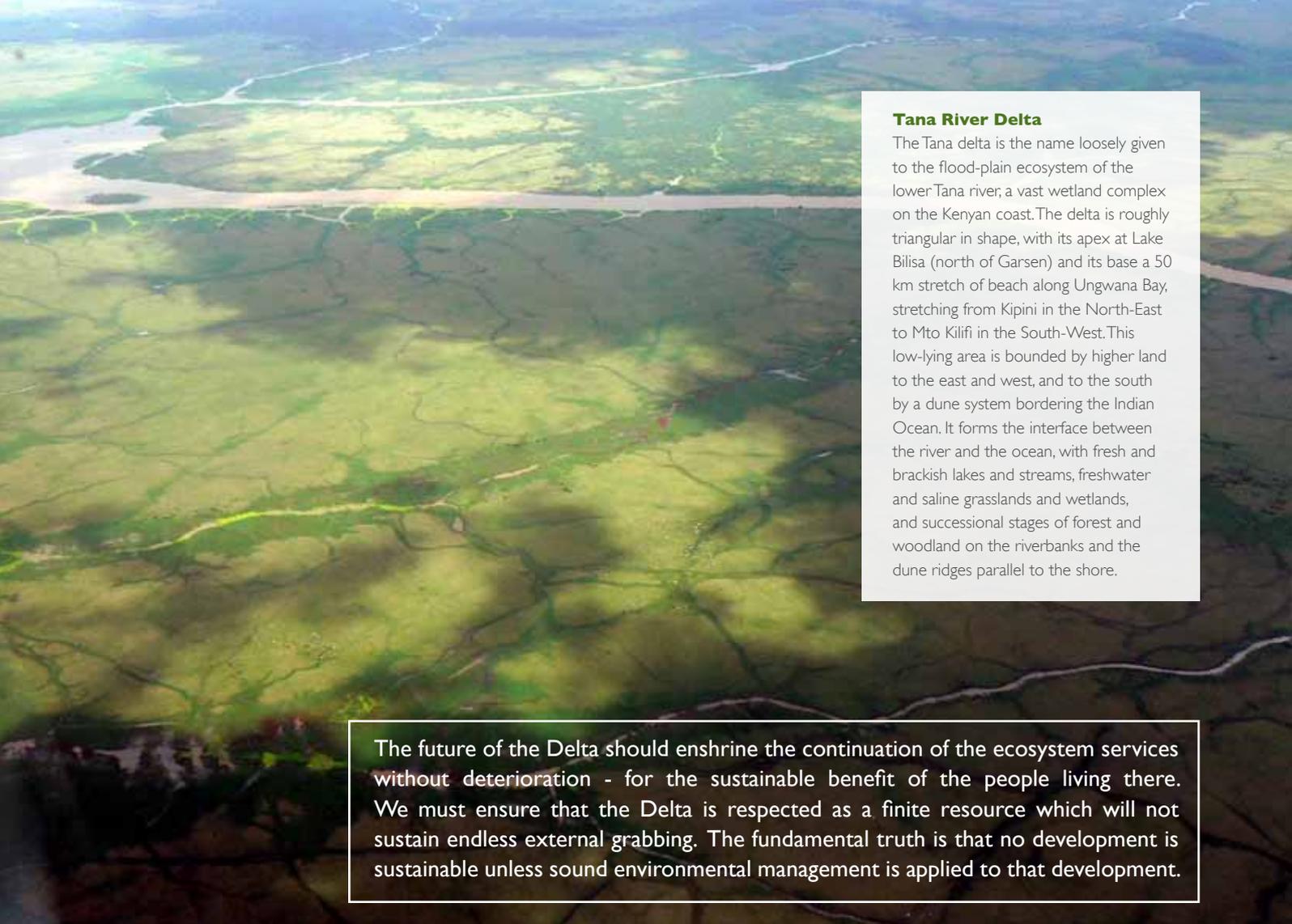


# Scarcity of Land and Resources is cause of Tana Delta Violence

Slightly over 100 people have lost their lives in the Tana mayhem killings, all within a 3 week period in the months of August and September 2012. The deaths are a result of conflict and revenge attacks between the Pokomo and Orma communities. This conflict experience in Tana is not new. For the past few years, real tensions, resulting in clashes, have been experienced between farmers and pastoralists, and between communities and external investors. Failure by responsible government institutions to recognise that the Tana delta is occupied and used by many local communities and a failure by those same institutions to recognise the social and environmental consequences of imposing external 'schemes' has escalated the land use issues in the Tana Delta into an even bigger problem of land, economic and social conflict. While acknowledging any solution to the "frequent" clashes must involve the two communities, the solution cannot entirely be left to them. Now is the time for the government to deal with the root cause of the problem. The underlying cause of scarcity of resources linked

to an increasing demand to use these resources should be at the heart of finding the solution. To recap, the Tana Delta is home to approximately 97,000, people that include pastoralists who depend on the water and grassland for their livestock throughout the year but more so during the dry season; agriculturalists who cultivate rice and other crops on the receding floodplain edges and grow perennial crops along the river banks; and the fishermen from several ethnic groups who fish from the Delta's lakes and water courses. The past five years has seen increasing demands by national (both private and state) and international investors for land in the Tana Delta for large scale farming of irrigated food crops to meet food security and for biofuel crops to meet global renewable energy demands. Some of the companies that have interest and even land in Tana Delta include; Bedford biofuels, Coastal Aquaculture Limited, G4 industries, Mumias Sugar Limited, Tana River Development Authority – TARDA, Mat International Limited, Tiomin Kenya Limited, Galole Horticulture among





### Tana River Delta

The Tana delta is the name loosely given to the flood-plain ecosystem of the lower Tana river; a vast wetland complex on the Kenyan coast. The delta is roughly triangular in shape, with its apex at Lake Bilisa (north of Garsen) and its base a 50 km stretch of beach along Ungwana Bay, stretching from Kipini in the North-East to Mto Kilifi in the South-West. This low-lying area is bounded by higher land to the east and west, and to the south by a dune system bordering the Indian Ocean. It forms the interface between the river and the ocean, with fresh and brackish lakes and streams, freshwater and saline grasslands and wetlands, and successional stages of forest and woodland on the riverbanks and the dune ridges parallel to the shore.

The future of the Delta should enshrine the continuation of the ecosystem services without deterioration - for the sustainable benefit of the people living there. We must ensure that the Delta is respected as a finite resource which will not sustain endless external grabbing. The fundamental truth is that no development is sustainable unless sound environmental management is applied to that development.

others. All this interest has conveniently ignored the people living there and the growing pressures faced by them through population growth, resource encroachment, catchment degradation, etc. Currently the existing human settlement and land use can be summarized as over 18 villages within the Delta, comprising pastoralist/livestock herders, namely the Orma, Wardei and Somali; farming/cultivation communities namely the Pokomo and Mijikenda; fishing communities, namely the Malakote, Bajuni and Luos; and hunters and gatherers, the Wasanya and Boni. Yet the justifications made by TARDA and others for large scale investments totally ignores the rights, interests and pressures faced by these local communities.

A solution that does not address these escalating land use pressures; that results in a further loss of community access to land will not help solve the conflicts between the pastoralists and the agriculturalists. It is a fact that land transfers for large scale development and lack of a land use Master Plan for the Tana Delta has led to social, cultural/

traditional, environmental and economic impacts. These impacts include: involuntary displacement of people, community denial of customary rights and access to land based natural resources, loss of people's only sources of livelihood (fishing, agriculture, pastoralism), reduced community coping strategies on their livelihood support systems, reduced land productivity, increase in landlessness, restricted access to grazing lands, water and forests, and as a result, increase in conflicts within communities, between different ethnic groups, and more recently between communities and external investors.

**The Government should be alive to these problems and use this opportunity to move in fast and put in place a Tana Land use Master Plan. This plan should fully involve the local communities in its development and agreement. Furthermore the Government would be demonstrating its commitment and compliance with the recently approved National Land Policy and with the 2010 Constitution.**