

Women's Migration to Daressalaam

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by Verena Knippel-Ruth, University of Bayreuth/Germany

STRUCTURE:

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A. BACKGROUND AND AIMS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The information presented here has been collected as part of a research project at the Department of Geography / University of Bayreuth, dealing with population mobility, which itself is under the Special Research Unit 214: "Identity in Africa ". Whereas other scholars have been analysing the conditions in Tanzanian regions of outmigration, my focus has been on migrants, i.e. people who actually moved, and on women in particular.

Much has been said and written about rural-urban migration in Africa. Urbanization is being called the most dramatic transformation process for African societies. Migrations have always had an enormous impact on women's daily lives, but most studies were for a long time focused on male outmigration.

And as women now play a major role as migrants, they are still an "invisible factor" as the world population report 1993 stated.

Tanzania has tried to avoid "biased development", the most famous example of it's policy to develop the rural areas being the villagization campaign called "ujamaa". Nevertheless the gap between urban and rural life has been widening drastically since independence and as "maendeleo" (development, progress) seems not to reach their villages, people are using the improved transport system to find their way to the cities. Tanzania's urban growth rates range among the highest in the world, and since the seventies the majority of the migrants arriving in it's biggest city and de-facto capital Daressalaam are women.

In this paper I will present the preliminary results of a survey that has been conducted in three different residential areas of Daressalaam (Buguruni, Sinza and Kawe) and at several working places (informal sector trading places and restaurants, Urafiki textile factory, dispensary, schools, Tanesco, Ministry of Women and Youth) involving 300 women migrants. The aim was to get a diverse picture of women's town migration on the basis of which certain aspects could be explored with the help of 50 biographical interviews and 3 case studies.

The main questions were: Who are the women who move to town ? What are their motivations and expectations ? Where do they get information about life in town and how is the decision made ? How do they organize the journey and accomodation ? What do they live on ? What is their daily life in town like, compared to the village ? What are their problems and which sources of support can they rely on ? How do they consider their situation ? Do they want to stay ? How is the relationship with their home area and how do people there react to the outmigration of women ?

The discussion (part B) will be structured in four sections: the first giving some demographic information, the second and the third trying to understand the past and the present situation and the fourth looking into the future from the migrants' perspective. Part C will offer conclusions and implications.

B DISCUSSION OF PRELIMINARY RESULTS

1. Who are the Women Migrants ?

The selection of research areas as well as the choice of interview partners within each area aimed at diversity rather than homogeneity. As a result the data can give a picture of who the women migrants are and reveal some tendencies (rather than give exact percentages of age groups or regions of origin for the total of women migrants in Daressalaam.)

At the time of the interviews more than two thirds of the women were between 20 and 40 years old. Together with the result that half of the interviewees moved to Dar-essalaam within the last 10 years this seems to support the assumption that mainly young, economically active women migrate and that in Tanzania this process has gained much of its importance within the last ten years.

As in other African metropolis, a large proportion of the women migrants in Daressalaam are single, divorced or widowed. Forty percent of the surveyed households were headed by women. Divorced women are more often living in cheaper residential areas like Kawe or Buguruni, whereas in Sinza the core family is the dominant household type.

Another difference between the group of migrants and the country's average is the number of children: one fourth of the women didn't have children and only one fifth had four or more children. Almost half of them said that they wanted three children or less. (Hereby has to be taken into account, that no migrant would give a lower ideal number of children than she actually had at that time.)

The household sizes ranged between one and 20 members. One third of the migrants were living with six or more other people, 40 % shared their home with three to five and 20 % with only one or two relatives or friends. One out of twelve women would live by herself.

Considering school education, half of the women had completed primary school, while almost equal shares had no or no complete education and secondary or even university education.

2. Why do Women Move to Daressalaam ?

Reasons within the National Context

The gap between rural and urban areas, as mentioned above, seems to be even wider for women:

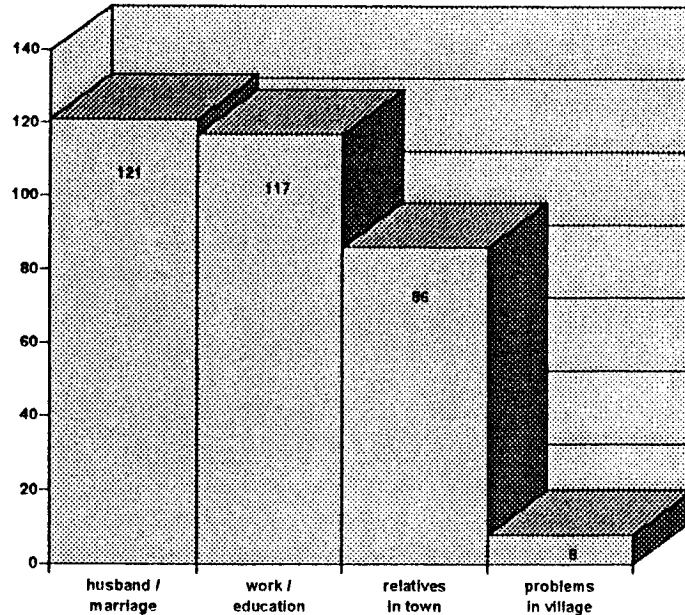
- Traditional inheritance and land tenure laws exclude women in many regions, which leads to situations where those who work on the fields can neither own them nor make the decisions about what to plant etc.
- The rural societies are conservative and restrictive to women. Traditional role expectations are thereby often in contrast to the requirements of harsh reality (as for example the necessity for women to contribute to the household economy).
- They are also in contrast to the qualifications and ideas many women gained through their good school education (as the socialist government used to successfully support girls' education).

Furthermore, by completing school, most women have some migration experience: Having been sent to different boarding schools, they are used to live somewhere away from home, and they may have grasped an idea of what is called "big city life". While on the one hand village life is getting still more difficult - the economic crisis together with the 'Structural Adjustment Programs' hit women first - on the other hand the towns seem to become even brighter and, through improvements in transport and communication, closer. So a growing number of women decide to move...

Individual Reasons

Nevertheless the reasons given by the women in the interviews were mainly "pull"-aspects of town, positive expectations the migrants had or still have rather than problems they perceived within the village. Four major groups of motives can be distinguished, as shown in chart 1.

Chart 1: Reasons for Migration to Daressalaam (As Given by the Interviewees)



The most important reasons for women to come to Daressalaam were 'marriage' or the 'husband living in town' and 'work, business, education'. Among the women migrants presently living in Daressalaam, both groups hold about the same share.

'Marriage/Husband'

Thirty-six percent of the migrants explained their migration with 'having got married' or 'having followed the husband'. This behaviour is according to the traditional woman's role: before, women in most regions of Tanzania used to follow their husband to his village after marriage. So "marriage-migration" has always been part of the majority of Tanzanian women's lives (belonging to patrilocal societies). It is also common, as many young men have moved to town, to choose a wife "from home", which is traditional on first sight but modern on the second: in times of more women coming to Daressalaam it would be possible to find a wife from the same village there. But men prefer "village women" who are said to be more handsome and less "crazy" or "selfish" than the ones who experienced life in town.

Accordingly, the women who came for this reason very often stated, they were "brought like the luggage", had no information about the place they were going to and were not involved in the decision to move. Some migrants called themselves

Not surprisingly "marriage-migration" has been more important for older migrants. For more than half of the women of over thirty years and for only one third of the up to thirty years old women, it was the main reason.

This type of migration is most relevant for women with no or incomplete formal education, while "marriage" is no reason for migrants who completed college or university.

With time, the importance of "marriage-migration" is declining: accounting for 50 % of the women's reasons who came thirty years ago, it was only 30 % for the one's arriving within the past 10 years.

'Work/Education'

One third of the migrants stated, that they had come to look for work or education. The share may be even bigger, but as the "dilemma between reality and ideology" persists, it may often be sensible or even unavoidable for women to move for economic reasons, as income opportunities are lacking in the rural areas, but it is not yet accepted and therefore not often admitted as a reason. Women do perceive the disparity between village and town and react to it.

Explanations must nevertheless be made up and are part of their strategy.

"Relatives" play an important role in explaining women's migrations that may later lead to opening a small business. The good education many women enjoyed raises or strenghtens their wish to "get forward".

Work and job training are especially important for women between 20 and 39 years of age. The group of younger girls who moved for the reason of schooling is supposed to be underrepresented, as they usually live in boarding schools (and not in households, where the survey was conducted, along with working places).

With the number of years of schooling the interviewees had, the importance of 'further education' or 'work' was rising (up to 50%). The share of "migration for work" is also growing with the years: of the migrants, who came within the last 10 years, 40% gave this reason, while among the ones who arrived 30 years or more ago, they were only 17%. Today 'work/education' is women's most important motive for

'Help or Visit Relatives'

In the list of reasons for migration, 'visiting relatives' ranges third. Being of negligible or no importance to men's decisions to move, relatives living in town seem to play a considerable role in all of women's migration process.

Relatives in Daressalaam are an essential 'resource' (see below), as many women do not possess enough money to settle in town, they can be used as an 'excuse', when no other reason will be accepted by the family or village community, and they offer the 'chance' to taste city life and "see what it is like".

'Help' or 'visit relatives' is the dominant reason for young women. In the age group between 15 and 19 years it accounts for two thirds of the migrations, which is supposedly due to the fact that these are the women with the least resources, the strong influence of a strict family background and to the popular "housegirl system", which attracts and creates young female migrants. Many of the girls who come for a certain time to help in a relative's household and, in turn get shelter, food and sometimes some education before they are returned to their village, will not really "fit in" there and prefer to come back and live in Daressalaam as migrants later.

For women without formal education and those with higher education, this type of migration is less relevant, while it is important for primary school leavers, who do - due to their lack of other resources - strongly depend on family support (economically and morally).

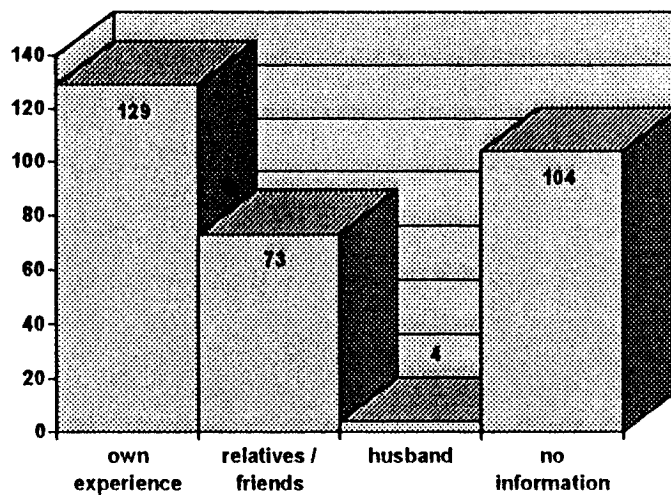
The migration motive 'visit / help relatives' is more often stated by women who came to town long ago - but it is regaining importance as the number of women migrants is rising since the 80s. Rather than to the revival of the extended family this is supposedly due to the worsening situation in the villages, which drives women to town, even if they can only survive there with the help of relatives.

The 'problems in the village' that were mentioned by some migrants are all of the "maisha magumu"-type (life is tough there), where migration is the only way out, no matter how tough the city life may be...

Information about Life in Town

We would suppose that, before they finally decide (or are decided) to migrate, women would need some information about the place they are going to.

Chart 2: Sources of Information about Daressalaam (in the Village)



But as a result of the Daressalaam survey we find that women who had not had the chance themselves to experience city life by former visits, will hardly know what they are going to face. Some said they were told by relatives or friends, but others said the picture drawn by others was not at all realistic, and more than one third of the interviewees stated they had no idea of what life in town was going to be like.

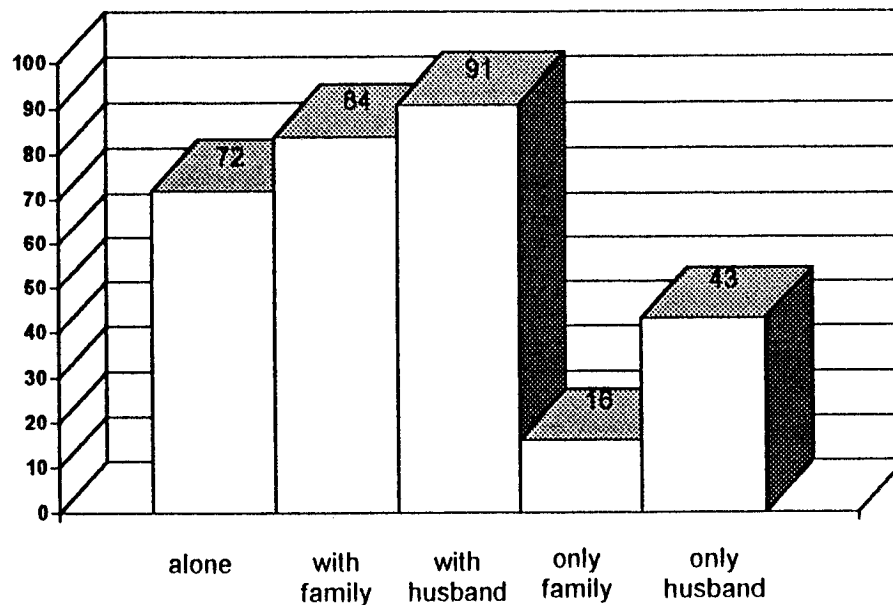
Husbands - who so often are the reason for their wives migration - obviously don't find it necessary to inform or prepare them: the only source of information inside the village are relatives and friends.

There is a tendency that younger and better educated women are more likely to get information and with time the number of women totally lacking information is getting smaller.

Migration Decision-Making

The question "how did you decide to move ?" revealed that twenty percent of the women had been totally excluded from the decision. Some said that they were brought "like luggage", while others stated that they had decided themselves, without consulting anybody. The majority had discussed and decided together with relatives or husbands.

Chart 3: Decision-Making



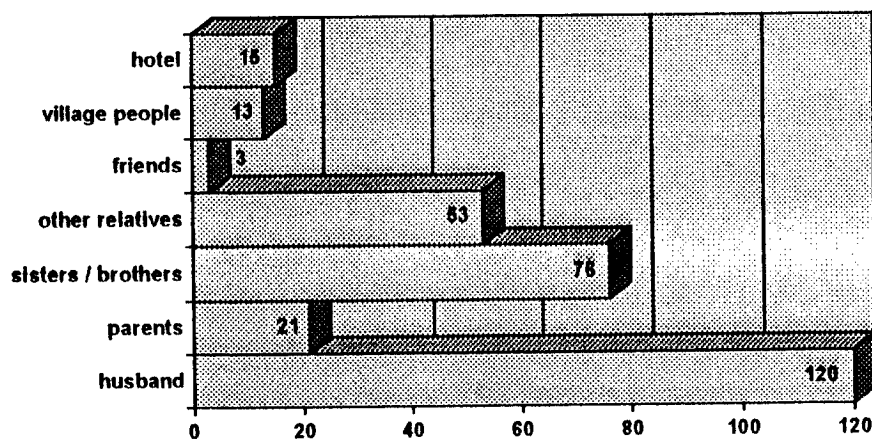
As it is not appreciated by the general public when women make their own decisions, some women seemed not ready to admit it, which means that the proportion of independent migration decision-making is supposedly even higher.

3. How do Women Migrants Cope in Town ?

Arrival in Town

In most cases the fare to Daressalaam (mainly bus tickets) had been paid by the migrant woman's family or husband. Very few interviewees had bought it themselves. On arrival in Daressalaam most women migrants find shelter with family members or husbands, who have already settled in town.

Chart 4: Accommodation on Arrival in Town



Sources of Support

More help is provided later by relatives - often in the form of money to start a small business, by neighbouring women - who volunteer to teach skills (handycrafts) and lend money (saving clubs are popular) and, in turns, look after each others' children - and by friends and colleagues - who give advice and company.

Neighbours, friends and colleagues are new, modern social networks for women in town, which, to some extent, take the place of the rural extended family and create reliable sources of mutual support.

Sources of Income

Almost all the migrants reported that there were a number of relatives who were financially dependent on them. Every third woman was supporting six or more people with her income.

As the working places-survey aimed at involving women working in different fields and under different types of employment, the formal sector may be overrepresented in this study. Still, about half of the interviewees were making a living in the informal sector, selling food being the most important source of income.

Compared to their former life in the village, women were much more often involved in informal sector activities and on the other side married women more often called themselves "housewives". Rather than to an actual change of behaviour this is probably due to the emergence of a name for the phenomenon.

Problems in Town

The biggest problem for women seemed to be health. One out of six respondents would mention a serious worsening of her or her family's health after having moved to town. This points at the difficult housing and sanitary situation the majority of the migrants, and especially women, have to struggle with. Another issue connected with health is the appearance of crime and social isolation in town, which was criticized by some interviewees.

Ten percent of the migrants said that they did not have anybody in town who could give them advice or help in a difficult situation. Many stated that the "work would never end" and they didn't have any time to take a rest or meet people.

4. What are the Women Migrants' Plans ?

Problems with housing and the chronic lack of money seemed to lead women when they were asked about their wishes and plans for the future: more than half of them wished to open or extend their own business and every sixth woman wished to have their own house. This goes together with the way women described life in town -"you

Chart 6: Preferred Place at Present

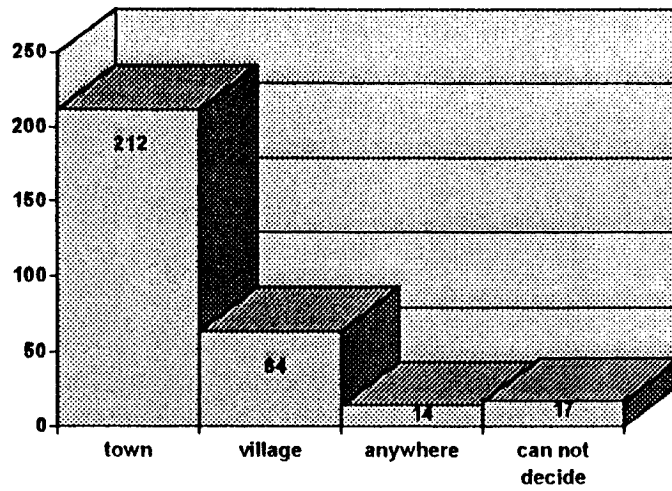


Chart 7: Reasons for Preference

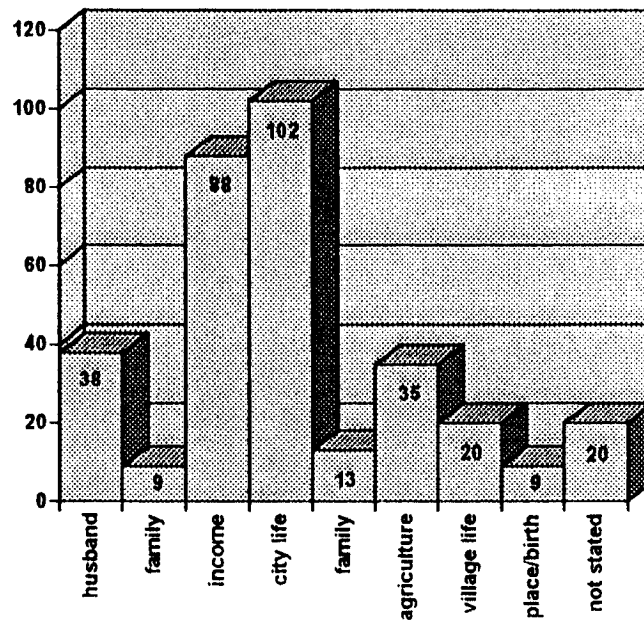
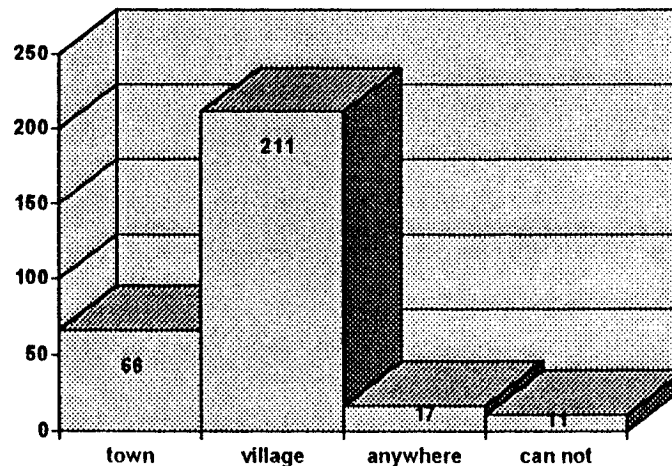


Chart 8: Preferred Place for Retirement



The results of the question "If you could choose, where would you prefer to live at the moment?" show that the majority of the migrants do, for the present and near future, clearly prefer Daressalaam as a place to live and work. Gudrun Ludwar-Ene and Gabriele Wurster have - after studies in Nigeria and Kenya - conjectured earlier that "women are more urban than men", and women may gain more through migration to town than men (supposing they gain personal freedom along with some economical success). The reasons they gave for their preference of Daressalaam are above all better "income opportunities", and the "way of life" they had become "used to".

This expression "maisha ya mjini"/"the way of life" does, on the one hand, mean the chance to earn some money, but also include the freedom to make their own decisions. Some migrants said it clearly: "if you are handsome, you must go to town" because "in the village there is no getting forward".

It should nevertheless not be overlooked, that one out of six women would rather live in the village (and could not return there - due to a lack of resources?) and some said it was not their decision where they stayed.

Having seen women's understanding of life in Daressalaam it is not contradictory, that - in contrast to the above quoted - in their old age most of the migrants would like to "return home" and lead a "peaceful life" in the village. For many migrants, even after 20 years "the town is where we work, not our home".

C CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

For reasons like marriage or family - which are within the traditional role set of Tanzanian women - but also for economic reasons - which have until today not been sufficiently acknowledged - a steadily growing number of women migrants come to Daressalaam.

Women migrants give the impression to understand clearly what city life is about and what it can offer them. They make the most of their and their families' resources by living and working in town, while they do keep strong links to their rural background (which couldn't be discussed in this paper, but is another finding of the study).

Once being once successful in town in monetary terms, women migrants support their families and, whenever possible, buy a piece of land and build a house in the village for a later return. This seems to be suitable for raising status and influence of women in the rural societies.

For many Tanzanian women town migration seems not mean "leaving village and family" - it is rather the attempt to improve their and their families' lives. Migration is therefore the route they take, their destination is a better life - in Daressalaam possibly, but not necessarily.

The implications of the above findings are:

- a) Improving the information flow is necessary to allow village women to get a realistic picture of life in town, on the basis of which they can decide whether and where they move.
- b) More equality for women and men together with alternative income opportunities in rural areas would give many women a chance to stay and improve their and their families' lives within their home area.
- c) As women living and working in town support large numbers of relatives, income generating projects for women improve many people's situation.
- d) Education once more proved to be a key to independent decision-making, as well as to sources of income for women, so all forms of girl's and women's education and training are to be supported.
- e) Awareness of the important role women migrants play - not only within the household but in the city's economic, social and cultural life of today - could help to finally abandon the old prejudice, that "the city is not for women".

Special thanks to all the women in Daressalaam, who supported the study with advice and participation !

Parts of this paper have been taken from a draft article "Women's Town Migration in Tanzania - Reasons and Resources" which is supposed to be published early 1997.

A workshop on "Rural-Urban Migrations in Today's Tanzania: Women and Men" will be held on 15th and 16th Jan. 1997 in cooperation with the University and TCNP