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



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THE
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COASTAL
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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 1. Description of Ocean Currents

#	Community	Efutu (eastward)	Adawu (westwards)	Adawu + Efutu (Mixture)
1.	Ankobra	During an upwelling, the currents blows eastwards towards the Akobra river	When the sea level goes down, the currents move westwards	
2.	Apewosika (Axim)	The currents change at any time- they interchange		
3.	Miemia	This is experienced from April to July. During this period, fishers use bottom set nets and catch fishes like,(sukwei),(ekan), ...(ablanwa), ...(nkanfona), ...(kokoo)	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), ...(kɔ nsu ano), ...(apoku) etc.	February to March. Nets are entangled and there is hardly any catch during the period.
4.	Princess Akatakyi	September to November. Sea waters changes colour, blue, red and green	Third week in December. Water becomes white and thicker and there is more fish as the currents open the nets	
5.	Cape Three Points	December – February. Makes it difficult to go fishing as nets are drifted away by the currents.	August – September. Currents are not as strong as the opposite. It therefore blows in multi-dimensions.	
6.	Akwidaa	June to August (reduces in September)	February to April.	September to November. It is described as “efutu a adawu da ase” thus eastern current with wester current underneath. Difficult to fish
7	Dixcove	May – August	December – January Moves swiftly and takes away nets. Destroys trapped fish	Destroys nets especially those who fish for pelagics
	Busua	Have not taken notice of its times. More fish catch	Low fish catch	

9.	Butre	April – October. Water turns either white or blue. Water is from the flood waters of lagoons and river bodies	November to March. Water becomes deep blue. This is the real water of the sea. Moves swifter than the eastern current and associated with Lower fish catch	October to November
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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 Mbɛbenyi 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.

Names of Fishes in:			Lagoons						
English	Fanti	Nzema	Ankobra (Sanwoma)	Butre	Busua	Mbɛbani (Busua)	Ezile (Akwidaa)	Epuko (Princess Akatakyi)	Ehunli (Princess Akatakyi)
	Wash boy	kanane	✓			✓	✓		✓
	Ablanwa		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
	aberwahon		✓	✓			✓		✓
	Idue		✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
	dwɛdɛɛ		✓			✓		✓	✓
	Mamfo		✓				✓		
	Kokora				✓		✓		
	mbambae				✓	✓	✓		✓
	Kokoo		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	manfɛr						✓		✓
	Kokotiako						✓		
	ɛpae		✓	✓			✓		✓
	Kosi (kɔtɔ)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	kɔkɔtɛɛ			✓			✓		

Names of Fishes in:			Lagoons						
English	Fanti	Nzema	Ankobra (Sanwoma)	Butre	Busua	Mbebbani (Busua)	Ezile (Akwidaa)	Epuko (Princess Akatakyi)	Ehunli (Princess Akatakyi)
	abeku			✓			✓		
	Sukwei		✓	✓	✓				✓
	nkanfona				✓		✓		
	Ɛkan		✓		✓				✓
prawns	sɛsɛw				✓				✓
	Tantra		✓			✓			✓
Snapper	Ɛsoe	Ɛsoe		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓

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



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.

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.



he 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.



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.

6.0 Marine Mammals

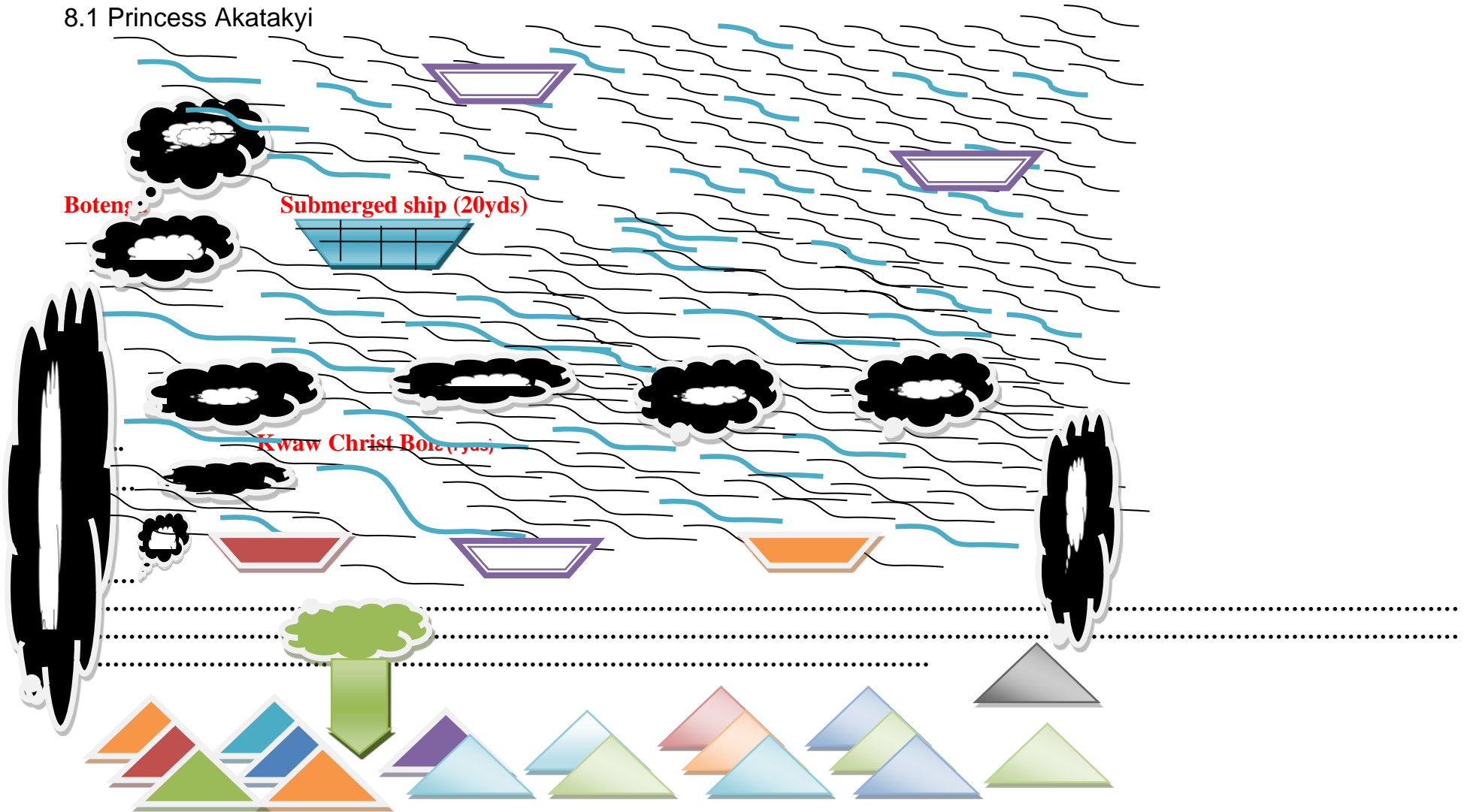
All the communities visited said dolphins and whales were seen from time to time along their beaches. Whales especially, do move in pairs and get very close to landing sites and watched by the entire community. Dolphins on the other hand do not get as close, they are seen up seas.

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



8.2 Butre

Abokwaw Island, Busua

20yds

13yds

Abonten

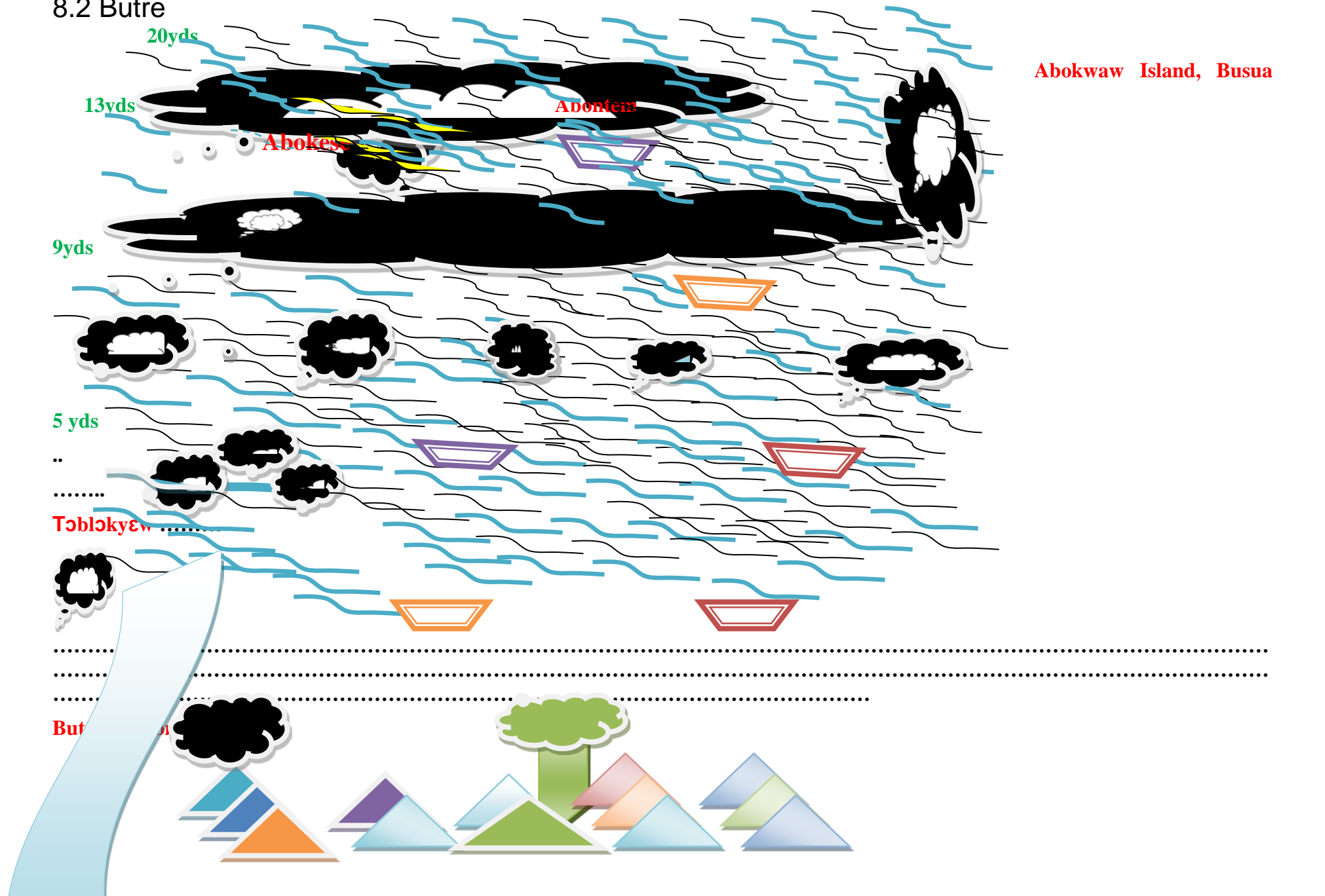
Abokes

9yds

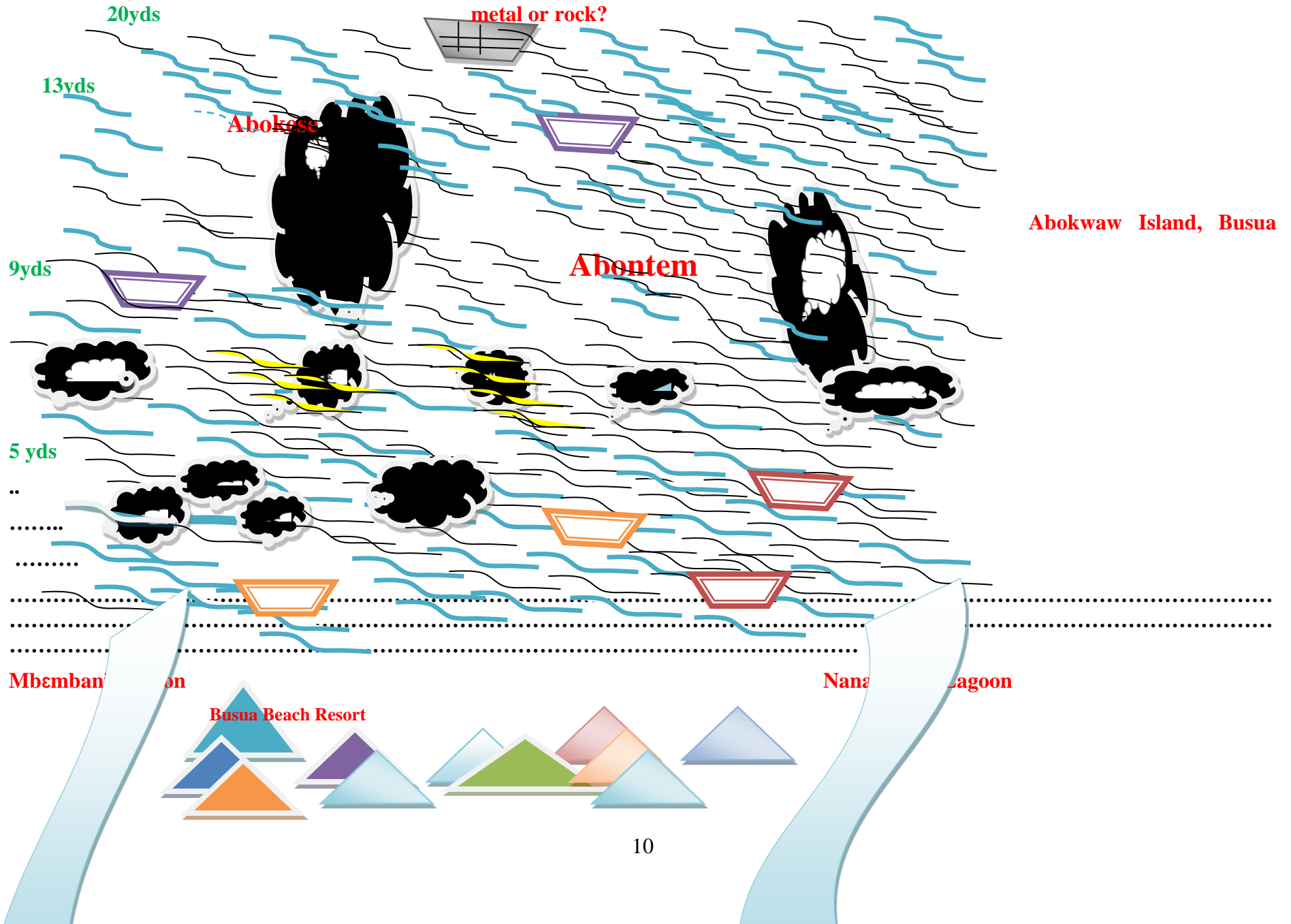
5 yds

.....
Toblokye

Butre



8.3 Seascape of Busua



9.0 List of Interviewees

#	Community	Name	Designation	Contact
1	Ankobra/Sanwoma	Paa Kwesi (T 99)*	Fisherman/ Canoe Owner	
		John Tetteh	Fisherman	
		Joseph Asare Quayson	Fisherman	
2	Axim – Apewosika	Kwame Bentum	Fisherman	
		Kwesi Nyamekye*	Fisherman	
		Jonas Tetteh	Axim Beach Hotel	
3	Miemia	Duku Agyake	Chief	
		Kofi Mensah*	Fisherman	
		Egya Aboah	Fisherman	
		Egya Kwaaprem	Fisherman	
4	Cape Three Points	Peter Addae*	Fisherman	
		Benard Cudjoe	Town Tourism Dev	
		Joseph Mensah	Fisherman	
		Paul Nichema	Fisherman	
		Paul Quaicoo	Fisherman	
5	Akwidaa	Nana Ekrpanyin*	Chief Fisherman	
		Nyankaade *	Fisherman	
6	Dixcove	John Parker	Fisherman (Sec.)	
		Egya Kojo Amakye	Fisherman	
		Aggrey Mensah	Fisherman	
		Nana Kweku Dadzie	Chief fisherman (Lower Dixcove)	
7	Butre	Kojo Tawiah*	Fisherman	
		Nana Baidu	Fisherman	
		John Mensah	Fisherman	

8	Busua	Eric Quayson-Bailif	Fisherman	0275819786
		Man Ahey	Fisherman	
9	Princess Akatakyi	John Mensah		0201973386
		John K. Essilfie*		0201649181
		Kwaw Enyina		
		John Kwofie		
		Joseph Anokye		
		Kwesi Ayaah (One-Man)*		0209878395