Data was collected through focus group discussions, participatory mapping, direct observations and key informants interviews.

This report summarizes the key findings from the assessment.

2.0 Ocean Current

The fishermen identified two main movements of the ocean currents. This is either towards the east or to the west. These are known locally as ‘efutu’ and ‘adawu’ respectively. The currents were also said to be stable at times and/or a mixture of ‘efutu’ and ‘adawu’. The mixture is when the upper currents moves eastwards while the under currents move westwards at the same time.

Characteristics of the ocean currents

The fishermen in the various communities described the movements differently. The table below shows the features of the ocean currents as described by a cross-section of the fishermen interviewed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Efutu (eastward)</th>
<th>Adawu (westwards)</th>
<th>Adawu + Efutu (Mixture)</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Efutu (eastward)</th>
<th>Adawu (westwards)</th>
<th>Adawu + Efutu (Mixture)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ankobra</td>
<td>During an upwelling, the currents blows eastwards towards the Akobra river</td>
<td>When the sea level goes down, the currents move westwards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Apewosika (Axim)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Miemia</td>
<td>This is experienced from April to July. During this period, fishers use bottom set nets and catch fishes like, ……(sukwei), ……(ekan), ……(ablanwa), ……(nkanfona), ……(kokoo)</td>
<td>This comes when the main fishing season goes away, mainly during the hamattan and starts from September and peaks between December and February. Major fish caught are sea bird (ntetre), ……(kΩ nsu ano), ……(apoku) etc.</td>
<td>February to March. Nets are entangled and there is hardly any catch during the period.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Princess Akatakyi</td>
<td>September to November. Sea waters changes colour, blue, red and green</td>
<td>Third week in December. Water becomes white and thicker and there is more fish as the currents open the nets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Cape Three Points</td>
<td>December – February. Makes it difficult to go fishing as nets are drifted away by the currents.</td>
<td>August – September. Currents are not as strong as the opposite. It therefore blows in multi-dimensions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Akwidaa</td>
<td>June to August (reduces in September)</td>
<td>February to April.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Dixcove</td>
<td>May – August</td>
<td>December – January</td>
<td>Destroys nets especially those who fish for pelagics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Busua</td>
<td>Have not taken notice of its times. More fish catch</td>
<td>Low fish catch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.0 Spawning

3.1 Gravid
When asked of the period which most fish carry eggs (gravid), most of the fishers gave a range between July and December but are common is September, they call “botwiber”. The gravid fishes, according to the fishers, are of varied sizes. They said some fishes are by nature big and the vice versa. It was, however, stated that they had a lot of fat in them. They could not tell of the ages though.

3.2 Production grounds
They stated that between February and June, they experience lower fish catch which according them, the fishes had gone to reproduce. The sardinellas, especially, go beyond the 30-metre zone, where the artisanal fishermen work. The pelagics hide inside rocks to ‘hatch’. The communities that had lagoons mentioned names of some marine fishes that are also found in the lagoons. These are mainly of the pelagic family. According to them, they reproduce in the lagoons and enter the sea through the estuaries.

4.0 Rocks
The fishermen identified their familiarity with rocky spots as well as places under the sea with some abnormalities like old ships. These they said capture their nets should they fall on them inadvertently. They indicated these spots by depths of the sea. Some places have rocks as close as five feet. The rocks are of various degrees of sizes and heights. Lobsters and crabs are fished around the rocks. Though they do not dive, they listen and hear knockings of stones at each other under the sea. Special landmarks like big trees, storey buildings and light houses are sometimes used to locate the rocks so as to avoid entangling their nets. Samples of seascape maps make the above description clearer. (see 8.0 below)
5.0 Lagoons

The assessment team visited all the eight lagoons that have their estuaries on east and west of Cape Three Points. These are river Ankobra at Sanwoma, Butre at Butre, Nana Busua and Mbêbênyi at east and west ends respectively of the Busua community, Ezile at Akwidaa, Mvuma at Dixcove and Ehuli and Epuko at Princess Akatakyi. The epuko lagoon, which lies at the east end, is infested with crocodiles which come out from the water upon incantations by a local priest. Tourists pay a token to watch them.

As mentioned elsewhere in the report, the lagoons serve as spawning grounds for most marine fishes.

5.1. The table below shows some species of fishes in the various lagoons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Fishes in:</th>
<th>Lagoons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>Fanti (Sanwoma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ankobra (Sanwoma)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Butre (Busua)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mbêbênyi (Busua)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ezile (Akwidaa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epuko (Princess Akatakyi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ehunli (Princess Akatakyi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash boy kanane</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablanwa</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aberwahon</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idue</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dwêedeɛ</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mamfo</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokora</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mbambaɛ</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokoo</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manfɛr</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kokotiako</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Êpaɛ</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kosi (kɔtɔ)</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kɔkɔtɛɛ</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5.2 Significance of the Lagoons

It was stated in some communities that all the fishes apart from herrings, turtles, dolphins and sharks are found in the lagoons. Fishing in the lagoon, they said, helps the people in a number of ways.

It was said that, during stormy days when marine fishing was impossible, fishermen entered the lagoon to fish for both commercial and domestic purposes.

As the lagoons, especially Butre and Ehunli, harbour very big fishes, it was believed that fishes hide under the mangrove along the lagoons and spawn before they migrate to the sea. It is cold in the lagoon. At Ankobra and many other places, upwelling of the sea, which should have otherwise cause flooding in the communities are avoided due to the lagoons. They said the excess water from the sea enter the lagoons.

Again, the wetlands around the lagoons are home to all kinds of plant species which were not only medicinal but also local building materials for the people. For example bamboos and raffia.

_A bamboo house at Miemia_
At Princess Akatakyi, it is a taboo to enter the lagoon on Thursdays, irrespective of what one is going to do. Tenth-born children and women in their “periods” are prohibited from entering the lagoon. Again, no one is allowed to go near the lagoon when there is a funeral in the town. As well, certain mesh sizes are not permitted to be used in the lagoon. It was said that most of these are often violated by some community members.

5.3 State of the Lagoons:
Despite the forgone benefits, the fishermen confessed of some activities the people in the communities do which threaten their sustainability of the lagoons. Some of these were mentioned as cutting of mangroves around the lagoons, dumping of refuse and also the violation of traditional laws and taboos that govern them.

The picture shows the heap of rubbish dumped on the bank of the lagoon and also used as a place of convenience.

The Busua lagoon is under serious threat. A walk beyond the bridge on the lagoon depicts a very gloomy picture.

The Mvuma lagoon at Lower Dixcove, is on the verge of collapse. Though the water in the lagoon used to be clean and was good for drinking and for other domestic purposes, it is now “dead” due to some of the practices mentioned above. Thus, mangroves are cut and dumping of refuse is a common place. The estuary is permanently blocked.

Some of the lagoons serve as tourism sites. In Butre and Akwidaa, for example, tourists are sailed by Guides on the lagoons to watch birds, the beautiful plants and also to “inhale fresh air”, they said.

The estuary of the Ehunli lagoon is opened every three years amidst a colourful traditional celebration.

Busua and Butre have set up offices (wooden kiosks) for local tourism and also boats for expeditions for a fee.
6.0 Marine Mammals

All the communities visited said dolphins and whales were seen from time to time along their beaches. Whales especially, do move in pairs and get very close to landing sites and watched by the entire community. Dolphins on the other hand do not get as close, they are seen up seas.

7.0 Traditional Systems

Few communities have sea-gods and for that matter, priests and priestesses through whom they worship. Libations are poured and various sacrifices are made to the gods who offer abundant fish in their seasons.
8.0 Seascape Maps

8.1 Princess Akatakyi

Botenga Submerged ship (20yds)

Kwaw Christ Bolt...
8.2 Butre

20yds

13yds

9yds

5 yds

Toblokyew

Butre Lagoon

Abokwaw Island, Busua
8.3 Seascape of Busua

- 20yds
- 13yds
- 9yds
- 5 yds

- Mbēmban Lagoon
- Nana Busua Lagoon
- Abokwaw Island, Busua
- Busua Beach Resort

metal or rock?
## 9.0 List of Interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ankobra/Sanwoma</td>
<td>Paa Kwesi (T 99)*</td>
<td>Fisherman/Canoe Owner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Tetteh</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Asare Quayson</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Axim – Apewosika</td>
<td>Kwame Bentum</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kwesi Nyamekye*</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jonas Tetteh</td>
<td>Axim Beach Hotel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Miemia</td>
<td>Duku Agyake</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kofi Mensah*</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Egya Aboah</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Egya Kwaaprem</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cape Three Points</td>
<td>Peter Addae*</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Benard Cudjoe</td>
<td>Town Tourism Dev</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Mensah</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Nichema</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Quaicoo</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Akwidaa</td>
<td>Nana Ekrapanyin*</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nyankaade*</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Dixcove</td>
<td>John Parker</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td>(Sec.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Egya Kojo Amakye</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aggrey Mensah</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nana Kweku Dadzie</td>
<td>Chief</td>
<td>fisherman</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Lower Dixcove)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Butre</td>
<td>Kojo Tawiah*</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nana Baidu</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Mensah</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Phone Number</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Busua</td>
<td>Eric Quayson-Bailif</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td>0275819786</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Man Ahey</td>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Princess Akatakyi</td>
<td>John Mensah</td>
<td></td>
<td>0201973386</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John K. Essilfie*</td>
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<td>0201649181</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kwaw Enyina</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>John Kwofie</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Joseph Anokye</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kwesi Ayaah (One-Man)*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0209878395</td>
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</tbody>
</table>