

# Climate change forces villagers to relocate in Mkuranga District



A woman collecting seashells next to the new seawall built along Barack Obama Road in Dar es Salaam to protect the road against rising sea waves.

By Jennifer Gilla

SOME 110 kilometers south east of Dar es Salaam is located Mdimni village in Mkuranga District of Coast Region.

The coastal villager's main economic activity is farming and fishing with major crops being maize, paddy rice and millet. As one enters the village from the southern part, it is fascinating because of its unique landscape, grass thatched mud houses which are well arranged in two straight lines with a main road cutting across.

Not only that, the hospitality and humour of villagers will also make one feel like being at home because of their welcoming culture.

To the north, the village borders the Indian Ocean, which has become a nightmare to residents in recent years as they are now leading almost a nomadic life. For the past 17 years, the villagers have been forced to relocate and move southwards by surging Indian Ocean waters as climate change leads to rising sea levels. "It's been a regular threat in recent years for the ocean waters to flood our homes and force us to relocate," said 65 year old Mzee Selemani who has been living in the area since his birth.

Mzee Selemani remembers an encounter when raging sea waters almost drowned him while sleeping at night some years back.

"It was in 2003 on Saturday, we were getting ready to move but since our house roofing was not done, we decided to stay for a night, it was a bad decision because my family was almost drowned," he noted.

He was lucky to be rescued alongside his seven year-old son, who fortunately woke up to answer to the call of nature when he met the rising sea tide.

"He yelled and woke us up after witnessing the horror wave which ultimately saved our lives," the veteran fisherman added. Mzee Selemani is one of the villagers' 1,390 residents who have been victims of rising sea level of the Indian Ocean for the past 25 years.

His neighbor, Latifa Mbonde, who is a fisherwoman, said her family was forced to leave their original home because of rising seas waves, some years back.

Apart from forcing her family to relocate, Mbonde also lost several

hectares of paddy rice where her family used to harvest 50 bags of 100kgs each with a market price of 2m/-.

"Of course we had good life and we managed to build a family house, but in 2005 things changed after being invaded by sea waves which destroyed the house and the farm," she said her eyes in tears as her family struggled to resettle.

The 50-year-old grandmother said she started fishing in 2009 after her husband died and life became difficult. Due to poor fishing methods, she only managed to catch shrimp that live near beaches and earn a paltry 5,000/- each day.

Seeing the regular threat being faced from rising seas waves, some villagers decided to leave the area to new places. One such person is Diba Kisagulu who moved to Bonde la Ndege in 2003 following destruction of his home and five hectare paddy rice farm.

Kisagulu moved to a cashew nut farm owned by his late father but was abandoned for many years. "Thanks to my father's wisdom we are now living here growing cashew nuts, maize which we sell and earn a living," he said.

Mdimni village Chairman, Kadam Saidi backed his fellow villagers by saying that life along the beach front has been a horror experience for many residents.

Saidi said their original village has moved almost two kilometers away with some 2,000 hectares of farmland abandoned. "In 1990s, our parents used to live in areas close to the seas which we now call Jangwa la Ndege ( a birds sanctuary) but we have since moved up here due to rising sea waters," he noted.

He said a combination of rising sea waters has also caused salty soils which are not good for cultivation hence forcing villagers to abandon 2,000ha of prime land.

## 400 left the village

According to the village Chairman, census conducted last year indicated that the village is now left with 1,390 villagers from the original 1,800 who were there before relocating.

"Over 400 villagers have left to other safe places because of raging sea waters," the father of three said adding that some residents have gone to suburbs of Dar es Salaam such as Kitembulu where they are working in factories.

One such resident is Ramadhani Saidi who left in 2014 following Jangwa la Ndege's destruction. "I left the area where we were cultivating cashew nuts and millet while fishing as well because of raging sea waters," he said adding that life is difficult waiting for a paltry monthly salary compared to doing business and cultivating crops.

## Help from environmental stakeholders

Despite such challenges there are activist groups which are trying to help residents of villages suffering effects of climate change by counseling them on mitigation measures.

One such not for profit organization is TCCI-Mazingira whose Vice Chairman, Salum Kigungo said they are sensitizing communities at Mdimni village about the effect of climate change and how to mitigate them.

"We advise them to plant mangroves to protect the environment for fish breeding but also to control sea waves," said Kigungo who noted that many villagers are heeding the advice given to them.

He said the NGO also targets schools to teach children how to start taking measures to protect the environment by avoiding destructive practices such as deforestation.

## District Commissioner speaks

Not only NGOs are supporting community efforts to curb effects of climate change but also the government through Mkuranga District Commissioner's office.

The DC Philbert Sanga has issued an order to all villagers to relocate to higher ground. "We have instructed the villagers to find suitable places and move while we find a solution to challenges of climate change effects," said Sanga who also blamed communities for contributing to the challenge.

## NEMC

The country's environmental conservation watchdog, the National Environmental Management Council, has also moved to assist.

NEMC's acting Manager for Swamps, Fredrick Mulinda said they have not heard about the particular Mdimni villagers crisis but acknowledged that communities along the Indian Ocean coastline are being impacted by climate change effects.

"As a nation, we signed an agreement with United Nations Convention for Climate Change (UNFCCC) to help us with funding from the Adaptation Fund, to take mitigation measures against impacts of climate change on communities," Mulinda said while promising to include many villages in Coast Region to help them with projects to mitigate against rising sea waves.

A report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) concurs with findings by the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) in 1990 which said that by 2020, there will be 200 million migrants, displaced by effects of climate change. Other impacts of the changing weather pattern include erosion, soil salinity which is affecting agriculture production and regular flooding caused by rising sea waves.

Meanwhile, a report by the second group of the IPCC of 2007, estimates that sub-Saharan Africa, including Tanzania, will have its rain-fed agriculture yields

# From women to migrants: What does a Biden win mean for Africa?

NEW YORK

DEMOCRAT Joe Biden's victory in the U.S. presidential election is set to affect Africa's 1.3 billion people on issues ranging from climate change and immigration to women's health and human rights, according to academics and analysts.

Under the Trump administration, the United States pulled out of the landmark Paris climate accord, issued travel bans on Muslim-majority nations, and cut aid to charities providing reproductive health services that included abortion advice. The Thomson Reuters Foundation asked activists, academics and analysts how a Biden administration could impact Africa's 54 nations.

## David Kode, head of advocacy, Civicus

"Civil society groups in Africa have observed how President Trump's attacks on the media and his violent reprisal of Black Lives Matter protests exhibit similar tendencies of Africa's worst authoritarian leaders.

A Biden presidency will certainly be a welcome relief for Africa as civil society will be able to count on a Biden administration to denounce African leaders who violate the rights of their people and exert pressure on them to uphold international law.

A practical way will be for the United States to re-join the U.N. Human Rights Council, which civil society holds in high esteem, but authoritarian leaders have increasingly trod on over the last four years."

## Nigel Tricks, East Africa director, Norwegian Refugee Council

"The new U.S. government should prioritise efforts in leading global action to protect millions of people seeking refuge, particularly from those African countries ridden by deadly conflict or the devastation of a changing climate.

As African countries continue to take up more than their fair share of the global duty in welcoming women, children, and men fleeing their homes, the wider international community - led by the United States - has not matched their efforts.

We would like to see the U.S. government taking a lead in ensuring these host countries have the necessary financial support to ease the load of hosting many millions of refugees, as well as the political engagement that can lead to more durable solutions that help people rebuild their lives."

## Victor Rasugu, executive director, Network for Adolescents and Youth of Africa

"The United States is the single largest family planning donor in the world and thus plays a major role in reproductive health care in Kenya. Trump's (so-called) global gag rule was and continues to be an onslaught on the reproductive health and rights of women. The decision deprived individuals, especially women of reproductive age, of the right to body autonomy.

A win for Joe Biden brings back hope and sanity in the management of the healthcare systems ... Countries like Kenya will once again be free to offer the reproductive health continuum of care to its populace without being whipped into a certain policy direction that they are not party to."

Aissatou Diouf, West Africa coordinator, Climate Action Network

"The Trump administration has refused to act to mitigate the effects of climate change, and has blocked international climate negotiations for ambitious climate action. Donald Trump's decision to withhold \$2 billion of the \$3 billion pledged by his predecessor has contributed to a huge shortfall at the Green Climate Fund - a contribution that would have enabled countries most affected by climate change, such as African countries, to implement policies to strengthen the resilience of their frontline communities.

A Biden administration would need to take the lead on climate change and make climate change a global priority. We expect the United States would re-join the Paris Agreement, and step up its efforts and also contribute to the Green Climate Fund."

## Isa Sanusi, spokesman, Amnesty International

"President Donald Trump's expansion of the immigrant visa ban that includes Nigeria and other countries with vulnerable populations fleeing persecution was unacceptable.

The ban is discriminatory - and with it the United States is setting a dangerous precedent. It has closed the door for people fleeing persecution and also for those who are seeking new opportunities.

Applying the ban on people from select countries, some of them facing crisis, is contrary to the values of the United States. It is our hope that all these discriminatory measures will be removed and more migrant friendly policies will be introduced."

VIEW FROM THE TOP



US president-elect Joe Biden.

# Peace and security are key essential enablers of development

By Martin Gabone

NO state can develop or sustainably grow economically without peaceful coexistence among its citizens, and also neighbours with which the country shares common boundaries.

Peace and security are essential factors for human beings to develop and succeed in life. A peaceful and secure environment is critical to every society since it determines all aspects of economic and social development activities and is also a necessary factor to realize of human rights.

We should also remember that the world in which we live, has become increasingly more complex, with new security threats emerging not just on a daily basis but every other minute. As a result, governments are investing in mitigation measures such as counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency but also engage in multilateral peace-keeping and reconstruction operations of war ravaged nations.

The fastest developing nations are among those with the best security structures or infrastructure which guarantees their citizens peace and tranquility to thrive and develop as individuals

but also a nation.

In this aspect, Tanzania has been a role model not only in Africa but also globally, which has led to enormous development and sustainable economic development for many years. One key element which has contributed to peace and calm is the fact that Tanzania is among the few countries in the world with a united population and political stability.

It's because of such stability that the country was earlier this year named by World Bank as having graduated from least developed country into a lower middle income economy. This milestone has been achieved because of increased production, improved trade and investments across all sectors done by both the public and private sectors.

Thus, the nation's prevailing peace and stability for many decades, have contributed immensely to development and growth which in turn leads to improved standards of living among the majority of the people.

Of particular interest in this regard, is how local communities are playing a key role in matters of global status notably the World Bank's recent confession that Tanzania has made significant



progress economically in the past five years.

But with achievements made, it is also worth noting that as Tanzanians, we have responsibility nurture and guard our hard won national treasures which include unity, peace and stability which have contributed significantly towards our

global recognition.

As former President Benjamin William Mkapa said, "I believe that the majority of Tanzanians are patriotic people of integrity, ready to come together to fight any vices," our nation has become of age and what we need now is jealously guard against any divisive elements that may come from both internal and foreign interest groups and individuals.

Peace and security which are needed for sustainable economic growth and development of the nation, can also be safeguarded by ensuring that there is rule of law. The rule of laws helps our nation attract foreign direct investment need to develop the economy rapidly. It is therefore advisable that leaders of all political parties should work together with their supporters to safeguard peace and calm, law and order needed to continue our sustained economic growth as we head towards a proper middle income economy probably before 2025.

Strengthening the role that local communities play in this equation is important because integration of peace and security for nation building is an important milestone that needs to be sustained. It is therefore important that the

government continues its noble duty of ensuring that it fosters responsible and transparent approach in dealing how our natural resources are shared.

Mismanagement and greedy consumption of our natural resources can be a dangerous factor that may lead to disruption of peace and stability because the majority may feel that their rights are being violated.

We have seen many resource rich countries in Africa having internal conflicts or utmost civil wars that have been prompted by a group of people who feel that they have been marginalised taking up arms.

Fortunately, our nation under the distinguished leadership of President John Pombe Magufuli has successfully managed to end mismanagement of our resources by a clique of elites who are in public or private sector positions that allow them to easily access such resources and make final decisions on how to utilise them.

NB: **Martin Gabone (pictured) is a business consultant and social economic commentator. The views expressed in this article are his own.**