Final Report for the project: Conservation and Development: Advocating for the establishment of Community Conserved Areas in Tana Delta Wetland Important Bird Areas

Organization Name: Nature Kenya (the East Africa Natural History Society)

By
Alex Ngari
(with inputs from Serah Munguti)
**Project Background**

The project targeted the Tana River Delta (02 30’ S, 40 20’ E), in Tana River and Lamu Districts of Coast Province. The delta has an estimated area of 130,000 ha within altitude of 0-37 m above sea level. Tana Delta presents a complex system of freshwater, brackish lakes and streams, saline grasslands and wetlands and successional stages of forest woodland on the river banks and dunes parallel to the shore. This complex habitat hosts biodiversity of global conservation importance. Given the unique biodiversity, Tana Delta has been recognized globally, as Important Bird Area/Key Biodiversity Area and therefore the site has been prioritized by Nature Kenya for conservation action.

Despite the ecological importance of the site, the delta faces numerous threats such as huge unplanned developments which includes large-scale biofuel farms such that the total areas targeted for developments exceed the known size of the IBA.

The specific objectives of the project were:
1. Map land uses and land cover and produce a map of the delta
2. Purchase one motor-bike to provide transport for extension staff to collect mapping data
3. Mobilise communities and sensitize them on their rights to be consulted on land development issues
4. Mainstream the data and learning to the Tana Delta management planning process

**Project Goal**

The project goal was to put in place safeguard measures to ensure that Tana Delta biodiversity is conserved for posterity.

**The involvement of Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation to date**

Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation through BirdLife International Partnership has supported conservation work in Tana through a small grant amounting to € 11000. Nature Kenya, the BirdLife partner in Kenya, is very grateful for this support.

**Project progress during the final reporting period from January to July 2010**

Below is an account of activity delivery in relation to the objectives set for the project:

**Objective 1: Map land uses and land cover and produce a map of the delta**

A GIS expert was identified to work on the Tana map. A map showing various land cover/land use regimes and areas of some of the proposed developments is now in place (Annex 1) and is being used to inform resource planning for the delta. Some of data sources for the map included: Topographic sheets, Google maps, ground truthed data, as well as open sources such as the International Livestock Research Institute website.

**Objective 2: Purchase one motor-bike to provide transport for extension staff to collect mapping data**

A motorbike was purchased to aid field project operations. Due to the expansiveness of the delta, another motorbike was sourced through other support. This second bike improved the mobility of the field staff in order to efficiently undertake various project tasks.

**Objective 3: Mobilise communities and sensitize them on their rights to be consulted on land development issues**

Community representatives were facilitated to attend meetings to formulate the Tana Delta Conservation and Development Master Plan in April and June 2010. This ensured that the planning
process was participatory enough and communities were part and parcel of the decisions reached on future management of Tana Delta resources. This process culminated into development of a draft Conservation and Development Master Plan (Annex 2).

In June, Nature Kenya facilitated community representatives to a meeting with their lawyers in Nairobi. The communities discussed with the lawyer (Job Thiga) a number of issues and nominated Abdalla Rhova Hiribae to sign the petition on their behalf (Annex 3). In July 2010 the community representatives filed a petition No. 14 of 2010 in the constitutional court of the High court. They are challenging the Kenyan government for giving away their land to corporations without their involvement and consent (Annex 4).

Nature Kenya established a Site Support Group in Ozi location of the Tana Delta. The group was trained in leadership, governance, group management, financial management and advocacy (Annex 5). This has helped the group to attain the necessary capacity to engage in local and national fora including National Liaison Committee meetings. As a result of this capacity, the group has identified a community conservation area and have developed guidelines and bylaws for its management, access and resource utilization (Annex 6).

**Objective 4: Mainstream the data and learning to the Tana Delta management planning process**

To maximise benefits from this support, the data collected to develop the map was organised such that it will be possible to develop a geodatabase for the delta. With the database, it will be possible in future to input more data as it becomes available and therefore generate various scenarios and maps depending on the need at the time. Apart from using the map for planning purposes, the experiences acquired in its development as well as engagement with local communities has been useful in contributing into Tana Delta Ramsar listing.

**Overall Project Achievements**

Conservation of Tana Delta had largely been ignored by the relevant key relevant government institutions and the delta was viewed as one big area with unexploited opportunities and resources. The eventual goal for conservation work in Tana Delta is to achieve a situation where the biodiversity is safeguarded for today and future generations. The support from Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation has helped to move closer to meeting this goal and below are some noticeable achievements:

1. A map that is one of the useful planning tools has been developed
2. Improved capacity of Nature Kenya to conduct operations on the ground
3. The Tana Delta community is more aware of the importance of conservation and their participation in natural resource planning
4. The community has been empowered and has therefore moved to court to challenge deprivation of their right over resources, life and dignity
5. More Community empowerment achieved through its participation in formulation of a Conservation and Development master plan for the delta

**Problems Encountered**

Some of the challenges that were encountered during the project implementation were:

- Tana Delta is quite expansive with some areas being inaccessible proved to be difficult while collecting ground truthed GPS data.
- Community in the delta and widely scattered and a large number are quite mobile because they are predominantly pastoralists. This posed a big challenge in outreach work.
Project sustainability
To foster conservation work in Tana Delta Nature Kenya has been working to bring together and generate interest for the site in various mainstream organisations engaging in conservation of nature. These include government and non-governmental organisations. Through support from other sources, Nature Kenya has lead efforts in drafting of a management plan for the delta through the vision and mission has been identified. The key action areas and the lead organisations including the communities to deliver on the actions have been identified in the plan. The plan once completed will be an excellent tool to guide natural resource management and conservation in the delta. As the stakeholders in Tana take up their roles to implement the plan the biodiversity hosted by the Delta will continue to thrive as natural resources in at the site are exploited in a sustainable way.

Nature Kenya has also been developing the capacity of the local people to take action for conservation of nature. A Site Support Group (SSG) for Tana is at the early stages of formation. Once the SSG is fully operational with the right capacity will be the guardians to the biodiversity in Tana and will act as the necessary nuclei to impact the needed positive transformation for biodiversity support and action at the grass root level.

As one of the priority areas that Nature Kenya has identified for continued conservation work and given the magnitude of threat that the biodiversity at the site is facing, the institution will continue to advocate for the site’s conservation, mobilise resources and forge partnerships that are required to move closer to achieving the conservation and sound natural resource management goal for Tana.

Lessons Learnt and Closing Remarks
Some Key Lessons learnt from this project are:

- Planning for sound natural resource use for high value biodiversity areas may seem an obvious thing that every government should work to achieve. Tana is such a place where resource planning needs to be done now, however, the authorities have issued licences to companies to farm some areas with most fragile ecological systems without a land use plan.
- Communities in Tana just like other places in Kenya have immense powers in deciding their future, given the many supportive pieces of legislation requiring their full participation in key decision making processes in resource management and biodiversity conservation. Despite this, the communities are poised to loose due to many overwhelming interests pulling in different directions and low awareness and capacity to engage in key negotiations.
- Poverty remains a key driver to biodiversity destruction in Tana, therefore forcing many locals to accept any proposed development that promises income regardless of the threats it poses to their well being in future. Due to poverty, people are desperate to fulfil their immediate human needs like food.
- A SSG is a valuable tool for delivering conservation in IBAs, they act as cells within the community through which positive transformation is possible.

Closing Remark: The journey to salvage from eminent ecocide of Tana Delta has just begun and seems long. It requires synergies, determination, courage and goodwill from all the stakeholders to complete it. Aage V Jensen Charity Foundation has come forward to give the much required boost, but more is needed from all who cherish a bright and harmonious future for human kind and biodiversity.