



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

22 March 2005

**TZA43431.E**

Tanzania: Information on the relationship between education and a single woman's ability to refuse her parents' proposals for arranged marriages; consequences for refusing; recourse available and possibility of relocating within the country (January 2003-March 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Information on the ability of single educated women to refuse their parents' proposals for arranged marriages and the consequences for refusing was scarce among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

For background information on forced and early marriage in Tanzania, please refer to TZA41762.E of 30 July 2003.

An article from the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) stated that "Africa may be totally different today than it was a century or so ago but many girls still face cultural practices that affected their great grandmothers" (14 Feb. 2005). According to this source, the fact that girls have more access to formal education and are more exposed to Western culture does not have an impact on their ability to protect themselves from societal inequalities (ibid.).

In 8 March 2005 correspondence to the Research Directorate, a professor of the Department of African & African American Studies at Syracuse University stated that the fact that a woman is educated had no impact on her ability to refuse her parents' proposals for arranged marriages. According to this professor, a woman's decision to refuse to marry could result in her "social death" (ibid.).

Likewise, an associate professor of the Department of Anthropology at Rutgers University who has conducted long-term research in Tanzania, indicated that a woman's decision to refuse to marry could result in her social exclusion (12 March 2005). However, the professor explained that "educated women [had] more ability to use the courts, if necessary to challenge 'customary law'" (ibid.). She added that "[m]any educated women ... now elope with their boyfriend rather than marry a man of their [parents'] choosing" (ibid.). The associate professor stated that a woman would not necessarily have to leave her country to find a safe place to stay, "although she might have to move to another area or to a more urban environment" (Associate professor 21 March 2005). She mentioned that "relocation is possible within Tanzania, although not without its social and economic costs" (ibid.). Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In correspondence to the Research Directorate, the Executive Director of the Legal and Human Rights Center (LHRC) in Tanzania stated that "the consequences to marry depend on where one is situated and the community where one is living" (22 March 2005). The Executive Director explained that "women who are able to reject their parents' proposals have to be in a good financial situation" (ibid.). She added that "a woman's education plays a big role as one will have a good chance of getting a good job so that she can keep herself and thus can be able to have a say in her life" (ibid.).

The Tanzanian Law of Marriage Act of 1971 stipulates that consent of both parties should be given "freely and voluntarily" (Center for Reproductive Law and Policy 1998; see also IPS 15 July 2003). However, *Country Reports 2004* mentioned that "inheritance, marriage and land laws do not consistently support full equality, and in practice women's rights often [are] not respected" (28 Feb. 2005). In its *Tanzania Human Rights Report 2003*, the Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC) stated that "[a]lthough the government has ratified a number of international human rights treaties, Tanzanians' access to international mechanisms of human rights protection remained technically impeded by the government by way of non-ratification of crucial treaties with monitoring bodies" (March 2004). Additional information on the protection available from authorities could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

### References

Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, Rutgers University, New Jersey. 12 and 21 March 2005. Correspondence.

Center for Reproductive Law and Policy. 1998. *Women's Reproductive Rights in Tanzania: A Shadow Report*. <[http://www.crlp.org/pdf/sr\\_tan\\_0798\\_eng.pdf](http://www.crlp.org/pdf/sr_tan_0798_eng.pdf)> [Accessed 14 March 2005]

*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2004*. 28 February 2005. "Tanzania." United States Department of State. Washington, D.C. <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41630.htm>> [Accessed 4 March 2005]

Professor, Department of African & African American Studies, Syracuse University. 8 March 2005. Correspondence.

Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 14 Feb. 2005. "Tanzania: A Century Later, Little Has Changed for Females." <[http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=45529&SelectRegion=East\\_Africa,%20Great\\_Lakes](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=45529&SelectRegion=East_Africa,%20Great_Lakes)> [Accessed 3 March 2005]

Inter Press Service (IPS). 15 July 2003. Ananilea Nkya. "Culture-Tanzania: Activists Challenge Gender Inequality as Women marry Women." <<http://www.aegis.com/news/ips/2003/IP030717.html>> [Accessed 15 March 2005]

Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC). 22 March 2005. Executive Director. Correspondence.

\_\_\_\_\_. March 2004. *Tanzania Human Rights Report 2003*. <<http://www.humanrights.or.tz/downloads/Tanzania-Human-RightsReport-2003.htm>> [Accessed 18 March 2005]

### Additional Sources Consulted

**Oral sources** : Attempts to contact four local legal aid and women's rights organizations in Tanzania and four university professors who specialize in African studies were unsuccessful within the time constraints of this Response.

**Publications** : *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, *Africa Today*.

**Internet sites, including** : Abyz News Links, AllAfrica.com, BBC News, *CIA World Factbook*, CEDAW, Danish Immigration Service, European Country of Origin Information Network (ECOI), Freedom House, Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent*, Law Library of Congress, United Kingdom - Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND).

The attached reproduction is a copy of an official work that is published by the Government of Canada. The reproduction has not been produced in affiliation with, or with the endorsement of the Government of Canada.