

**LAND GRABBING IN A POST INVESTMENT PERIOD AND POPULAR
REACTION IN THE RUFJI RIVER BASIN¹.**

A RESEARCH REPORT

By

HAKIARDHI

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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction 3
 - 1.1: Approach and Methodology 7
- 2.0 Land Grabbing as a Form of Capital Accumulation under Neo-liberalism 8
- 3.0 Rufiji: The Socio-historical Context 11
 - 3.1 Pre-colonial Rufiji..... 11
 - 3.2 The Warufiji and colonialism 13
- 4.0 Who is Grabbing Land in the Basin? 16
- 5.0 Whose Land is Grabbed? 22
 - 5.1 The methods of land grabbing 23
 - 5.2 The Role of the State in Tanzania and Land Grabbing 24
- 6.0 Perceptions of Investments in the Rural Areas 28
- 7.0 Land Grabbing and Popular Discontent 31
- 8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations 39
- 9.0 References 42

1.0 Introduction

The history of Africa's relations with the West has been a history of robbery – robbery of African manpower, its mineral and agricultural resources, and its land.
Woddis, Jack Africa – the roots of Revolt.

Historically, the Rufiji River Basin (RRB) is rich of accounts of struggles and resistance against domination, oppression, and exploitation. It was in this region that the initial planning and organization of the Maji Maji insurrection against German colonial rule and accumulation took place. The insurrection spread to southern regions of colonial Tanganyika involving the Wamatumbi and Wangido, Wamwera, Wamakua, among others (Chachage 2005a).² The Maji Maji insurrection happened over 200 years ago and to the majority of the people inhabiting the RRB after independence from colonialism it never dawned to them that they would ever be exposed to situations where they would be compelled to invoke the spirit of Kinjekitile Ngware to wage another war in defense of their resources (Chachage 2005). However, beginning from the 1990s these people are confronting new realities for which they have to make choices, to either resist and struggle against them or comply. These new realities relate to the global and local accumulation interests which seek control of the resources of this region. This comes after Tanzania embraced neo-liberalism. This means the market is in command and the regulator of the economy, that the private sector is the engine of growth, and the local state must facilitate these interests to realize their objective by putting in place all the conditions necessary. This required that all sectors of the economy including land and other natural resources to be reformed and be open for grab. It was in the mid 1990s that residents of the Rufiji delta found themselves confronting a situation which compelled them to wage a struggle against the combined interests of the political class and private business over the resources of the delta. This was just a curtain riser for what was to happen in Rufiji and the rest of the RRB in the years to follow.

The underlying reasons why the Warufiji have to encounter these forces is the resources endowments found in the RRB, and the expansion and deepening of the interests and needs of international capitalist accumulation which, under neoliberalism, are realizable through the transformation of everything into commodity (Harvey 2005). The documented resource

² See Chachage (2005). *Makuadi wa Soko Huria*, Dar es Salaam; E&D, pp. 49-57.

endowment of the RRB shows that it is one of the fourteen basins in Tanzania and one of the largest. The RRB covers an area of 176,000 sq. km, and consists of the Rufiji Delta, the Luwero, Kilombero and Ruaha rivers. The Rufiji is the largest river basin in Tanzania and drains about 20% of the country. It is the most ecologically and biologically diverse, socially and economically important wetland. It supports a gallery of ecosystems ranging from forests, sand dunes, beaches, ocean; exotic plants and animal species, some of which have been declared as endangered. In typical years, the river basin is inundated by floods which are normally influenced by rainfall and run-off patterns throughout the vast watershed, which in the process deposits nutrient-silt on the land thereby creating highly suitable conditions for floodplain agriculture. Flooding is also a valuable event as it enables the refilling of hundreds of ponds and innumerable riverside lakes which are an important source of fishing.

Despite these innumerable natural resources, its inhabitants who approximate 500,000 people, of whom 93% constitute small-scale farmers and pastoralists, are some of the poorest in the country. According to a study conducted by Hogan et al (2000), it was found that out of a sample of 54 households in four villages, only 5 households had incomes that were above Tshs. 500,000/= per annum, which was slightly above the national poverty line. However, incomes differed widely by gender, education and location. For example, people living in the delta had incomes which were higher (Tshs. 1,471,524/=) than those living in the flood plains who obtained Tshs. 631,995/= per year. Furthermore, the study revealed that agriculture was not an important source of income: out of a sample of 1,590 adults, more than 85% were involved in agriculture. But agricultural activities were combined with other off-farm activities such as fishing (45%), palm weaving (26%), salt making (10%), and business (7%). One interpretation of this picture is that despite the fact that many are directly employed in agriculture most of their income comes from other sources. This is mainly because agricultural activities are not productive enough. This is despite the agricultural potential of the Rufiji River Valley.

In the 1970s the government tried to address, in a small scale though, the agriculture needs of the *Warufiji*. One such initiative was an irrigation scheme supported by the government of Iran. This project however collapsed after sometime. The Tanzania/Iran irrigation scheme project focused on growing of rice in the Lower Rufiji River (Manongi n.d.; Mwalosyi 1990). The collapse of this scheme was compounded by the early focus of the liberalization policies which paid little

attention to agriculture in general. Between 1995 and 2005 the government of Tanzania, as president Mkapu admitted towards the end of his last presidential term, had ignored the farmers and agriculture. However, when the government was reconsidering agriculture it was within the framework of the market and the private sector. Ideally the government was considering promoting large scale commercial farming. It was in this context that the Warufiji of the delta found themselves contesting political elites-cum-corporate interests.

In 2006 the government of President Jakaya Kikwete gave more impetus to the idea of promoting large scale farming. This was done by inviting foreign investment into the agriculture sector. By this time the government was interested in growing plants for producing energy biofuels. In his tour to Canada in December 2006, Edward Lowasa, then Prime Minister, invited Canadian investors to Tanzania and invest into the agriculture sector. On this the premier partly stated the following:

With the continued rise in the global demand for fuel and consequently the upward pressure on oil prices, bio-fuels are increasingly becoming alternative fuel sources. In Tanzania we have plenty of land for growing the relevant crops. We are, therefore, keen to see further investments in palm-oil, jatropha, and sugar for ethanol and we welcome interested partners (Lowasa 2006).

The desire of the government to ‘welcome interested partners’ coincided with a global demand for lands for both food and biofuel projects (Kamata 2009). These developments at both the local and global level have created pressure on lands in rural Africa, and the Rufiji River basin has, within a few years, experienced such pressure. Requests for land from companies and individual persons posing as investors is common, and the most recent case is a move led by the government agency, RUBADA, to prepare acquisition of about 100,000 hectares of land on behalf of a Korean company.

What has been the reaction of the rural producers and other land holders over these demands and actual land acquisitions? What does their reactions mean in relation to ongoing land grabbing? While these questions are important this study was motivated by two major concerns. First, although some reactions of the peasants on land grabbing have been documented, nothing much

is known of what happens after the initial stage of land acquisition has been carried out in a specific area. The second concern is that how do people respond to second or third incidences of land acquisitions done in the name of investment? To address these concerns the study ascribed to itself three specific objectives.

First, is to show that the scramble for land by capitalist multinational corporations - which has been taking place in Africa in general and Tanzania in particular, is not an isolated affair. Neither can it be conceived as an aberration nor an accident in history. It is instead an expression in concrete terms of the laws of motion of *capital*. In other words, it needs to be understood as a continuation of the age-old and ongoing processes of primitive accumulation, whose present expression form is accumulation by dispossession entailing commoditisation of everything from the essential services like education, health services, including the commons like land, water ponds and bores.

Second, is to demonstrate the role the state plays in the process of accumulation under the neo-liberal era. The state, it is argued, has been facilitating the process of granting agricultural land to foreign investors (the new settlers) in return for what has been dubbed “bringing new technologies, developing productive potential, facilitating infrastructure development, and creating employment and supply of food to local markets.”³ While doing this it undermines the very conditions of existence of the peasant communities (Moyo and Yaros, 2005).

Third, the study intends to show that wherever there is oppression and exploitation, there is always resistance. The history of the colonial people has been one of continuous struggles conducted by the peasants and the working people. Whereas the *Warufiji* rose in their hundreds and waged the Maji Maji war against the Germans during the early phase of the last century, the peasants of to-day have never remained silent and hence acquiesced in their exploitation and oppression. Their struggle has taken different forms as outlined in the relevant section below.

In the wake of the flurry for land grabs in Tanzania, it sought to examine the extent to which both foreign and local capitalist companies have been allocated land for agricultural production in the Rufiji River Basin and to what use. More specifically, it was concerned with identifying

³ Cotula, Lorenzo *et al* (2009) “Land grab or development opportunity? Agricultural investment and International land deals in Africa”. pp. 58-59.

the companies involved, whose land they had acquired and the processes and methods/approaches used in acquiring the said land and the full implications of these developments. For one thing there have been claims that foreign investments in land are beneficial to villagers as they provide employment opportunities, they employ inclusive agricultural business models which would also benefit small scale peasants and thereby raising labour productivity in agriculture. To ascertain the extent to which the concessions have gone and their socio-economic implications was the principal objective of this study.

The report is organized in eight major sections. Section one introduces the study and sets out the aims and methodology of the study; section two deals with some conceptual and theoretical issues, and lays out the theoretical framework used for this study. Section three is an attempt to map out, historically, the various struggles and tribulations people in the Rufiji River basin have encountered; and section four establishes the various land grabbers, both those who have acquired land and those who have approached the village communities with that intention. Section five is a concise presentation on whose land is grabbed and what methods are used to grab land. Section six reviews various perceptions of land grabbing and investment, and pays particular attention to popular perceptions about land grabbing and investment. Section seven is a detailed presentation and discussion of cases of how the people in Rufiji and elsewhere in the basin have reacted to the most recent cases of land grabbing. The last section, section eight, is a conclusion and recommendations.

1.1: Approach and Methodology

This report draws on the field work which was carried out in Rufiji and Kilombero districts between 20th May and 28th June 2011. Data collection involved both primary and secondary sources. First and foremost, the existing literature including media reports were reviewed. Second, primary data was elicited by conducting interviews and focus group discussions from villagers and government leaders in the districts. In Rufiji district, field visits were undertaken to village communities in Nyamwage, Ngorongo Mashariki, Ruwe, and Kipo. Data was also collected from Ikwiriri a peri-urban township along the Rufiji River Valley. In Kilombero district, the following village communities were earmarked, yet the researchers were not able to visit them all due to impassable roads. Among the four sampled villages only Namawala village was visited. But even here it was not easy to conduct fruitful discussions with villagers due to the

volatile political situation in the village. Given the conditions neither the village leaders nor villagers themselves were willing to engage into a discussion with members of the research team. A discussion was later held between members of the research team and leaders of Namawala Village Council after the later paid a visit to Dar es Salaam as part of their mission to follow up matters related to land dispute in their village. The meeting was held at the Office of HAKIARDHI. While in Ifakara however the research team was able to hold some discussions with government officials.

2.0 Land Grabbing as a Form of Capital Accumulation under Neo-liberalism

Most of the massive land acquisitions in Africa have been described as land grabs. This description might be irritating and makes others uncomfortable when they hear it said again and again. These will try to seek an alternative term to describe and somehow legitimize what is going on. Of these the most recent study by IIED carefully chooses the world land rush instead of land grab.⁴ Our problem with this attempt is that it is an effort to deliberately divert the debate on what these land acquisitions means, in the final analysis, to the marginalized land holders and users, and to promote the idea that foreign investment on land can work if it is properly managed and regulated. It is in our view that this is an intellectual effort at the service of capitalist accumulation.

For lack of a suitable term we are of the view that land grabbing, at least so far, best describes the kind of dispossession going on in rural Africa. The term augurs well with the neo-liberal grand project whose objective, as described by various scholars (Patnaik 2011, Amin 2010, Harvey 2005), is accumulation by dispossessing the popular classes. In the rural areas this form of accumulation also displaces the majority of rural producers (Patnaik and Moyo2011). Accumulation by dispossession as both Shivji (2009) and Amin (1974) would argue is not an isolated phenomenon but a continuation, though in a changed form, of the primitive accumulation of capital.

Historically, land grabbing is not a new phenomenon to Africa. As both Moyo (2011) and Chachage (2005a) show it happened during various periods of colonialism in Africa. For example Moyo (in Patnaik and Moyo 2011) indicates that by the 1960s countries like Kenya,

⁴ See Ward Anseeuw et. al (2011). *Land Rights and The Rush for Land*; Land Coalition.

South Africa, and Algeria had witnessed the first wave of extensive land grabbing by European Settlers (Ptnaik and Moyo 2011: 64). What is new in the present wave is that accumulation is not confined to European nations as was in the past, and that it involves the local state as an actor on behalf of capital, and thus exposing its characteristic as a typical agent for capitalist accumulation in the periphery.

Despite the similarity between the present and previous land grabs the present happens after years of struggles against imperialism in the periphery. That it is happening again today depicts that imperialism was not defeated and is now in a new offensive. Land grabs is carried out today through the application of both force and consent. In the first instance those to be disposed resist and when that happens they have to be coerced to complicity. In the second instance consent is used to dispossess after bombarding the dispossessed with illusions about a myriads of benefits from investors. However, in both circumstances people resists either prior to acquisition of their land or after. Laws are also used and invisibly operated as a coercive arm of the state to disposes the popular classes. In the context of Tanzania the laws to facilitate dispossession were already in place and were reformed in the 1990s to make it easier to the acquisition of land for investors.

In the late 1980s the state in Tanzania, under the dictates of the World Bank and the IMF, adopted market-based land reforms. One thing these reforms sought to achieve was to facilitate land transfers. The objective was to commodify land and in so doing usher in a whole process of expropriating the peasants, and in turn strengthen private property rights of the agrarian capitalists (large commercial farmers). These reforms were in line with the new form of accumulation i.e. the plunder of the natural resources of the periphery and the dispossession and displacement of the peasantry. This however, was to be seen conducted according to the laws (Shivji 2006, Land Act No. 2004, Kamata 2010).

In the late 1990s these reforms coincided with new developments at the world scale. Food prices were on the increases, pressures for cleaner environment and an alternative source of energy were mounting (Kamata 2009). This was compounded by the rise of China and India as new global players (Cheru and Obi 2010), ushering in a new wave of land grabbing in the African

periphery which some scholars have termed as the new scramble (Moyo and Yeros 2011). The outcome of this was a rush for lands acquisition in different parts of rural Tanzania.

Although at the core of many cases of land grabbing are accumulation tendencies and trends, the illusions used in order to construct consent range from conservation, efficient modern forms of farming, food security, and poverty alleviation. And all this is done on the claim that it is to help the poor masses to rise out of poverty. Apart from land grabbing, some agro-industrial investments have taken place in some rural areas of Tanzania. This sector in the rural areas constitutes a form of capital accumulation known as expanded accumulation of capital. In rural Tanzania this is a minority tendency, and it involves the production of commodities and engagement of labour and capital. This form of accumulation dots the Rufiji River Basin, where some capitalist firms and industries are found. To name a few: Ilovo Sugar Co. and the Kilombero Plantation Co. which are located in the Kilombero District.

At this juncture it is important to note that not all land grabbed is turned into production. This is because the nature of capitalism today allows accumulation without production, this is what is called financialisation in which speculation and hence casino economics has a place. In this regard land is acquired in the rural becomes an article for speculation. This is typified by the changing of hands of lands from one company to another, and every new transaction of undeveloped land fetches higher price than before. Others use land to access bank loans not for purpose of farming but for other activities with no relation to land or farming. Although this is so far difficult to establish there are allegations that some idle big chunks of land in Kilosa have been used by owners to acquire bank loans. But this also may explain the frequent change over land ownership from one company to the other. This typifies some of the most recent land acquisitions by foreign companies.

The foregoing discussion presents an analytical framework with which we would analyse and try to understand land grabbing in Tanzania, and in the Rufiji River Basin in particular, and popular responses to such processes. We would however want to underline a few points. The different forms of accumulation in rural Tanzania are happening under the general name of investment. Land is alienated to foreign companies and local elites, and peasants are promised development and employment opportunities. This is a consent building mechanism and makes dispossession

appear as if it was consented by the dispossessed themselves. . But where this is not easy, as many cases in rural areas show, the state intervenes on behalf of investors. We argue that the present phase of accumulation in the rural areas requires the application of force and violence to extinguish real and perceived resistance.

Another important point is that there are three different forms of capital accumulation that have been taking place in the rural countryside in Tanzania today: primitive accumulation, expanded accumulation of capital and financial speculation based on land acquisition and possession. While primitive accumulation is pervasive in the entire Rufiji River Basin, speculative accumulation of capital, on the other hand, is specific to Rufiji district where prospective investors seem to be interested in acquiring land for speculative purposes and not for agricultural investment. This is particularly so for companies such as SEKAB Tanzania Ltd; Synergy Tanzania Ltd; and African Oil Ltd. But on the other hand it is our view that capital investment in agriculture is concentrated in a few companies located in Kilombero district and ones which were established before the promulgation of the neo-liberal policies in Tanzania. The Ilove Co. Ltd; the Kilombero Plantation Ltd. and the Kilombero Valley Teak Co. Ltd, are a case in point. This suggests that not all “investors” are interested investing in agriculture per se!

3.0 Rufiji: The Socio-historical Context

Before a presentation of what is going on in Rufiji and the Rufiji River Basin in general, it is important to present a sketchy picture of the socio-economic history of the people of Rufiji. The aim is to map out their struggles, and how over the years they have managed to survive amid internal and external forces against them.

3.1 *Pre-colonial Rufiji*

The picture that we get from pre-colonial people in Rufiji is one where there were signs of great productive activity and prosperity and not of societies that were dejected and hungry as some ideologues of colonialism would want us to believe.⁵ Although there were no “agricultural

⁵ Informed by a narrow and positivist view of society as an organism, Environmental conservators have tended to study present day communities in the Rufiji River Basin a-historically as if present predicament of the *Warufiji* has been trans-historical and hence, a natural phenomenon.. See for example, a series of studies which have been churned out by the Rufiji Environmental Management Project which used to be implemented by the Rufiji District Council with the technical support from IUCN - The World Conservation Union, and funding from the Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Eldorado” nevertheless, they were prosperous and self-sufficient communities whose economies were internally integrated. They were characterised by abundance of foodstuff due to a highly sophisticated system of *m/au* cultivation which used to exploit the use of water which had sank during the previous rainy season. According to the reports of European explorers who passed the Rufiji country in mid 1880s, it is shown that the use of manure and intercropping was extensive to such an extent that it ensured the *Warufiji* of sufficient food throughout the year. The rich alluvial soils of the Rufiji basin and the abundance of foodstuff were so great that Elton left the following impression that:

*“The fertility of the lands lying between Mahoro and Rufiji is extra-ordinary. Maize, rice, millet, ground-nuts and peas are largely cultivated, and heavy crops are garnered every year, the periodical inundations bringing fresh life to the soil. Sheep, cattle and goats are in sufficient numbers to be bought for export and shipped at either Murengu or Samanga. In fact, from the Mahoro to the Rufiji was a three hours’ march through a land of plenty.”*⁶

Historical evidence has it that the people of the Rufiji River Basin had developed fairly prosperous and flourishing trading activities in a number of merchandise: food stuffs such as rice, maize and millet, and timber.

There is no doubt that over a number of centuries the *Warufiji* had developed a robust and intricate farming system which had a distinct genesis, one which produced a considerable amount of surplus product. This made the Rufiji delta to be known, at one time, as a “small Calcutta” on account of the tremendous amount of goods which were traded from the delta. Speaking of inland Rufiji tributary system in the *Wamahenge* land mid 19th century Joseph Thomson had the impression:

“All the cereals of the coast are grown, such as rice (the favourite food), millet, and maize, are grown extensively. So also are such vegetables as sweet potatoes, yams, ground-nuts, melons, pumpkins, and cucumbers, and many other excellent articles of food. Tobacco is grown very abundantly. The sugar cane, the castor-oil

⁶ Quoted in Kjekshus, Helge (1977) *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History: The Case of Tanganyika 1850-1950*. London: Heinemann.

*plant, and cotton, are also cultivated. Curiously enough in what appears to be an extremely favorable country for bananas none appear”.*⁷

What this means is that the people inhabiting the entire Rufiji River Basin had, by the end of the 19th century, developed particular systems of planting and planting strategies, the choice of crops and tilling methods. All of these were based on a particular belief systems and practices, available technologies as well as market access.

3.2 The Warufiji and colonialism

By the turn of the 19th century, Germany was faced by a number of economic and political problems. Due to her expanding economy, growing rivalry in Europe and coupled with the increasing American challenge, Germany embarked into production of strategic raw materials of the time such as cotton, rubber, gold and sisal. Until then, Germany had been importing cotton from the United States but as from 1870s, and as a result of the “cotton famine” in the USA, its supply began to fluctuate and ultimately to diminish. Hence from the beginning of the 20th century supply of cotton became so acute among the German industrialists that a new source of supply was to be found.

The German imperial state turned to its East African colony by introducing cotton farming. The first attempt to promote the crop was through plantations. It encouraged and promoted European farmers to grow cotton. This prompted a wave of land grabbing by European settlers. Besides these efforts the colony had not produced much to the anticipation of the Germans. It was for this reason that cotton experiments were introduced in Kilosa, Rufiji, Tabora and in Sukumaland. It was at the turn of the 20th century that the Governor resolved to grow cash crops on the basis of communal farming.

The production of cotton was not based on land intensive methods but on labour intensive techniques. This affected the traditional subsistence economy. It brought into question the issue of labour supply. This brought about the most intriguing problem that confronted all colonial states in their initial contacts with indigenous people. In a community where each household provided its own food, built its own huts and made most of its clothing and domestic utensils, the

⁷ Thomson, Joseph (1881), quoted in Kjekshus, Helge (1977) *Ecology and Economic Development in East Africa control*

idea of seeking employment on a settler farm or mining settlement was definitely out of question. For this reason, therefore, the German colonial state resorted to various ruthless techniques to secure unimpeded flow of labour in the colony. The techniques used included, among others, land alienation, forced labour, taxation and land control.

Since the Rufiji River Valley came under the sway of colonial capital, the *Warufiji* have confronted a number of perturbations: the Maji Maji war; the 1968 floods and the subsequent villagisation schemes of the 1970s. In the 1990s the *Warufiji* were in confrontation with the Tanzanian state which, in collaboration with a foreign investor, attempted to alienate a good chunk of mangrove forest for the introduction of shrimp farming in the Rufiji delta. Since the mid-2000s the *Warufiji* are once again facing the state and a number of investors eyeing their lands.

The Maji Maji war of 1904-1907 was a result of the impositions of cotton cultivation on the *Wamatumbi* in the Rufiji river valley basin. It needs to be emphasized that the invasion, seizure and occupation by the Germans of Tanganyika in 1885 and the wars of resistance which followed thereafter; the processes of re-ordering the indigenous African economies into a colonial pattern; coupled with human and animal diseases, locust invasions, drought and famine in the last decade of the 19th century spelled a lot of suffering for the indigenous populations in the country. They were important impetus which galvanized the *Wamatumbi* into the war of resistance. It is estimated that at the end of the Maji Maji war in 1907, about 300,000 people had lost their lives. Above all, at the village level, the subsequent adverse economic effects of classical colonial rule, namely the reorganization of indigenous production from production for use to production for exchange set the village communities on a new trajectory – the trajectory of underdevelopment. Villages were no longer self-sufficient and self-contained; instead they became off-shoots and targets of the merchant capitalists who were located far away in the urban centers. This is not to suggest that prior to German colonialisation the *Warufiji* were not a trading community, they were but colonialism distorted and disarticulated their production and trading systems.

Within the framework of the colonial and subsequent neo-colonial economies, merchant capital in the form of the colonial state, co-operative unions, import/export businesses and traders were

to prove formidable and reliable bastions of imperialism. In other words, colonial production set in train processes of class formation whose ramifications became an integral part of colonial domination and struggles at the same time. For the first time in the history of the country including Rufiji, new social classes began to emerge such as semi-proletariats, salariat, peasants and capitalists. The colonial system could not function without a reliable cadre of technocrats and administrators who ensured that the colonial system of production and circulation worked well.

It is important to note that since the colonial period the potentials of the Rufiji River Basin has attracted the attention of successive rulers both classical colonialist and neo-colonialists alike. During the German period, it is stated that Germans had ambitious plans of transforming the Rufiji river into a development model similar to that of the Mississippi River in the USA with all the paraphernalia of barges of transportation. Though the British were less ambitious due to the mandate status of Tanganyika, nevertheless, they had plans of harnessing the Stigler gorge for hydro-electric power generation. The independent government of Tanzania had similar ambitious plans. In 1975 it established RUBADA with a view of developing the Stigler dam which would generate hydroelectric power for the country and the controlled water would be the source of a large irrigation project able to feed the rest of the country as well as some African states. This plan never materialized.

The *Warufiji* have been experiencing floods for a long period. In 1968, disastrous floods caused immense destruction of crops and property as well as human lives to such an extent that the Tanzania government had to take drastic measures to relieve the people of this havoc. Through the *Operation Rufiji* people were ordered to move from the floodplain and settle upland. In 1996, the Delta was the site of a major controversy and contestation between commercial fishing interests and the indigenous people practicing subsistence farming. Insensitive to the social costs likely to be borne by the local people and oblivious to the environmental risks involved, the government of Tanzania in collaboration with one foreign firm owned by Reginald John Nolan (an Irish weapon dealer) attempted to gain control over 19,000 hectare of land including mangrove forest for purposes of prawn farming. The ill-fated project was finally halted after the joint efforts of indigenous people in the delta, researchers, academicians, lawyers, journalists and environmental activists.

Of late a new catastrophe of great proportions, likely to haunt and jolt many people-, is in the making in Rufiji district. In the recent past, under the auspices of RUBADA, companies from different places of the world are reported to be seeking land from the villagers ostensibly for agriculture development. We map out this situation in the following section.

4.0 Who is Grabbing Land in the Basin?

In 2009, at the meeting of the National Land Forum organized by HAKIARDHI, a delegate representing the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) revealed that many investors were interested in lands found in the Coastal, Morogoro, and Tanga regions. This prompted some questions as to why these regions? Unfortunately, the delegate did not go further to explain why that was the case and who these investors were. It seems that Bagamoyo, Rufiji, and Kisarawe districts are the most attractive districts in the Coastal region. The districts of Kilosa, Kilombero, and Mvomero are some of the most attractive districts in Morogoro region. Although there could be different accounts as to why regions along the coast are most preferred by land grabbers, some reasons given by a study by Madoffe and others suggests that most investors on biofuel, for example, prefer areas with access to the port, where there is ample supply of water, and labour, and the land is fertile (Madoffe et. al. 2009). The choice of coastal regions where the ports are found is also telling of the nature of production and the intended destination.

In this section we present some of the companies found to be involved in land grabbing in the areas, which forms part of the the Rufiji River Basin. In some cases we just mention the name of the company and the land size it requested or was granted, and in some cases we give the profile of the companies involved. It was our interest, wherever possible, to provide information about the companies. But this proved difficult because information regarding some companies was hard to come by.

The companies mentioned below were found either operating or in the process of acquiring land, or have submitted request to acquire land in various villages in the area. The companies include: SEKAB Tanzania Ltd (Sweden), SYNERGY Tanzania Ltd (Asian), ALTRO AGRICULTURAL Ltd (Bangladesh), AFRICAN GREEN OIL Ltd, SAP Agriculture Ltd (Turkey), RUBADA and the SOUTH KOREANS (Korean Rural Community Corporation), KILOMBERO PLANTATION Ltd (Britain), KILOMBERO VALLEY TEAK CO Ltd (British), KILOMBERO

SUGAR Co. Ltd (Boers, South Africa), KILIMO CHA YESU (Swiss), and GREEN RESOURCE. Below is a brief description of some of the companies.⁸

(i) SEKAB Tanzania Ltd (Sweden)

SEKAB BioEnergy Tanzania (SEKAB BT) is a subsidiary of the SEKAB Group which is a leading Swedish producer of ethanol for the European biofuels market. In October, 2009, the subsidiary company was sold to another Swedish company called EcoDevelopment, presumably still in partnership with Community Development Corporation Limited which holds 1.5% shares in the company. For the sake of this study, SEKAB BT will be our reference point and not EcoDevelopment which took over SEKAB BT after the latter had been sold. This is precisely because as late as May, 2011 when this study was being conducted, the company which was still known to both government officials as well as villagers was SEKAB BT.

In Tanzania, sugar production is carried out along three models: large-scale production, out-grower model whereby companies contract with independent farmers and peasants as well as suppliers to produce crops that are then sold to the company for biofuel production. The last model is the hybrid model which incorporates aspects of both – small scale production as well as large-scale. In Rufiji, large-scale approach is the primary model which is intended to be adopted by SEKAB BT- a production model which is intended to be adopted by the successor of SEKAB BT, that is, EcoDevelopment.

The coming of SEKAB BT on the Tanzanian scene was not accidental because it was facilitated by the Tanzanian and Swedish governments. It has been claimed that it is the government of Sweden which set the stage for large-scale investment in bio-fuel industry in Tanzania and hence its instrumental role in supporting, through SIDA, the creation of Tanzania's National Biofuel Task Force which is responsible for developing procedures for managing bio-fuel investments in the country and promoting the use of biofuel in the country. It is further claimed that it is the Swedish government which facilitated contact between SEKAB and the Tanzanian government. SEKAB, which had already acquired some lands in Bagamoyo district, wanted to expand its activities by acquiring 500,000 hectares of land in Rufiji (see also Madoffe et. al 2009).

⁸ For a comprehensive and profile of companies involved in land grabbing see HAKIARDHI (2010)

(ii) AFRICAN GREEN OIL Ltd

The company has a farm in Rufiji which was acquired in 2006. The company planted palm trees, but after a few years in production the company was in discussion with the Rufiji District Council requesting another land. In this discussion the company wanted to either abandon the present farm or cede it to the district council. The company was asking a piece of land in the banks of the Rufiji River. This came as a surprise to district authorities and by the time we were doing this research a decision on the company's request was not yet granted. Our visit to the farm gave the impression that not much was happening, and some of the plants looked weak and uncared for. This compelled us to search for more information about the company. What we found, although we can't confirm it, is that the company was registered in the United Kingdom in 21 December 2006. Two years later the company was dissolved. If this record is correct then the Rufiji District Council was and is perhaps dealing with a company whose base has already been removed for whatever reasons. However, we were not able to gather all the information needed to verify the existence of the company and its current status, something which prompts more investigation on it.

(iii) SAP Agriculture Ltd (Turkey)

This is known as the *Waturuki* among the *Warufiji*. The company acquired 5,000 hectares of land in Nyamwage Village in order to grow maize and rice. The company was able to farm between 500 to 600 hectares in 2005 and 2006 respectively. Since then there has not been any activities in their farm. The village council of Nyamwage is informed that the land has been passed on to another company called *Majani ya Chai*. The company representative in Rufiji confirmed this but did not give any details.

(iv) RUBADA and the SOUTH KOREANS (Korean Rural Community Corporation)]

RUBADA (Rufiji Basin Development Authority) is a statutory organ, established by an Act of Parliament in 1975. RUBADA is mandated to carry out activities in an area of approximately 176,000 sq. km with a population of about 500,000 people. Under section 6 of the Act, the Authority has the following functions to perform:

“to generate electricity by means of hydro-electric works in the Development Area and to supply, on such terms and conditions as the Board may, subject to the provisions of this Act, approve, electricity so generated for the promotion of industries and the general welfare of the people of the United Republic; to undertake measures for flood control; to promote and regulate industrial activities within the Development Area; to promote and regulate agricultural activities within the Development Area; to promote and regulate the development of forestry within the Development Area and to take measures to ensure the prevention or minimization of soil erosion; to promote and regulate fishing industry in the rivers, lakes and dams within the Development Area; to promote and regulate public inland water and road transport systems within the Development Area; to promote tourism within the Development Area and to provide for or encourage the provision of facilities necessary or expedient for the promotion of tourism; to do all such acts and things as, in the opinion of the Board, may be necessary to uphold and support the credit of the Authority and to obtain and justify public confidence, and to avert and minimize any loss to the Authority.”⁹

Since its inception in 1975, the Authority has practically done nothing, and one of its explanations for this state of affairs has been its financial weakness. In the recent past, however, RUBADA has abdicated its functions as stipulated in the 1975 establishing Act. In the 2000s the Authority acts as “*mshenga*” (an agent) for foreign investors.

According to one press report, Mr. Aloyce Masanja – the Director General of RUBADA stated that Korea Rural Community Corporation (KRC) was expected to begin farming 15,000 hectares of land in the Rufiji River Basin in 2011 for food production and processing at an estimated cost of US \$ 50 million. And that this was a product of the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed in August, 2010 between the State-run KRC and RUBADA. He further revealed that “Tanzania was in talks with other investors from Britain, the United States, Singapore, India and the United Arab Emirates who have shown an interest in setting up commercial farming and food processing factories in the Rufiji basin.” He finally added that “An American company wants to invest in a 5,000-hectare cassava plantation and build a factory to produce starch for the export

⁹ URT, The Rufiji Basin Development Authority Act, 1975, p.

market," (Ng'wanakilala 2010). Based on these deals and others RUBADA is in the forefront pushing for land acquisition in the Rufiji and other places within the river basin. Its Director General believes that he is doing an important work for the country although he is aware that the land they want to use belongs to the villagers. In the light of this Mr. Masanja was of the view that:

“We know it is a village land but we have laws in this country... we can not accept land to remain idle because the villagers are saying it is their land....that is not proper..... If the Koreans are coming and they are ready to give us funds to help farmers and then export these resources commercially that is preference for me” (Makoye 2011).

In Kilombero district there are also a number of companies seeking land or have already acquired land. These include:

(v) KILOMBERO PLANTATION Ltd (British)

The company has been in the district for three years now. It is located in Mngeta village west of Ifakara Township. It has 5000 hectares of leased land. The land formerly belonged to Korea Tanzania Company (KOTACO). After KOTACO phased out its activities the land was taken over by RUBADA which leased the land to the current company. It is reported that after the collapse of KOTACO peasant farmers reoccupied the land formerly alienated from them. However, the district authorities prohibited them from settling on the land although they were allowed to cultivate perennial crops only. The peasants, however, balked. When the new investor – the Kilombero Plantation Ltd came the villagers still resisted to vacate. It was not until a new arrangement and agreement was concluded that the villagers compromised and moved to another area. In the agreement each household was promised a three acre farm and a house built at the company's expenses

To date, 3,000 hectares of land is cultivated and planted with rice. Production is highly mechanized. Rice production is rain fed and to supplement any shortfall in water supply the company has dug wells for irrigation purposes as well as for agricultural research. The company's future plans include harnessing the Mngeta River for irrigation purposes. Currently,

the company produces 5 tons of rice per hectare and its future plan is to increase it to 7 tons per hectare.

(vi) KILOMBERO VALLEY TEAK CO Ltd (British)

The Kilombero Valley Teak Co. was established in 1993 by the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The aim of establishing this company was to supply the global market with Tanzanian teak plantation. Its capital town is in Ifakara town. It is situated south of the Selous Game Reserve and has 28,000 hectares of land of which 7,000 hectares are planted with teak trees. The first harvest of 24 hectares is expected in 2013. The remaining 20,000 hectares have not been planted with teak but support large areas of indigenous *Miombo* woodland which is rich in biodiversity.

(vii) KILOMBERO SUGAR Co. Ltd (South Africa)

The Ilovo Company (formerly known as the Kilombero Sugar Co.) is owned by a South African conglomerate. Its principal activity is the production of sugar. It has been leased 28,500 hectares of land and uses irrigation system. The company has a long standing land conflict with the surrounding villages – a conflict which dates as far back as the early 1960s when its predecessor, the Kilombero Sugar Company, was established. How the company got possession of the land was not verified during our interviews with the government officials in the district. However, according to the accounts provided by the same officials, it is claimed that upon possession of the said land villagers from the surrounding villages of Msolwa station, Selous Game Reserve, Gombala and Nyange invaded approximately 1976 hectares of land. Since then the land conflict has been simmering without any attempt to resolve it.

When the Ilovo Company took over the land as a result of the privatization programme of the Tanzanian government, it also inherited the conflict. However, upon assumption of ownership of the land Ilovo company initiated discussions with the Tanzanian government with a view of resolving the land conflict with the villagers. It requested compensation from the government for the lost land. The government agreed to compensate the company by allocating them another 1976 hectares in Lwipa, 100km away from the parent firm. Ilovo refused, arguing that the land at Lwipa was too far from their plant in Ilovo. The company instead demanded about 6000 hectares

of land because that would allow them to establish another plant in Lwipa. The government refused their request and the company filed a case against the government which they won. But this did not end the problem because a stalemate was born as is reflected in the volatile and embittered situation currently prevailing in Namawala village, to be discussed in subsequent sections.

(viii) KILIMO CHA YESU (Swiss)

This is a Swiss company specializing in the production of paddy and to a less extent maize in Mpanga village, Mlimba division. It possesses 3,000 hectares which were granted to the company by the village of Ngalimila in 2008. The farming of paddy is mechanized though not to the same level and sophistication as the one at the Kilombero Plantation Limited Co. Apart from working this farm, the company is also known for advancing tractor services to peasants who are obliged to pay in kind after the harvest season. There is some kind of share-cropping arrangement between the company and neighboring villagers.

5.0 Whose Land is Grabbed?

The profile of the companies involved in land grabbing reveals that; first, most of them, with the exception of RUBADA, are foreign companies. This confirms the driving force behind land grabbing. But even in the case of RUBADA it acts on behalf of foreign investors, it does not act on its own, and does not seem to have the ability to acquire land and develop it. As such it has reduced itself into a *'kuadi'* (pimp) one which paves the way for foreign land grabbers.

It is also possible to point out the outcome of the grabbed land. Peasant farmers are displaced and production seems to be mainly for export. The case of the Kilombero Valley Teak Company and Kilombero Plantation Ltd are just a pointer to what direction production of grabbed lands will take. It is also clear that most of the land targeted for grabbing is in the rural areas. Of course there are a few exceptions where land is grabbed in urban and peri-urban areas by and for estate developers or speculators. This study however focused on land in the rural areas and both Rufiji and Kilombero districts are predominantly rural. In the rural areas of Tanzania most land is village land, governed by the Village Land Act, No. 5 of 1999. The majority of rural residents either occupy land on customary basis, which is recognized by the law, or acquired land through allocation by the village council. But in any case land governed under the Village Land Act

cannot be transferred without the consent and authorization of the village decision making bodies which include the village assembly and the village council. This is important to note especially because land required by some of the companies listed above exceeds the acreage size the village assembly can legally allocate.

Another important thing to note is that the land grabbed is either under dispute regarding who is the legal owner or is out-rightly known to belong to the villagers. From the presentation of the companies above it came out clearly that some of the land acquired by some companies, especially in Kilombero district, were under dispute. In Rufiji SEKAB and other land grabbers did approach the people requesting to be allocated land. RUBADA approached them but not by advancing a request but informing and mobilizing them to support the project, which the people, as reflected in the village of Ruwe, disputed. The RUBADA Director General is at least aware of the fact that the land which RUBADA initially claimed is under its authority does in fact belong to the villagers (Makoye, 2011).

5.1 The methods of land grabbing

The methods vary from one company to the other. Some companies approach village councils directly, some go through the district authority, others through TICI, and recently through RUBADA. Between 2008 and 2009 SEKAB, for example, contacted village councils directly, sponsored and took part in organizing purportedly meetings of Village Assembly. This scenario is adequately treated in Ally and Mgumia's Report (2009).

The common practice however is for companies or would-be investors to go through the district authority. In this case the prospective investor (foreigner or local) would first liaise with the district authority for more information and guidance. After this a meeting with the village council and assembly respectively would be organized. Government officials at the district level, those from the department of land would be involved in assisting the investor to have these meetings held and talking to the village councils. Where the situation is not smooth higher authorities may intervene. District commissioners, regional commissioners, even ministers are reported to have intervened on this matters in favour of investors. This is how many companies and individual persons have acquired land in rural Rufiji.

In the most recent cases of Rufiji and Kilombero district, RUBADA, as an agent of the Tanzanian government, and as a promoter of the Rufiji River Basin to foreign investors, have directly approached the village councils with its proposed project(s). The difference in the initial RUBADA's approach was to pose as the legal occupier of the land required for the project. This has created uneasiness and discomfiture amongst members of the village community as to who actually owns the land – the authority or the villagers. The villagers' responses to this are discussed in the subsequent section.

The long term established investors like the Kilombero Sugar Co. has a protracted and long drawn land crisis with a number of villages after it had won the case against the central government. At the moment, the ultimate outcome of this controversy can hardly be precisely delineated; however, in any case, one can hypothesize that given the government's blind obsession with foreign investors, it would decidedly pit the villagers on one hand, against the Boer investor in collaboration with the Tanzanian government, on the other.

In almost all cases of land grabbing, the promise of social service provision by the prospective investors has been legion and this can be construed as a form of corruption. For one thing, these false promises coupled with cashing out money as well as building materials to the village governments have been a great inducement which has hypnotised the villagers to approve lease of their land. This situation, as we show in section six and seven below is changing as villagers are starting to question the real intentions of investors.

5.2 The Role of the State in Tanzania and Land Grabbing

The state in Tanzania is key in facilitating land grabs. This emanates from two sources. First is the nature of land tenure in the country which makes the state the eminent domain or the holder of the radical title over all land in Tanzania, and two is what appears as state desire to attract foreign investment hoping that such investments would boost the country's economy. On the radical title land in Tanzania, both in policy and law, is public vested in the president as trustee (Land Act 1999 No. 4 Sec. 1(1)(a), See Policy and Law). The people in Tanzania, as individuals or as a collective, have the right to occupy and use land under two major categories of land occupancy: the granted right of occupancy and the deemed right of occupancy. Using these legal

prerogatives the state can alienate land from current users and allocate it to others. During the post-Arusha Declaration period, for instance, the state alienated land belonging to customary holders in the villages and allocated it to public institutions such as the prison departments and other parastatal organizations like was the case with NAFCO (See Shivji 2006). Such land alienation were justified on the grounds that it was for ‘public interests’ or ‘national project’ (Shivji 1998: 9). This has not changed and under the present Land Acts public interests includes private investment.

Under neoliberalism, the state in Tanzania is driven by the illusion that foreign investment can make a difference in the country’s economy. Based on that notion the state in Tanzania has been promoting the country’s potentials in order to attract foreign investment. Jakaya Kikwete, the President of Tanzania, shares the view that “increased investment may bring macro-level benefits (such as GDP growth and improved government revenues), and may create opportunities for economic development and livelihood improvement in rural areas” (Cotula, et. al 2009). The Tanzania president believes that by “improving both the business climate and... economic infrastructure” poverty will be reduced, and new jobs will be created (Kikwete 2007, see Brochure of TIC).

Guided by desire and the compradorial interests of the local elites the state has turned itself into an agent of foreign interests against the interests of the popular masses. The cases in Rufiji and elsewhere provide some evidence on how this is done. In reforming land laws in the 1990s the state retained its hold on land but making a specific provision which allows land to be alienated for public interest and that public interest includes investment. It is on this basis that the state and its various agencies have played a significant role in facilitating the ongoing land grab. This study demonstrates the different roles played by the state or its agencies in facilitating land alienation in rural Tanzania.

The state has been involved in at least four ways to facilitate land grab. First, it has encouraged investors to come in the country and has assured them that there is plenty of bare land available. This idea has been promoted by government officials every time they have visited foreign capitals or receive officials and would-be investors from other countries or in various investors’

fora. In relation to the specific case of Rufiji, the visit by the Tanzania Prime Minister, Mr. Mizengo Pinda to South Korea in September 2009, is a case in point. While in South Korea the Prime Minister discussed the possibility of the government of South Korea to invest in agriculture, particularly in the Rufiji River Basin. The South Korean Government agreed to support Tanzania, through its Korea Rural Community Corporation – (KRC), to developing agriculture in the Rufiji River valley. It was agreed that 100,000 hectares be allocated for the project (RUBADA 2011). The Prime Minister was convinced that land for this purpose was available because the Rufiji River Basin was bare and idle . As it is discussed elsewhere the task of establishing and demarcating the land in Rufiji River Basin was left to RUBADA, and other district and regional authorities including the relevant local government authorities.

Second, the state constructs consent among the rural population to accept land grabbing. Most government documents and functionaries promote the idea that investment is good and necessary for development. While in Nyamwage we were informed that the state promotes the idea among the residents of Rufiji that “If investors come we would benefit because they will bring capital and enable us to irrigate our farms” (Survey 2011). In a letter to the village chairpersons of Nyamwage and Ikwiriri South, the Rufiji District Executive Officer (DED), while promoting this illusion also wrote “with this letter I am requesting you to release the land in order to speed up the district’s development and that of the country in general” (Village File letter dated 21 2. 2005). In other places such as Kipo, Ruwe, and Ngorongo of Rufiji District, and Namawala in Kilombero District informants reported that both government officials and would-be investors or their representatives are both rhetorical and make a lot of promises about poverty reduction, creation of employment, construction of schools and dispensaries, training, and transforming agriculture among other promises (Surveys 2011). In some incidences would-be investors in collaboration with some corrupt government officials or their agents use money or other means to buy peoples’ consent for their plans or intentions. In a study conducted by Bashiru and Mgumia (2009), it was revealed that SEKAB, a Swedish Firm, prepared food (mbaa) in order to attract villagers to meetings supposed to discuss their land applications. Such incidences not only violate the rules regulating village assembly meetings but compel villagers to enter into agreements over undue influence (See Bashiru and Mgumia 2009).

Third, state agencies act as agents for foreign ‘investors’. Two State agencies were mentioned in Rufiji: RUBADA and the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC). According to our informants both RUBADA and TIC approach villagers with land requests on behalf of investors not known to villagers. In the case of Namawala, in Kilombero District, the DC was in the forefront harassing villagers and the committee opposed to land grab. In this case it was not clear whether the DC was representing his own interests or that of unnamed company, but used his office to harass and frustrate villagers’ efforts to stop the land grab.

In 2005 TIC approached Nyamwage and Ikwiriri South villages via the Rufiji District Council, requesting 5,000 hectares on behalf of Safe Agriculture Ltd, famously known in Rufiji as *Waturuki*. Writing to the chairpersons of the two villages, The DED of Rufiji District stated that his office had received application for land from TIC on behalf of investors who have been cleared by the government to invest in farming in Rufiji. The company would grow maize, paddy. The DED directed that decision on the matter be expedited and should be reached not before 28th February 2005 (Letter 21. 02. 2005). The two villages had only a week to reach this decision. In other words, a decision had already been made and the two villages were required to comply.

In 2008, TIC again supported land requests by a Swedish company, SEKAB, which wanted to grow crops for biofuel projects. With the support of the highest authorities in the country SEKAB acquired lands from a number of villages in Rufiji. In 2009 and during the time this research was conducted, RUBADA had sent officials to visit and talk to villagers residing along the River Rufiji in Rufiji district. In the visits RUBADA, according to our sources, was informing villagers to prepare for a large agriculture project and support it, and that they would reap a lot of benefits from the project. RUBADA was not requesting land in the form way as it assumed that all land in the RRB belongs to it.

Fourth, is when the state operates as a shield for investors against the people. In the most recent events RUBADA has sent its scouts in the Rufiji River basin. This was prompted by the Prime Minsiters visit to South Korea. In 2010 RUBADA and the South Korean representatives appeared in Rufiji surveying and burying beacons. Villagers were not informed of any of these

incidents. People intervened and stopped the exercise (Survey 2011). It is acknowledged that there was no consultation with the villagers. Apparently, RUBADA assumed that the land in Rufiji is under its authority. However, even when the government admitted to have committed mistakes its attitude did not change. In what they considered to be consultations with the villagers, RUBADA with the assistance of the Coast Regional Commissioner (RC) and Rufiji District Commissioner (DC) tried to persuade the *Warufiji* to accept the planned project supported and financed by the government of South Korean. But people questioned the procedures used and blamed RUBADA for trespassing on their land. They urged RUBADA and the government to follow the laid down procedures for land acquisition to the later. It was at this point that the RC was called in to help. However, instead of opening a dialogue with the people the RC ordered them to comply otherwise they would be black listed, and the government would not support any development efforts in their villages. This was specifically said in relation to Ruwe village which, of all the villages in Rufiji, is an epitome of opposition to RUBADA project.

6.0 Perceptions of Investments in the Rural Areas

The rationale for land grabbing in Tanzania is promotion of investment. At the centre of this promotional drive is the government of Tanzania through its various functionaries at various levels, and government institutions such as TIC and RUBADA. The focus of this promotion is foreign investors, and of recent local investors finding an entry window through Kilimo Kwanza. In some incidents, as the case of Namawala shows, government officials act either on their own behalf or on behalf of companies and individuals in helping to grab land. This however does not exclude locals who have acquired land in rural areas in the name of investment. The study by Chambi et. al, reveals that some political and business elites have acquired land long before the present wave of land grabbing started (HAKIARDHI 2010). This study also found a few cases where political and business elite have acquired land in Rufiji but have not done anything with it. It is partly on the basis of these experiences that the villagers of Rufiji and Kilombero have formed their perception of investment in general and foreign investment in particular.

Popular perception on investment does not exclude some officials at the district and ward levels. Many officials both in Rufiji and Kilombero would publicly speak in favour of investors and blame the people for posing unnecessary opposition. But privately, the story is different. Three

concerns were raised by some officials. First, they were not happy with the pace of investment. Their concern was that although much has been done to promote investment the response was slow. Second, they were concerned about the type of investors coming to their districts. In Rufiji, for example, it was reported that most of the investors were not genuine. ‘When they come’, an official said, ‘they present big and ambitious plans but once successful in acquiring land they do not do much.’ (Survey 2011). The Africa Green Oil was cited as one example of problematic investors. The company was granted land in Nyamatange village, in Lwaruke ward, for purposes of producing palm oil for bio-fuel production. As soon as palm trees started to germinate and grow, the company changed its mind and approached the district council demanding re-allocation to another land within the Rufiji valley which, it claimed, was more suitable for palm tree plantation. The district was hesitant to grant the offer to the company. The third concern is about the decisions to grant or not grant land to an investor. At the district, ward, and village level officials complained that they receive orders and directives from top government officials that they should facilitate land acquisition in their districts on behalf of investors. Sometimes they respond to such order knowing that it not only violates the laws but would cause friction between the government and the people.

From these narratives it is obvious that the government is key in facilitating land grabbing. Its motivation to support this is partly based on its belief that foreign investment will inject capital, which would create not only employment but also growth. Little attention therefore is paid to the destructive potential of such investments to the social and economic fabric of the communities losing land and the country as a whole. The government also does not pay much attention to the concerns of the marginalized producers who argue that their future is in their ability to transform their farming methods and not in ceding land to investors. These are echoes from some of the villagers we interviewed and it is such stories that we wish to present in the subsequent presentation.

Nyamwage village first came in contact with the idea of “investment” in 2005. SAP Agriculture Ltd from Turkey requested land, through TIC, to carry out farming. Villagers were so happy and optimistic. They accepted the idea because they trusted that given the poverty afflicting the majority of them and the promise by the investor that it would improve their farming, they had the feeling that their long time problems would be solved. Many of the promises and the

enthusiasm arising out of the promises by the investor were disappearing as days passed by. Based on these experiences, villagers in Nyamwage feel that investors are a hoax. They are seen not only as unreliable but also as having other ulterior motives when seeking land for “investment”! This explains the negative but radical and intransigent stance of the Nyamwage village government when it is engaged in a discussion with respect to the so called investors.

In terms of perception of investors Ruwe comes closer to Nyamwage. In a discussion with members of the Village Council on the issue of investments it was clear that they have learnt a lot from engaging with previous investors. For example in 2004, a Member of Parliament from Shinyanga and a lecturer from one of the Universities in Tanzania requested 5,000 hectares of land from the village for purposes of growing cotton. Ultimately he was allocated 2002 hectares but since then he has never appeared in the village. In 2008 Ruwe had another land seeker in the name of Synage. This company was in need of 100 hectares of land for the purpose of planting sugar cane. As an inducement and a show of commitment to its goals the company offered 50 bags of cement and Tshs. 1,000,000/= to the village. After this advance nothing of substance took place in terms of actual investment. Villagers in Ruwe view all investors – local or foreign as driven by accumulation interests while using the pretext of making a contribution to resolve problems afflicting the peasants. On the same lines they were critical of the central government for embracing foreign investors and disempowering villagers. They argued that if they had the entire infrastructure in place – better and efficient farming equipments and irrigation schemes, they could farm productively and do most of the developmental issues on their own. They suggested that this can be achieved if the government is serious about transforming the rural areas and small-scale farmers. Basically, villagers were suggesting that with serious commitment from the government there is no need for investors other than the villagers themselves. It was against this background that when RUBADA approached Ruwe village with its request for land in 2009 it was rebuffed by villagers.

Kipo and Ngorongo have both been approached by different companies and personalities requesting lands. From Kipo, for example, SEKAB BK, Kilombero Sugar Co., and Altro Agricultural Ltd (from Bangladesh) have requested between 5,000ha and 10,000ha each. RUBADA has requested 4,500 hectares of land for purposes of cultivating paddy and millet. Although some requests were granted those of RUBADA and Agriculture Ltd are awaiting

survey of the village land to establish whether the village has enough land or not. It was not clear when and who was going to carry out the survey.

It is stated that on the day SEKAB agents visited the village a cow was slaughtered to celebrate the deal and the said officials of SEKAB took along with them samples of soil for chemical analysis. However, since then, they have never appeared and nor have the soil analysis results ever been communicated to the village government.

Both Ngorongo and Kipo were ephemeral in their perceptions of investment and their concerns were short-term in nature: They have hinged on pious promises being made by investors with regard to the provision of social services and physical infrastructure. The notion that loss of their land rights to an investor has quite a life-long debilitating consequence for future generations does not seem to be of upper most importance for now. In principle they were overtly opposed to RUBADA's request for land.

7.0 Land Grabbing and Popular Discontent

Generally speaking land grabbing in the Rufiji River Basin has not been easy. Even where people have initially conceded their lands to 'investors' for some reasons they have, after some time, tried to reclaim back their lands. A cross section of responses to land grabbing in the basin would show variations in responses. The reasons as to why this is a case also vary. Over the last two decades the reactions of the people in Rufiji River basin have been expressed in at least three forms. First, is an outright rejection to any requests for land by 'investors'. This form is characterized by rejection of the request and a non-cooperative attitude to potential land grabbers or their agents. This is expressed through open statement and position against the request or where forced upon them then they apply other ways such as sabotage and slander. The second method is some semblance of compliance, what Scott (1987) calls false compliance. In this case people buy time in order to ascertain themselves of the seriousness of the request and the benefits they are likely to gain. This is also compounded by doubts they harbour over the deal and its promises. Based on these calculations they may decide to concede land to an 'investor' or eventually reject it. In both cases however the context is important. And two are important to mention here in relation to Rufiji district. First is the outcome of concessions made in the past and the gains registered; and second is the degree of impoverishment in the rural areas resulting

in a desperate need for a relief from would be investors. In the most recent cases in Rufiji River basin these two seem to have influenced how people react to land grabbing.

The first model of expression taken by the people of Rufiji was in the form of resisting conceding land to a prawn farm project around the Rufiji Delta in mid 1990s. In 1997 the government of Tanzania, amid opposition from the people of Rufiji Delta, environmentalist movements and other forces from the civil society, approved a prawn farming project in the Rufiji Delta. In its approval note the government stated that:

African Fishing Company proposed to develop prawn farming in the Rufiji Delta covering 10000 ha of land. The Government of Tanzania considered the project and approved it. The project would be implemented in sites 1-6 in the Rufiji Delta and Bwejuu Island. The areas approved for this project do not have mangroves, or any other vegetation. The Government reached this decision after being satisfied that the project will have little environmental impacts and that the African Fishing Company Ltd. will take mitigating measures to ensure minimum environmental impacts. The Government will also form a team of experts to monitor the project to ensure minimum environmental impacts." (LEAT: n.d)

This however was contrary to independent studies on the social and environmental impact of the project which showed that over 6,000 people would be displaced, a big chunk of protected mangrove swamps would be cleared if the project was to be implemented (Leat, n.d), and sources of livelihood of the thousands would be destroyed. The African Fishing Company, in a common fashion, sought to pacify the people in the delta to accept the project by advancing many promises which include 'poverty' alleviation. Using the ignorance of the people and the difficult conditions under which they live the government and the investor were creating an illusion that there was more to benefit by accepting the project.

However, tireless efforts of a few enlightened villagers and organizations of civil society succeeded to mobilize the people against the project. The struggles of the *Warufiji* against the project were multi-fronted. They mobilized support locally and internationally but also went to the court. Despite this the government of Tanzania was adamant and proceeded with the project.

Had it not been the decision by the International Financial Institution (IFI) of the World Bank to withdraw the offer of a loan to the African Fishing Company the project would have continued. This is because the government was convinced that this was an important project for the country and deserved the sacrifice of some thousands of poor and marginalized people in Rufiji delta.

There are two lessons we can draw from the Rufiji Delta prawns project. First, it exposed the government of Tanzania on whose side it would throw its weight in case of disputes between the people and ‘investors’. It was obvious that the government ignored all pieces of advice discouraging the project. It chose to go along with findings of studies commissioned and funded by the African Fishing Company itself. The government did not pay much attention to the profile of the ‘investor’ and the resources he was able to deploy to the project. The second lesson is that organized popular discontent pays. In the case of Rufiji the mobilization of local and international support helped not only to frustrate the project but eventually to halt it. The IFI decision was partly informed by these struggles, and many lives were served that way.

After the failure of the Rufiji Prawns Farming project, a new wave of investors in the Rufiji River Basin started. In 2005, for example, SAP Company from Turkey, requested land from the village of Nyamwage. The request was processed through the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) which in turn forwarded the request to the Rufiji District Council. The AS G wanted 5,000ha in order to grow paddy and maize on large scale commercial farming. The company promised to the village of Nyamwage to do the following if land was ceded to them:

- To build secondary school in the village
- To build a house for a village clinical officer
- To improve the village water project by bringing about more powerful machine since the existing one was small,
- To construct a police post,
- To supply electricity to the village

- To assist those with farms near the allocated land to improve their farming

Apparently these conditions were agreed by the investor. Villagers were assured by the district officials, acting on behalf of the investors, that their requests would be granted (Village Assembly Minutes Nyamwage, 2005). Five years later none of the promises have been fulfilled. The villagers claim that only a small piece of land was farmed when the company was allocated the land in 2005. In 2005 the company farmed 700ha and planted maize, followed by 600ha in 2007. Since then no farming has been taking place. Villagers were disappointed by this development. They were further frustrated by the restrictions imposed by the company for them to access fishing ponds located in the same land allocated to the company.

According to the village chair Mr. Ibrahim Mboweto, these factors faulted the notion of investment. Villagers could not trust anybody talking about investment. In 2006, after satisfying themselves that nothing was honored, and there were now experiencing difficulties imposed by the presence of the 'investor' they reacted by helping themselves to the maize from the farm. They followed by farming on the same land allocated to the investor. As if this was not enough they started a process of re-claiming the land. In 2008, the village government sent a letter to the district authority requesting them to take over their former land as the Turkish investor was nowhere to be seen. To date there is no response from the district. Currently, the situation is still in flux.

In a letter to the Permanent Secretary Ministry of Land and Settlement Development, the village chair states two reasons why their land should be returned. First, no compensation has been paid to the village and people whose land was allocated to the company. The chair argues that the land was not properly acquired as it did not adhere to the law especially in relation to compensation issues. The second reason cited is that since acquired in 2005 the land has not been developed. The village claims that it would like to have the land back because it is experiencing increasing demands for land from villagers because over time population has increased (Ruwe Village 2010). According to the village chair, he was under pressure from villagers to have the issue resolved before villagers decide to take unilateral action on the land.

Circumstances surrounding land given to SAP Agriculture Company had already created anxiety among the villagers of Nyamwage, and other villages found in the Rufiji River Basin. When RUBADA approached them in the last half of 2010 with demands for land for an investor on agriculture from Korea, the reaction was an expected negative. According to the Nyamwage village chair, they have learnt many lessons with the so-called investors. They are now aware that when a number of acres/hectares are mentioned it is necessary to ascertain if the village has sufficient land to accommodate investors and themselves.

He also argued that agriculture to them was the only answer to their development predicament. 'We can farm' he lamented, but we need to farm better and produce more' unfortunately farming productively depended on a number of factors which, according to the villagers surveyed in five villages, include modern farming equipment, and irrigation. Expressing his disappointment with investors the village chair of Nyamwage had the following to say:

we thought investors would be the answer to our capital needs, but now we know there is nothing to that end. When they come they have good words written on papers, but in reality they are conmen (Survey 2011).

In 2007 information about investment in biofuel projects started to come out in the public domain. During the same time a study by Ally and Mgumia (2007) revealed that Rufiji district had already received many requests of land for biofuel projects. The report revealed that although local authorities were opposed to the idea there were special instructions from above directing local authorities in Rufiji district to facilitate acquisition of land for the project. Two companies had submitted their applications these were SEKAB BIO ENERGY TANZANIA and ZUMBE. SEKAB representatives were found in various villages directly negotiating land deals with villagers. The targeted villages included Ngorongo, Ndundu, Nyikanza, Kipo, Kipungira, Nyaminywili, Mtana-Msoka, Mibuyu-saba, Mwaseni and Mloka (Ally and Mgumia 2007). These are the same villages where RUBADA is also planning to acquire over 100,000ha (RUBADA 2011).

Although there were suspicions of the SEKAB and ZUMBE request for land that they may cause disputes in future, the use of deceptions and illusions persuaded a number of villagers that there

would benefit by conceding land to SEKAB and ZUMBE. SEKAB gave the common list of promises investors make to villagers: employment, building a school, constructing a dispensary, and other token issues. Some villages agreed to allocate land to SEKAB. After a year or two SEKAB packed its bags and left without utilizing the land they acquired in Rufiji. Apparently, SEKAB, a Swedish company did not get the money to invest in the project after three municipalities in Sweden withdrew their support after learning that SEKAB had doctored, in its favour, a consultant report on the project (Madoffe et. al 2008). SEKAB disillusioned the people of Rufiji so that they no longer respond favorably and with excitement whenever they hear the word *wawekezaji*. In general, they become not only suspicious but worried when they are informed that investors want land from their villages.

It is this background which has informed people's perceptions and response to the RUBADA bid for Rufiji lands. Many people suspect what RUBADA is up to and in some villages their request has been openly challenged and rejected. RUBADA also have approached the *Warufiji* with similar promises. According to responses from villagers interviewed in five villages in Rufiji RUBADA has promised a number of things which include: building a college to train villagers in Rufiji on modern farming methods, they have promised to build a dispensary, a factory for processing cotton and rice, and irrigation schemes (RUWE). RUBADA also tried to assure villagers that it was not like SEKAB which cheated the *Warufiji* with unfulfilled promises. In its report on the project RUBADA lists a number of benefits villagers would get from the project: extension services, titles for their lands, markets for their crops, and productivity (RUBADA 2011).

RUBADA admits that in its bid to acquire land and cause the project to take place some villages have resisted the idea, for different reasons. Out of 50 villages to be covered by the project the following villages have not yet accepted the project: Nyamwage, Ruwe, and Ikwiriri South. According to RUBADA, Nyamwage rejected the project because the village has no land, and the only land they could allocate to RUBADA is already occupied by AS G, the Turkey Company. In Ruwe RUBADA claims that opposition to the project came from some young people from Dar es Salaam and others employed in government institutions in Dar es Salaam. Apparently, these Dar es Salaam youth and employees whom RUBADA accuses of opposing the project for their own interests are originally from Ruwe and have relatives there. RUBADA sought the

intervention of the Coastal Regional Commission to extinguish the opposition. On this RUBADA reports:

Suala ... la ubinafsi bado lipo Ruwe na Mkuu wa Mkoa ameamua kulikomesha kwani linawanyima wananchi fursa ya kujiletea maendeleo na kubaki kutegemea kupewa chakula cha msaada” (RUBADA 2011).¹⁰

The story in Ruwe is slightly different from the explanations given by RUBADA. It is correct that RUBADA sought the intervention of the Regional Commissioner but they did so after the intervention by the district authorities failed to persuade the villagers of Ruwe. The major claim of the villagers is that RUBADA approached them as the owner of land, that it had no reason to follow the legal acquisition procedures. In fact RUBADA was just mobilizing support for the project as a public relations onslaught (RUBADA 2011). This was confirmed at the district level where we were informed that initially RUBADA posed as the owner of all the land in the Rufiji River Basin. However, when this was challenged in some villages RUBADA solicited the intervention of the district authority. Our source at the Rufiji district Council confided to us that:

‘We knew that RUBADA had goofed but as government we wouldn’t go and say that to people, we tried to pursue the matter differently by emphasizing the benefits of the project to the people. Even with this approach we were not successful’ (Survey 2011).

In fact RUBADA’s approach was, to a larger extent, a public relations move to mobilize and build ‘good neighboring’ with the peasants of Rufiji.

RUBADA was able to get the Regional Commissioner to intervene but she was not able to persuade the people of Ruwe and the meeting was a disaster. In a public meeting the Regional Commissioner resorted to threats. Of course she admitted that mistakes were made by RUBADA for surveying land and inserting beacons without the consent of the people. However, she insisted that the project would go on and if they were not going to cooperate she would ensure that no social services are given to the villagers, and that she has a list of names of people

¹⁰ *Trans*: The issue of self interest is still holding the project, in Ruwe, the regional commissioner has decided to extinguish it for it is denying wananchi an opportunity to self-development and free themselves from food handouts,

instigating others to oppose the project. But even this attempt to threaten the people did not work as people were adamant insisting that RUBADA invaded their land and should start afresh applying for it.

Although the dominant force in Ruwe is opposed to the project there are a few ambivalent positions on the project. Some seem to support the project out of fear and uncertainty regarding their positions. In a meeting with the Village Council of Ruwe, it was obvious that the general feeling was that land should not be given to RUBADA. However, a few voices, out of fear and threat from the government, seem to support the idea that some land be released to RUBADA but after ascertaining the size of the land and population, which would determine how much land should go to RUBADA and how much should remain for the villagers.

In Kipo, Ngorongo, and even Ruwe the other concern was that what would happen in future, and what would they pass to the future generation if all land is given to ‘investors? ‘Land does not expand but we are increasing’, this was a sentiment echoed in many villages. In Kipo for example, members of the village council were of the view that there were so many requests for land, sometime they wonder what the government thinks when they pressurize them to consider such applications. They sometimes feel that if they were to agree to every request they would not have any land left for themselves (Kipo May 2011).

It was also clear that after having encountered and experienced a number of people and companies who posed as investors and nothing of benefit happened they do not trust anybody. As for RUBADA they consider it as an agent of a company or investor they do not know. They insisted that if there was a real investor then they would like to meet him and directly negotiate. There was a widespread fear that they were being cheated again. A specific example here is from Ngorongo. RUBADA’s request was not endorsed. Villagers suspected that they were being cheated once again. They had given land to SEKAB who have disappeared. None of the promises has been fulfilled. They only hear that the project has been shifted to Bagamoyo. In relation to RUBADA they are even more suspicious, because some three decades ago RUBADA was present in their village, undertaking what was known then as an irrigation farming programme. RUBADA disappeared only to make reappearance in 2010. This time RUBADA is operating on behalf of investors which raise more suspicions.

Apparently there have been many reactions created by the illusions of investment in the rural area. Rufiji is a test case where many promises were given and none of them were fulfilled. We have already mentioned Nyamwage but the same is experienced in other villages. In Ngorongo, we were informed that when SEKAB approached villagers with many promises many young people were willing to come back. Many youth and elders alike have been disillusioned by the unfulfilled promises.

8.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Land deals in Rufiji are still in progress and hence conclusions can only be prospective. However, the following are some of the principal observations which were made and for which further studies and activist work can be undertaken by HAKIARDHI.

Except for (Kilimo cha Yesu – the Swiss investor), Ilovo (Kilombero Sugar Co. and the Kilombero Plantation Co and Kilomebero Valley Teak Co. – which have been established for quite some time, the new investors: SEKAB BT, the Turkish/Sap Agriculture Co., Africa Green Oil, Sainage Co. (Asian), Altro Agriculture Tanzania Ltd, and others- all seem to be speculators of land rather than agricultural investors. For example, after it had obtained land for growing palm oil trees in Nyamatanga village, Africa Green Oil eventually abandoned the entire project and is nowhere to be seen. Other individuals have equally done the same, the case of the university don and former MPs is one point of reference. But the fact that land has been acquired by these so-called investors does not extinguish villagers need to use it or completely re-claim it, especially when they realize that it is not in use and they erred in granting it to the investors. The problem they encounter is when the attempt to re-claim it back (as the case of Nyamwage reveals) nobody pays attention to their demand.

Since most investors have acquired land and are doing nothing with it, it is not easy to tell what would become of the Rufiji people. At this point we can only speculate, that if the current trend continues and what is planned would happen, the majority of the Rufiji people would either be reduced to labour reservoir for the various agricultural projects, or share croppers. But there is another possibility in the long run, landlessness and pauperization. But current developments as demonstrated by reactions of the people, such as reclaiming the land conceded to investors would open disputes and endless social conflicts around land and livelihood matters.

There is a very high degree of hopelessness amongst the peasant communities and probably this has something to do with the high prevalence and intensity of mass poverty amongst and across village communities. It is this factor which has propelled them to believe that the only way out of this type of predicament is through the so called investors: saviors who can bring them technological advancement, provide them with social infrastructures and services, employment opportunities as well as higher standards of living. The notion that it is only through their own collective efforts, creativity and struggles that can emancipate them from the prevailing hardships does not feature prominently. The unfulfilled promises by so-called investors are unmasking this and people are slowly rethinking their blind embrace of investors, and are rediscovering the potential around them and their own ingenuity. However, they admit there are limitations to what they can do and challenge the government to make 'strategic' investment to enable them produce effectively. This is one area where those organizations closely working with rural producers could look at and see how they could support these positive developments.

Money and the associated phenomenon of commodity relations have engulfed almost everyone in the village communities we visited. The worst part of it is that, it has tended to individuate members of the communities to the point of believing that it is money only which can deliver everything on earth. Some of the investors have capitalized on this in order to acquire land. But it will be overstating the issue if we do not quickly add that a sense of collective concern and action is still in existence, to some degree at least. The collective reactions against RUBADA demonstrated in Ruwe and Nyamwage villages are cases in point.

The government has also banked on village councils to achieve their land acquisition objectives. It has been revealed in this study that village councils act as breaks to villagers' sentiments. In some villages much as large section of the village council and people were opposed to the project, the village chairs were ambivalent. And where village councils were strong and with the people the top village leadership was harassed as the case of Kilombero revealed. In most cases village leaderships, especially chairs, out of ignorance and practice feel that they are supposed to account to district level and not to their voters. More sensitization is required to members of village councils on their powers and relations with their constituencies and district level authority.

Whereas there is a need to make a comprehensive analysis of the nature, role and functions of the district authority as an important component part of the Tanzanian state, in relation to land grabbing and land governance, it is equally important to identify some progressive members of the district authority and establish a working relationship. This would strengthen them in their bid to protect the interests of the majority peasants.

Lastly, the current role and functions of RUBADA needs to be re-assessed and the village communities informed accordingly. This can dispel the many myths imbibed by villagers with regard to RUBADA and its role in the land grabbing processes.

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