Pastoral communities cry foul over land encroachment

By CHARY BARASA

CONFRONTED with the loss of grazing land due to acquisition of their territory for wildlife conservation and agricultural investments, Maasai, Barag and other pastoral tribes have to abandon their ancestral land for new pastures.

The tookovers have seen hundreds of the pastoral community members lately having to migrate elsewhere in search of grazing land, while others have discarded their traditional ways of life and relocated in urban areas to work as fishermen, herders or engage in other menial jobs.

A recent study conducted by the Research on Poverty Alleviation (RPOA) examining the reasons for the migration of Maasai to sedentary life in urban areas cited loss of grazing land (47.8%) as the major contributing factor to the movement.

The study analyzed Dadaab, Kambala, Dakawa and Milama villages in Morogoro Region that had recently seen an influx of migrant Maasai. Other reasons cited for leaving traditional lands were loss of livestock due to disease (23.7%), search for firewood (15.5%), shortage of land for cultivation (8.5%) and prolonged drought (5%).

Despite the fact that drought, what has caused so much sleepless nights over the years is annexation of our lands by the government and private investors, that has left us battling to live off small pieces of land," says a Loliondo village Mr Zedebayo Laizer, adding, "The loss of land, apart from diminishing our possibilities of integrating into the urban setting, has resulted in increased poverty levels and conflicts among pastoralists and farmers as they compete for scarce resources.

On the other hand, University of Dar es Salaam Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Hadji and Senior Lecturer Dr Joyce Nyami observed that for a long time the Barag had lived a nomadic life with cattle being their main source of livelihood.

"However, with investment in agriculture (wheat farms) among other factors there has been an increasing pressure on land. As a result they have been forced to look for alternative means of living, agriculture being one of the options," says Dr Nyami, adding, however, that the Barag have not fared well in agriculture resulting in the migration into urban areas in search for other options of earning an income.

According to the RPOA study, the reduction of grazing lands for pastoral communities was found to have contributed to not only a shortage of pastures but also led to the spread of diseases in cattle and disease of land resulting in prolonged periods of drought.

Also, the less land there is, the more families have to compete it, resulting in conflicts between families that can last for generations. As a result of these factors, the Maasai settled in other regions to pursue agriculture or alternative livelihood," further reads the Report.

Mr Laizer links the drought currently affecting pastoral communities in areas of Arusha and Manyara regions to the savannahs, where they have squeezed out our lands and saw us unable to move their herds from one place to another, so that the grass has a chance to grow again.

His views are seconded by another pastoralist Samwel Ngoria who claims that Maasai and other pastoral communities’ lifestyles are not compatible with the environment, noting that the communities have over the years developed knowledge to survive drought and other natural calamities.

Pastoral communities in the country have been forced to migrate to other regions in search of water and other resources. As a result of these factors, the Maasai settled in other regions to pursue agriculture or alternative livelihood," further reads the Report.

The Coordinator of the Arusha Based Tanzania Pastoral Community Forum (TPCF), Mr Joseph Parumbei observes that widespread acquisition of land by the government and private investors is encroaching on the so-called indigenous people’s land, forcing them to settle elsewhere.

"Others have made their ways to Dar es Salaam and other urban areas to work as watchmen, herders, hawkers and other non skilled jobs," notes Mr Parumbei.

He says conservation plans at Serengeti and Tarangire National Parks and Ngorongoro Conservation Area have over time helped to impact on Maasai and other pastoral tribes whose nomadic lifestyles have greatly been disrupted.

The Report by LHCP and LIVES indicates that since independence wildlife parks have increased to cover about 70 per cent of the grazing reserves.

It has been observed that grazing is becoming more expensive every year mainly due to the increasing number of grazers to compete for land or migrate to villages and urban areas.

According to Mr Parumbei, the current conflicts between farmers and pastoralists in Manyara and Morogoro regions are a result of the decrease in the number of grazing herds compromising the traditional rights of farmers, who have been using these grazing areas for centuries.

"We are forced to leave our lands and move to towns," says Mr Ngoria, adding, "We cannot do anything to prevent this unless the government uproots people from their land while living there."
Delayed land compensation sparks fury among villagers

By CHABY BARASA

A CRISIS that loomed large in Muhima District, Tanga Region following delay in allocating alternative farmland to villagers evicted from Derema Forest may have been averted, but for Mr Malenai Hamia, officials cannot escape blame for mishandling the issue.

The IBC Mawasu villagers accuse the officials of having dragged their feet over the matter for more than a decade before finally starting to act recently and only when the villagers threatened to force their way back to the forest.

Hamia says the villagers were burnt from engaging in agricultural activities around the forest at 2001 but it was not until 2008 that the government completed the exercise to dislodge money to the victims being compensation package for their crops.

"However, it took another five years before the villagers could be allocated the alternative land for farming promised to them when they were being evicted from the forest," he observed, adding: "the delay assorted villagers' patience to the limit." He went on to add that in some instances the alternative land for farming, allocated to the villagers, was distant from their original homesteads and was not suitable for farming.

Hamia, who preferred to use a pseudonym for reasons he would not want to reveal, posited that the situation was not unique and that many villages had been waiting for alternative lands for a long time.

Evelyn Magna, who has been in charge of the Derema Forest Project, said in an interview that the villagers were promised alternative farmland in 2010 but it was only in 2015 that they were given farmland.

"The villagers were promised alternative farmland in 2010 but it was only in 2015 that they were given farmland," she said.

According to the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group (TFCG), which is leading the compensation process, the villagers have been promised alternative farmland in 2010 but it was only in 2015 that they were given farmland.

TFCG said it had received a letter from the government promising alternative farmland in 2010 but it was only in 2015 that the villagers were given farmland.

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The government has announced that it is going to build a dam at Farkwa in Chamba District in Dodoma, some 70 kilometres north of Bahi along the way to Kendoa.

By Esther Mkgodo
The Citizen Reporter

When President Jakaya Kikwete visited Bahi District during the 2010 presidential campaign, he promised the Bahi residents he would build them a dam. The Secretary of Matajila Farming Scheme, Mr. Yosa Chiganda is among those who cheered. The irrigation scheme he oversees is among five that operate in Bahi, namely Matajila (450 hectares), Bahi Sokoni (2040 hectares), Nguruvari (360 hectares), Miminse (655 hectares) and Uheheha (944 hectares) covering a total of 2,949 hectares of surveyed land. "This would mean that we would be able to harvest at least twice a year. We are only able to harvest once because we depend on seasonal rains," he said. The people's hopes were up. But three years later, after waiting patiently and being occasionally reassured by Bahi MP Baduel Omari (CCM) that the government was going to keep its word, minister for Water Prof. Jamamne continued on page 14.