
[Tanzania: Impasse on commercial shrimp farming at Rufiji Delta mangroves](#)

The Rufiji Delta in South Eastern Tanzania holds some 53,255 hectares of unspoiled mangrove forest. These mangroves are not only a key element for the environment in the region by stabilising the coastline, building land through accumulation of silt and the production of detritus, preserving the quality of water, and serving as windbreaks for the hinterland, but also constitutes the source of livelihoods for thousands of people living there (see WRM Bulletin 12).

In April 1999, Tanzanian NGOs were able to secure an interim order staying plans of the African Fishing Company's 10,000 hectare shrimp farm project at Rufiji Delta. Would the project have been implemented, one third of the whole Rufiji Delta would have ended up in the hands of the company for a period of no less than ten years, thus threatening the livelihoods of thousands of local farmers and fisherfolk living in the delta, and causing severe environmental impacts that would have put at risk the future of the region.

The panel of three judges chosen to hear and dictate on the case disintegrated when one of its members retired and another one was transferred. The case has not yet been assigned to another panel and it appears that at present there are not enough judges to constitute a new one. In the meantime, the company is said to be facing severe financial constraints which would have even forced it to sell part of its assets. Although the situation is not yet clear, it seems that the efforts carried out by concerned citizens and organizations have managed to save --at least for the time being-- the mangroves and local peoples' livelihoods.

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