## THE DYNAMICS OF LAND DEALS IN THE TANA DELTA, KENYA

by

#### **Abdirizak Arale Nunow**

(FAC and Moi University, School of Environmental Studies, Eldoret, Kenya)

at

The International Conference on 'Land Grabbing' Held at IDS, Sussex, 6 – 8 April, 2011

## Introduction to Tana River District

 One of the seven (7) districts of coast province;

 It has estimated population of 240,075 people;

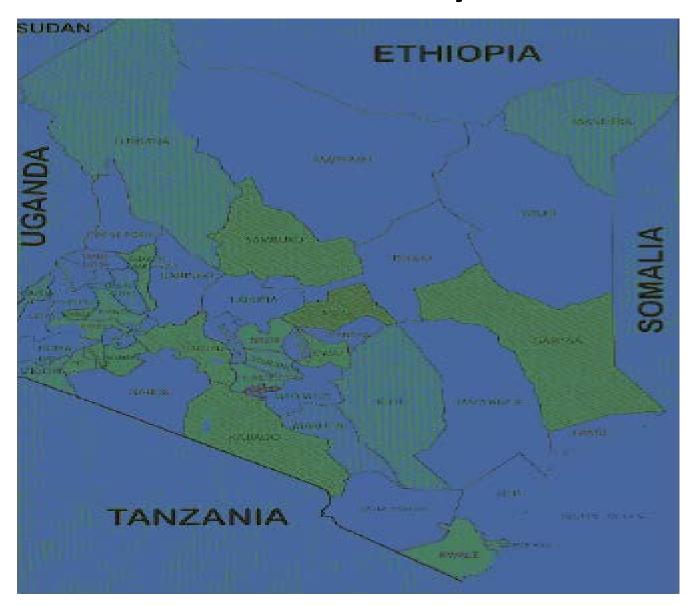
 The major communities include the Pokomo farmers who are Bantus and the Orma and Wardei pastoralists who are Cushitic;

## 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;

## Map Showing the location of Tana River District in Kenya



#### 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 =  $3,226 \text{ Km}^2$
- Range land =  $8,964 \text{ Km}^2$

**Total** Area = 16,012 Km<sup>2</sup>

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 agropastoralists;

 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!!