

THE DYNAMICS OF LAND DEALS IN THE TANA DELTA, KENYA

by

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Introduction to Tana River District

- One of the seven (7) districts of coast province;
- It has estimated population of 240,075 people;
- The major communities include the Pokomo farmers who are Bantus and the Orma and Wardei pastoralists who are Cushitic;

Introduction Cont'd...

- River Tana – a major source of water for people, livestock, wildlife and cultivation;
- A large delta is formed between Mnazini and Kipini at the Indian Ocean;

Introduction to Tana delta

- The delta is one of the country's largest and most important freshwater wetland ecosystems;
- It supports pastoralists and small-scale subsistence farmers, all of whom have been dependent on the delta for many years;
- Delta is also estimated to hold more than **50%** of the national **potential for irrigable** land.

Land size and composition of the delta

- **Arable land** = 3,822 (382,200 ha)

- **Water Mass** = 3,226 Km²

- **Range land** = 8,964 Km²

Total Area = 16,012 Km²

Tana river **length** in Km = **270**

Importance of the Delta

- Rich and diverse species of biodiversity;
- Holds pasture reserves for critical periods;
- Supports small-scale farmers and some agro-pastoralists;
- Also supports minorities of hunter-gatherer communities, collectively known as the *Wasanya* or sometimes *Watta*.

Nature of 'land grab'?

- Usually (trans)national commercial land transactions – hence domestic as well as foreign;
- Lease or purchase;
- Main actors include: national government agencies, private investors and foreign governments – for **crops, bio-fuel** and/or **minerals**, for export.

The Kenyan Situation

- There are 3 land tenure systems in Kenya: private, public and trust land;
- New Constitution stipulates that all natural resources belong to the people and the government merely holds them in trust for them;
- National Land Commission will be responsible for land and accountable to parliament;

- Vision 2030 considers foreign investment as key to agricultural development in the country;
- About 60% of the population live in absolute poverty;
- Lack of access to land is a major determinant of poverty in Kenya;
- 80% of the land is ASALs, and only suitable for pastoralism, or partly for Irrigation;

Land in the Tana Delta

- Land in the Delta is trust land and people don't have titles to their ancestral lands;
- Lack of titles makes the community/trust land vulnerable to land grabs;

Different land deals in the delta

- 1. TARDA-Mumias Partnership:** 40,000 ha for monoculture sugar cane plantation – to provide sugar and Ethanol;
 - 25,000 people plus living in 30 villages have been/are being evicted by the project. Electric fencing of this land is now in progress.
- 2. Tiomin Kenya Ltd:** For titanium mining; Deal underway, and exact size of land unclear so far;

- 3. Mat International:** Acquiring 30,000 ha within the delta and another 90,000 ha from the adjacent districts - for sugar cane plantation;
- Appears to have the support of the locals due to its planned out growers' policy.
- 4. G4 Industries:** Negotiating for 50,000 ha for oil seed farming. Negotiation at early stage.
- 5. Bedford Bio-fuels Inc:** A multi-national acquiring 90,000 ha through 45-year lease for *jatropha curcas*. Negotiation with ranch owners.

- 6. Galole Horticulture Project:** A private local co. acquired 5000 ha for horticulture – but now growing maize;
- 7. Emirate of Qatar:** To lease 40,000 ha for 80 years to grow food for Qataris, in exchange for a US\$ 3.5 billion loan to build a second deep water port for Kenya;
- Shockingly, the government is transacting this deal when over 10 million Kenyans faced starvation after the 2009 and the 2011 droughts;

Impact of 'land grab' on the local delta communities

- Restriction of access to key resources;
- Pastoralists 'grabbing' their own grazing corridors as land protection mechanism;
- Local elites taking ranches for themselves;
- Displacement of local communities;

- Loss of dry season grazing pastures for pastoralists;
- Loss of access to lands, water and fishing grounds to host communities.

Conclusion thus far ...

- Current 'land rush' aimed at getting done with before the new legal structures come into operation;
- Pastoral lifestyle and the necessary mobility for sustainable livelihoods is in serious jeopardy;
- The delta wetland may need International recognition for its effective protection under the Ramsar Convention;

- Trust lands allocations contrary to the provisions of the constitution should be revoked immediately, and reverted to their original owners/users;
- Urgent need to quantify the economic and environmental values of the delta – to rationalize the need for its careful utilization.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!!