

# **WOMEN PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESS AT THEIR COMMUNITIES: THE CASE OF MOVEMERO DISTRICT IN MOROGORO REGION AND BAHU DISTRICT IN DODOMA REGION**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The study to assess women participation in decision making process at grassroots levels was conducted in Mvomero District in Morogoro Region and Bahi District in Dodoma Region. The overall objective of the study was to assess the extent to which women are involved in the decision-making process related to socio-economic development in their communities. Data was collected from 80 women respondents using questionnaire, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. All respondents indicated that they sometimes participate in decision-making process since they are represented in various development committees such as schools, health, water etc. However, their proportion in relation to that of men was less than one-third. These findings indicate that women will not have a voice in decision-making process due to their limited number, particularly when it comes to voting. The study further found that their attendance was irregular in meetings to discuss developmental issues mostly due to lack of time as a result of heavy workload at home and meetings being called at inconvenient time. It is concluded that women are not active in decision-making process at grassroots level in the two districts. It is further concluded that what made them to be in that position was their low education, ignorance and low status. The study recommends that men at grassroots levels be sensitized to support women in their endeavour to empower themselves by shouldering part of the workload currently carried by women. It is further recommended that women be encouraged to form small business groups.*

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

In a situation where there are sufferings in the society, there are particular categories of people including women and children who suffer most. For example, the economic crisis in the 1980s in Tanzania, forced urban dwellers to seek alternatives to the state's

diminishing resource base. Many researchers believe that the economic security of women has been undermined in Tanzania by failure of neo-liberal reforms, most of which are relatively homogeneous across sub-Saharan Africa and closely associated with structural adjustment policies of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank (Lugalla, 1995; Ake, 1996; Tripp, 1997; Lockhart, 2003). These policies include such things as producer price reforms, removal of subsidies, liberalization of internal and external trade, new foreign exchange regimes usually including severe devaluations, the introduction of cost sharing for state-supplied services, privatization across a wide variety of public sectors, political reform and accountability (Tripp, 1997). While the consequences of these wider structural processes are complex and varied, some believe that the general outcome for women has been to further limit their already precarious civil and property rights in rural areas, resulting in an increasing female migration to urban areas. In the urban environment, the same policies led to fewer opportunities for women in the formal sector, which prompted them to join the ranks of the urban informal economy as petty traders and local food distributors, where they earn little and are forced to combine activities and diversify strategies (Lockhart, 2003).

These challenges have been preoccupying governments, decision-makers, international and national organizations, and other socio-economic role-players including women's activists. In fact, these agents have been more than ever committed to improving the quality of life of the people and in particular to alleviating the pain of the vulnerable groups including women (Lockhart, 2003). Much has been done in the struggle for gender equality. Different programmes, strategies and approaches have been initiated to recognize the role of women in development with a view of bringing gender equality in the society. Some of the approaches used include: Women in Development (WID), Women and Development (WAD) and Gender and Development (GAD).

Despite all these approaches, women are still underestimated and as stated by Ferera (2000: 182 – 183): “Men have always been regarded as the ‘real’ actors in development. One of the first obstacles to women’s participation in development is that their activities are not considered central to development ... [While] Experts are unanimous in the opinion that women have [every time] made a considerable contribution in ensuring the survival of communities afflicted by multiple economic, financial, political or military crises”.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

In Tanzania, some efforts have been made to empower women. Since 2004, the Government has committed herself to promoting Gender Equality, Equity and Empowerment of Women in line with the Dakar/Ngor Declaration (DND), International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recommendations, the ICPD+5 Key Actions and the ICPD+10 Africa Regional Review major recommendations. In this regard, the Government is implementing the National Strategy for Gender Development (NSGD) 2005 through institutions that are mandated to promote gender equality, equity and women empowerment at all levels by (i) Increasing the awareness of the society about the importance of education for all children (ii) Promoting participation of women in decision-making at all levels (iii) Promoting women employment opportunities and job security and (iv) Transformation of socio-economic and cultural values and attitudes that hinder gender equality and equity in Tanzania (URT, 2009).

The institutional arrangement for implementing the National Strategy for Gender Development consists of the Ministry responsible for Gender issues namely, the Ministry of Community Development, Gender and Children (MCDGC); the Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) and Local Government Authorities (LGAs); the Civil Service organisations (CSOs), and the Development Partners. MCDGC is responsible for

coordinating and mainstreaming the implementation of the NSGD 2005, providing professional backstopping to other implementers, collecting and disseminating information and maintaining national database, and reporting implementation progress on regional and international commitments on gender development issues (URT, 2009). Due to these efforts by the Government, MDAs and LGAs are having Gender Focal Persons (GFP) who are mandated to implement the NSGD 2005 and who are the overseers of mainstreaming gender issues into plans and budget of their respective areas. At the local level, community development officers are responsible for overseeing the implementation of gender issues (URT, 2009). CSOs such as TAWLA, TAMWA, TANGO, TGNP, BAKWATA, CCT, TEC, WAMA etc. work closely with the respective Government departments to implement NSGD in their areas to achieve attitudinal change towards gender equality and equity, development, and to monitor and evaluate the programme impacts. They further provide gender disaggregated data and information concerning the families in their respective communities. Development Partners support the NSGD 2005 implementation through provision of financial, technical and other services. They are also involved in capacity building initiatives to various stakeholders on matters relating to gender.

The decentralization reforms in Tanzania under the local authority reforms were instrumentalised by the Local Government Reform Agenda 1996–2000 and Government Policy Paper on Local Government Reform of October 1998. The aim of the decentralization reforms was to strengthen the local government authorities with the overall objective of improving the quality and access to public services delivered through or facilitated by local authorities. Specifically, the reforms aimed at improving the autonomy of the local authorities; improve the responsiveness of local authorities to local priorities, solutions and monitoring as expressed through democratic organizations; improve the authority mobilization of resources, and to improve the

operational efficiency of local authorities (Shao, 2001). This indicates very clearly that the devolution of power from the central government to the districts, wards and finally to the village levels tends to give opportunity and freedom to the lower organs to participate in decision-making processes over issues of concern. At the end of the day, this would improve aspects of planning, financial accountability, administrative control over services and the whole governance system at the local level (Shao, 2001). Decentralization is taken as a means of encouraging local initiatives in the development process by giving people power to make decisions on issues related to planning, implementation and evaluation of processes of their own development (Ngware 2000). It is through being involved in the processes of development that people can realize and recognize their rights. It is also through equal participation that the marginalized groups like women are taken on board and involved in development.

At the local government level, decentralization system in Tanzania has set by-laws, which try to involve women in activities that tend to enhance their rights and to empower them. At the village council level different committees (Water, Finance, Community Development, and Environment etc) have been instructed that women should form at least 1/3 of the committee members (Shao, 2001). This is in line with the Millennium Development Goals on Equality and Equity and Declaration that by 2005 women should constitute 30% in all decision making structures (Instraw, 2005). The assumption is that through participation in meetings at the village level and the opportunity to gain education, women will be empowered (Koda and Shayo, 1994) and hence be in a better position to realize and fight for their rights. Studies have shown that the level of illiteracy among women in Tanzania is higher than that of men (URT, 2006). Similarly, in all levels of education (apart from primary level where the ratio at enrolment is close to 1:1), there are more boys than girls (URT, 2006).

These realities thus cast doubt as to whether empowerment of women at grass root level is taking place given the fact that women shoulder heavy workload than men (URT, 2006a; Fontana and Natali, 2008; TGNP, 2009) and that most of their activities are for sustenance of their families. Majority of children who complete primary school do not advance to secondary education making it difficult to assist their parents in a more productive ways. It was thus found necessary to assess the extent to which women are involved in decision-making process related to social development in their communities. The Millennium Development Goals on Equality and Equity by 2015 can only be achieved if all obstacles to women development are identified and addressed.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted at Mvomero District in Morogoro Region and Bahi District in Dodoma Region. Mvomero District was chosen because the District had more of rural characteristic. The Waluguru who are the dominant tribe in the District follow matrilineal system where uncles are the ones with a say over marriage of girls in the family. Morogoro Region was the ninth from top in 2009 national standard seven results where slightly over half (51.7%) passed (FreeMedia Limited, 2009). It was thus found interesting to assess the extent to which women had been empowered at local levels given the fact that majority of people in the District deals with peasant farming and the Region as a whole is suitable for farming activities. Bahi District was chosen because the Wagogo who are the dominant tribe in the Region follow a patrilineal system where father of a daughter is the one with a say over her marriage. The Wagogo are mostly agro-pastoralists and there is a possibility that some of their children do not attend school or the attendance may be poor due to the fact that girls might be involved in fetching water and other domestic chores and boys looking after livestock. Moreover, the Region has unreliable rainfall compared to Morogoro. According to the 2009 national standard seven results, the Region was the fifth from

bottom where only 40.22 percent of the students passed (FreeMedia Limited, 2009). It was thought that a comparative study from these two districts will highlight some of the obstacles faced by rural women in empowering themselves.

The study used a cross-sectional research design. Data was collected once at one point in time in the study areas since variables were not expected to change over time. In relatively less-known areas, where there is little experience and theory available to serve as a guide, intensive study is a very useful method of gaining insight instead of revisiting the study area (Ghuri *et al.*, 1995). The choice of this particular research design was further driven by limited resources, including time that was available to the researchers. The total sample size of women comprised of 80 respondents, where 40 of them were selected from Mvomero District in Morogoro Region and the remaining 40 respondents were picked from Bahi District in Dodoma Region. In addition, the study collected information from key informants who are knowledgeable about the plight of women in rural areas. They include the Community Development Officers, District Education Officers, District Administrative Secretaries and Microfinance Institutions such as FINCA and PRIDE (T). The study collected such information from 4 key informants in Mvomero District and another 4 informants from Bahi District. The sample for the study was obtained from two Wards in each District.

Selection of Wards in each District was done by considering factors like accessibility since the study was undertaken during the rainy season. Moreover, advice was sought from the District Administrative Officers in the two Districts. In Bahi District, Bahi and Ibihwa Wards were selected and the study picked Bahi Sokoni and Ibihwa villages in those wards. The wards selected in Mvomero District were Mhonda which is a Mixed Ward and Mlali which was categorized as Rural Ward according to 2002 Population and Housing Census (URT, 2005). In those wards, the

villages selected were Mafuta and Kipera, respectively. Since information sought was the same irrespective of the area in the district where the respondents reside, this selection approach of Wards and Villages did not affect the result. The Village Chairpersons were requested to provide a list of all households in the village from where the researcher picked forty respondents. The Village Chairpersons were further requested to show to the researcher the location of the identified households. The target group was women aged 18 years and above who were taking care of the households visited. The list did not include school children and other dependants. Data were collected using interviews, questionnaire and focus group discussions. Broadly, the objective of the study was to assess the extent to which women are involved in the decision-making process related to socio-economic development in their communities. Specifically, the objectives were to examine the participation of women in decision-making organs at Village or Streets, Wards and District levels; to identify the obstacles that women face in their endeavour to develop themselves and their families; to explore whether women are aware about development activities being undertaken in their area; to identify their extent of involvement in development activities being undertaken, and to examine their awareness regarding importance of education for their children (particularly a girl child) beyond primary school level.

## **4.0 RESULTS**

### **4.1.1 Age**

The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age and their marital status are summarised in Table 4.1. The majority of respondents in both districts (80% Mvomero and 82.5% Bahi) were below age 50. This age group is economically productive and is within the reproductive age. Those who were below age 30 were only 7.5 percent in Mvomero District and 5 percent in Bahi District.



#### 4.1.2 Marital status

The majority of women interviewed (90% in Mvomero and 82.5% in Bahi) were married at the time of study. Those who were not in union due to death of their husbands were 10% in Mvomero and 17.5% in Bahi as shown in Table 4.1. The study further wanted to establish whether marital status of women had any association with school going age children who do not go to school. It was thought that women who are widowed may not be able to take their children to school due to economic hardship. The study found a highly close association ( $\chi^2 = 12.810$ ;  $p=0.000$  for Mvomero and  $\chi^2 = 11.820$ ;  $p=0.000$  for Bahi) between marital status of respondents and the children of school going age who do not go to school when tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . These findings suggest that marital status of women in rural settings influence the school going age children to attend school. However, the study during the focus group discussions noted that children of school going age who do not attend schools had stopped going to schools on their own and not due to lack of basic school requirements. Factors such as lack of control on them and ignorance on some women concerning the importance of education to their children were mentioned as reasons for non-attendance to schools by children. It was further found that marital status had some influence over the reasons that made some women not to attend community or village meetings ( $\chi^2 = 10.362$ ;  $p=0.016$  for Mvomero and  $\chi^2 = 11.364$ ;  $p=0.017$  for Bahi) when tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Married women were more likely to attend meetings than widowed ones.

**Table 4.1 Age and marital status of respondents**

Age	Frequency		Percentage	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
20-24	1	0	2.5	0.0
25-29	2	2	5.0	5.0
30-34	2	3	5.0	7.5
35-39	5	6	12.5	15.0
40-44	13	12	32.5	30.0
45-49	9	10	22.5	25.0
50-54	8	7	20.0	17.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married	36	33	90.0	82.5
Widowed	4	7	10.0	17.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

### 4.1.3 Education

The socio-economic background of the respondents in terms of education, main activities done and how their time was spent are shown in Table 4.2. Data on education indicates that majority of them (80.0% in Mvomero and 60% in Bahi) had primary education while slightly above one-third (37.5%) had no education in Bahi District. Those who had no education in Mvomero District were very few (15%). Two respondents (5% in Mvomero District) indicated that they had attained secondary education while none indicated to have attained secondary education in Bahi District as shown in Table 4.2. Education is a key determinant of the lifestyle and status an individual enjoys in a society. Education provides people with knowledge and skills

that can lead them to a better quality of life (NBS and Macro, 2000).

#### **4.1.4 Main activities done**

The study sought information from respondents concerning the main activities that they conduct during their stay in the community or village. Women who earn some income are likely to be more independent than those without any income. Their responses on main activities are summarized in Table 4.2. Those who are dealing with peasant farming alone were the majority (72.5%) in Mvomero District while in Bahi District, most of them (77.5%) mentioned peasant farming and livestock keeping as their main activities as shown in Table 4.2. These findings indicate that in Bahi District, livestock keeping is one of the main economic activities. It is no wonder that due to the nature of their activities, they also have less education compared to the women interviewed in Mvomero District where it was found that 80 percent had completed primary education and 5 percent had completed secondary as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: Education, main activities done and how time is spent**

Education	Frequency		Percentage	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
No education	6	15	15.0	37.5
Adult education	0	1	0.0	2.5
Primary	32	24	80.0	60.0
Secondary	2	0	5.0	0.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Main activities</b>				
Peasant farming	29	8	72.5	20.0
Conduct small business & peasant farming	10	1	25.0	2.5
Peasant farming & livestock keeping	1	31	2.5	77.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>How time is spent</b>				
On domestic & business activities	9	1	22.5	2.5
On domestic/farming/h arvesting activities	30	7	75.0	17.5
On domestic & looking after livestock	0	1	0.0	2.5
On domestic/farming/h arvesting/ livestock	1	31	2.5	77.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

#### 4.1.5 Usage of time

The study was also interested to establish how women spend their time during the day in the village. It was thought that through this

approach, the extent to which they are involved in decision-making process that affects their lives will be known. In their response, the majority in Mvomero district (75%) mentioned that most of their time was spent on domestic, farming and harvesting activities depending on time of the year, while most respondents in Bahi District (77.5%) indicated that their time was spent on domestic, farming, harvesting and looking after livestock as shown in Table 4.2. Their responses indicate that women in the study areas spent their time on activities that are meant to sustain the families and not on decision-making process that would lead to their empowerment.

#### **4.2 Participation of Women in Decision-Making Organs**

Since the overall objective of the study was to assess the extent to which women are involved in the decision-making process related to socio-economic development in their communities, the study assessed participation of women in decision-making organs. In their response to the question which wanted them to indicate whether women participate in decision-making process concerning the development activities that take place in their community or village, all of them indicated that they sometimes participate. They further mentioned that women are represented in various development committees such as schools, health, water etc as shown in Table 4.3. However, when their proportion in relation to that of men was asked in those committees, the majority (75% in Mvomero and 72.5% in Bahi) indicated that it was less than one-third as shown in Table 4.3. About a quarter (25% in Mvomero and 27.5% in Bahi) mentioned that their proportion was less than a half. These findings indicate that women will not have a voice in decision-making process due to their limited number, particularly when it comes to voting. The respondents mentioned that their attendance was irregular in meetings to discuss developmental activities mostly due to lack of time as a result of heavy workload at home, meetings being called

at inconvenient time and due to the fact that their views are normally not sought as shown in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3: Participation of Women in Decision-Making Process**

<b>Do women participate in decision-making</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		<b>Percentage</b>	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Yes-sometimes	40	40	100.0	100.0
No	0	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Are women represented in various committees</b>				
Yes	40	40	100.0	100.0
No	0	0	0.0	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Their proportion in relation to men in committees</b>				
Less than one-fifth	2	0	5.0	0.0
Less than one-quarter	9	12	22.5	30.0
Less than one-third	19	17	47.5	42.5
Less than half	10	11	25.0	27.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Reasons for non-attendance</b>				
Heavy workload at home	15	17	37.5	42.5
Meetings called at inconvenient time	13	11	32.5	27.5
Views normally not sought	12	12	30.0	30.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Those who attend , do they participate equally as men</b>				
Yes	0	0	0.0	0.0
No	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Reasons for unequal participation</b>				
Women feel shy to talk infront of men	18	20	45.0	50.0
Women believe that men are their representatives	9	14	22.5	35.0

Their culture restricts them to talk in front of men	0	1	0.0	2.5
Their views not sought during meetings	13	5	32.5	12.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>What made them to be in that position</b>				
Low education	21	30	52.5	75.0
Low status caused by poverty and low education	3	1	7.5	2.5
Ignorance and low education	16	9	40.0	22.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

The study further asked the respondents whether on occasions when they attend the meetings, they participate equally as men during discussions. In their reply, all of them mentioned that their participation was low as shown in Table 4.3 by citing the following reasons: women feel shy to talk in-front of men, women believe that men are their representatives, their views are not sought during meetings and that their culture restricts them to talk in-front of men. They further explained that, what made them to be in that position was their low education, ignorance and low status as summarized in Table 4.3. During focus group discussion, one male respondent at Ibihwa village in Bahi District had this to say:

Women participate more in development activities than men. This is partly due to the fact that all development activities target the welfare of the community and women are more concerned about the family than men. The only problem is that some women do not attend community meetings and if they attend some of them do not give their views. This is mainly due to the fact that women feel shy to talk in-front of men. Majority of men do not value development activities in the village unless they are forced by government officials to participate.

### **4.3 Income from main activities done by Women**

Women become more empowered when they have income of their own that they can use for their development and that of the family. The study asked respondents whether through the activities that they do on daily basis earn some income. In their response, about one-third (42.5% in Mvomero and 30% in Bahi) mentioned that they earn some income while the rest (57.5% in Mvomero and 70% in Bahi) who are the majority indicated that no income was earned as shown in Table 4.4. This clearly indicates that the activities that women do at grassroots level does not empower them. The study further found that the majority (58.8% in Mvomero and 75% in Bahi) of those who earn some income out of activities they do on daily basis do not control them. Those who mentioned that they control the income were relatively many (41.2% in Mvomero District compared to only 25% in Bahi District) as shown in Table 4.4. The study had indicated earlier that some women in Mvomero District were also involved in conducting small businesses unlike those in Bahi District who do not conduct any business. It is generally very difficult for women to own income through sale of cattle or grains compared to income earned through small businesses due to the fact that family resources are normally owned by men. It is thus not surprising to find almost twice the women in Mvomero District controlling the income they earn compared to their counterparts in Bahi District. Moreover, the study found a highly significant association ( $\chi^2 = 29.000$ ;  $p=0.000$  for Mvomero and  $\chi^2 = 34.000$ ;  $p=0.000$ ) between marital status of respondents and the control over income when tested at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This suggests that widowed women had more control over income than married women. While other studies have shown that widowed women are more disadvantaged than married ones since all properties that belong to the household including land are taken by relatives of the deceased husband (Ali, 2008; UNDP, 2008), this study focused only on income arising



from the activities done at the household level. According to Mlole (2009), while women are the major agricultural producers; customary laws prevent them from owning land they work on. Married women are not allowed to transact property without their husband’s permission, whereas, husbands do not have to consult their wives. Those respondents who mentioned that they earn some income from the activities they were doing indicated that they used it as follows: to buy clothes, school uniform and other family requirements; buy food, clothes, pay school fees and other family requirements; husband takes it where he uses part on family requirements and to buy food, clothes and other family requirements as summarized in Table 4.4.

**Table 4.4: Income from main activities**

Earn income from main activities (Table 4.2)	Frequency		Percentage	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Yes	17	12	42.5	30.0
No	23	28	57.5	70.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Do you control the earned income?</b>				
Yes	7	3	41.2	25.0
No	10	9	58.8	75.0
Total	17	12	100.0	100.0
<b>How is that income used?</b>				
Buy clothes/school uniform/family requirements	11	8	64.7	66.7
Buy food/clothes/school fee/uniform/family req.	4	0	23.5	0.0
Husband takes & uses part on family requirements	2	4	11.8	33.3
Buy food/clothes & other family requirements	0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	17	12	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

In Tanzania, it is estimated that women especially rural women provide 80 percent of labour force in rural areas and produce 60 percent of food production. Though, they are the main producers of cash crops, the environment do not allow them to own their own wealth (URT, 2009).

#### **4.4 Obstacles faced by women in their endeavour to develop themselves**

The existing laws in Tanzania and in most developing countries do not discriminate women in development processes. However, customary laws which are deep-rooted in most culture in Tanzania favour men in aspects like land ownership, distribution of wealth and workload. Through this process, women have remained marginalized and since majority of them have low education, they have been unable to demand their rights. A lot of efforts have been made by the government of Tanzania to empower women including those in rural areas. Some of these efforts include: their representation in various decision-making organs, repeal of discriminatory laws and bringing social services nearer so as to improve their health (URT, 2009). Following these efforts, the study wanted to establish obstacles that were currently faced by women at grassroots level in their endeavour to develop themselves and their families. In their response, the majority of them (75% in Mvomero and 67.5% in Bahi) mentioned lack of income generating activities. The other reasons given include too much dependence on subsistence farming and livestock keeping and lack of alternative sources of income due to their low education as summarized in Table 4.5.

**Table 4.5: Obstacles faced by women in their endeavour to develop themselves**

Obstacles	Frequency		Percentage	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Lack of income generating activities	30	27	75.0	67.5
Too much dependence on subsistence/livestock keeping	1	11	2.5	27.5
Lack of alternative sources due to low education	6	1	15.0	2.5
Lack of support from husband	2	1	5.0	2.5
Too much dependence on subsistence farming	1	0	2.5	0.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

During focus group discussions, one male respondent at Kipera in Mvomero District commented as follows:

Women face several obstacles to develop themselves. Most of them depend on subsistence farming and due to unreliable rainfall their energy is wasted. They spend most of their time looking for means of feeding the family. Firewood and water is not readily available. They cannot do any business in this area that can assist them. The government has ignored us.

#### **4.5 Awareness concerning Development Activities in the Community**

The Local Government Reform Programme (LGRP) in Tanzania which covered four areas, namely: political decentralization, financial decentralization, administrative decentralization and changed central-local relations was meant to empower people at the grassroots level (Othman and Liviga, 2002). The most important, intended links between the local government and the

residents of the given area are the Vitongojis in the rural areas and the urban Mtaa committees, which are designed to mobilise citizen participation in local development. Priorities for local service delivery and development projects are brought to the Mtaa committees for discussion before being forwarded to the Ward Development Committee (WDC). In the rural system proposals reach the WDC via the village council (Othman and Liviga, 2002). Since in section 4.2 of this report, it was explained that the participation of women in decision-making was low, the study wanted to establish whether women are aware about development activities that take place in their community. In their response, all of them mentioned that they are aware about development activities and that they are involved in all village projects as shown in Table 4.6. The majority of them (72.5% in Mvomero and 75% in Bahi) further indicated that their participation in development projects was equal to that of men, while about one-quarter (27.5% in Mvomero and 25% in Bahi) pointed out that their participation was more as shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6: Awareness about Development Activities**

Are women aware about development activities	Frequency		Percentage	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Yes	40	40	100.0	100.0
No	0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Are women involved in development activities</b>				
Yes	40	40	100.0	100.0
No	0	0	0.0	0.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Do women participate equally as men</b>				
Yes	29	30	72.5	75.0
No – Women participate more	11	10	27.5	25.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

These findings suggest that women despite their heavy workload at home are equally or more involved than men in development activities. During focus group discussions, some women explained that they are more concerned about development projects than men since the projects to a large extent lead to reduction in morbidity or mortality and some projects are meant to assist their children to live a better life in future.

#### **4.6 Importance of education for their children beyond primary school level**

Education is a key determinant of the lifestyle and status an individual enjoys in a society. Education provides people with knowledge and skills that can lead them to a better quality of life. Studies have consistently shown that educational attainment has a strong effect on empowering women (UNFPA, 2005; UNICEF, 2006). In view of the above, the study asked women respondents whether they support or value education for their daughters beyond primary education. Focus was deliberately made on education for girls since they are the future mothers. Once girls are empowered by providing them with secondary education, it is likely that they will have a say in decision-making process concerning development activities at their community unlike their mothers as explained in section 4.2 of this report. In their response, majority of them in Mvomero District (67.5%) mentioned that they support education for their daughters beyond primary education while in Bahi District most of them (80%) indicated that they do not support as summarized in Table 4.7. It is rather surprising to note that majority of women in Bahi do not support education for their girl child. Most likely this is due to the fact that most of them are not involved in any business and probably they have not seen girls who have excelled academically. In Bahi District, girls are mostly involved in fetching water and looking for fire woods. The area has scarcity of

water unlike Mvomero District which has relatively reliable water. One of the wards where the study was conducted in Mvomero is Mhonda which was categorized as mixed ward according to the 2002 Population and Housing Census. The other ward which was categorized as rural (Mlali) is close to Mzumbe University. It is thus not surprising for the women in Mvomero to admire education for their children, particularly for girls.

During focus group discussions at Kipera in Mvomero District, women in the group commented that they value education for their children. The problem is that some children do not value education. Some conduct small businesses while others involve themselves in illegal activities such as bhang smoking and prostitution. Distance to school and lack of dormitories for girls make some of them to get pregnancy. Others stop going to school due to peer pressure from their colleagues and after realizing that those who complete school are not better-off compared to them. Community secondary schools do not have sufficient teachers, books and other facilities that can make students pass their examinations. Most of them are also unable to pay school fees and uniform due to their poverty. Respondents from both districts when asked why some women do not value education for their daughters mentioned the following reasons as summarized in Table 4.7: They have not seen the benefits of educating girls beyond primary level, will miss assistance on domestic chores if girls are in schools and secondary education is expensive. The study further indicated that all women (100.0%) in both districts do not want their children, particularly girls, to live the way they lived. When asked what should be done to make their children, particularly girls, to live a better life in future mentioned that they should be provided with free secondary education. They further suggested that girls should stay in dormitories after building dormitories for girls who are in secondary schools. Their views are shown in Table 4.7. Moreover, all female respondents mentioned the potential benefits of educating girls beyond

primary school level as: limited number of children that they can managed to feed; increased freedom to make decisions; more participation in decision-making process and that they will be able to assist their parents and community at large.

**Table 4.7 Education for girls beyond primary level**

<b>Do women value education for girls beyond primary</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		<b>Percentage</b>	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Yes	27	8	67.5	20.0
No	13	32	32.5	80.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>For those who do not support, what are the reasons</b>				
Have not seen benefit from girl's education	14	18	35.0	45.0
Will miss assistance on domestic chores	12	14	30.0	35.0
Secondary education expensive for them	14	8	35.0	20.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Do women want their children (particularly girls) to live the way they lived</b>				
Yes	0	0	0.0	0.0
No	40	40	100.0	100.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>What should be done to make your children (particularly girls) live better life in future</b>				
Provide free sec. education & let them live in dormitories	39	40	97.5	100.0
Build dormitories for girls who are in secondary schools	1	0	2.5	0.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

<b>Potential benefits for educating girls beyond primary level</b>				
Will have limited no. of children/freedom to make decisions/can assist their parents & community at large	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

Majority of the respondents in both districts (77.5% in Mvomero and 85% in Bahi) indicated that the nearest primary school from their residence was 2 kms or more but less than 5 kms, while the rest (22.5% in Mvomero and 15% in Bahi) mentioned that it was less than 2 kms as shown in Table 4.8. All respondents mentioned that long distance to closest secondary school was one of the factors that hinder children from pursuing education beyond primary level. Majority of them in both districts (70% in Mvomero and 80% in Bahi) mentioned that the nearest secondary school was 5 kms or more from their residence as shown in Table 4.8. The rest (30% in Mvomero and 20% in Bahi) indicated that it was more than 2 kms but less than 5 kms.

**Table 4.8 Distance to school and its consequences to children**

<b>Nearest Primary School</b>	<b>Frequency</b>		<b>Percentage</b>	
	Mvomero	Bahi	Mvomero	Bahi
Less than 2 kms	9	6	22.5	15.0
2 kms or more but less than 5 kms	31	34	77.5	85.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Nearest Secondary School</b>				
More than 2 kms but less than 5 kms	12	8	30.0	20.0
5 kms or more	28	32	70.0	80.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Consequences of long distances to children</b>				
Remain dependent	8	5	20.0	12.5



Embark on illegal activities	2	3	5.0	7.5
Girls get pregnancy	14	17	35.0	42.5
Girls are forced to early marriages	3	4	7.5	10.0
Girls get pregnancy & forced to early marriages	13	11	32.5	27.5
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Completed primary but not gone to secondary</b>				
Yes	38	36	95.0	90.0
No	2	4	5.0	10.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Activities done by girls who have not gone to secondary</b>				
Farming and domestic chores	21	22	52.5	55.0
Domestic chores	19	18	47.5	45.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0
<b>Activities done by boys who have not gone to secondary</b>				
Farming activities and small businesses	39	2	97.5	5.0
Farming and looking after livestock	1	38	2.5	95.0
Total	40	40	100.0	100.0

**Source:** Study survey, 2011.

Girls were mentioned to be mostly affected by this factor. The possible consequences of the long distance to their children was mentioned as: children remain dependent, engage in illegal activities, girls get pregnancy, girls are forced into early marriages and girls get pregnancy and are forced to early marriages as summarized in Table 4.8. The study further found that majority of children in both districts (95% in Mvomero and 90% in Bahi) who completed primary schools had not gone to secondary schools as shown in Table 4.8. The majority of girls who had not gone to secondary schools, do farming activities and other domestic chores in both districts (52.5% in Mvomero and 55% in Bahi), while the rest (47.5% in Mvomero and 45% in Bahi) were engaged in domestic chores such as fetching water and looking for fire wood. Moreover, it was found that majority of boys in

Mvomero District (97.5%) were said to be engaged in farming activities and in conducting small businesses while in Bahi District, most of them (95%) were engaged in farming and looking after livestock as shown in Table 4.8.

#### **4.7 Empowerment of Women in the Community**

Since this study was mainly concerned with empowerment of women at grassroots level, opinion was sought from them and from men during focus group discussions. Suggestions were further sought from key informants who included: District Community Development Officers, District Education Officers, District Administrative Secretaries in the two Districts and from FINCA and PRIDE (T) officials. Women were requesting assistance of the Government to provide them with loans in the rural areas so that they can start small businesses. They further requested for free education to their children who are in secondary schools. According to them, the little that they get from their daily activities is mostly spent on schooling children. Men were of the view that quality of the community secondary schools be improved so that their children can advance to higher levels. They suggested that dormitories for girls can reduce the incidence of pregnancy and early marriage for girls.

The key informants suggested that campaigns towards importance of education (particularly girl education) among the community are crucial for women empowerment. The educated boys and girls are likely to ignore all socio-cultural factors that contribute in the subordination of women. They further suggested that women should be encouraged to form small business groups so that stakeholders can easily support them. Officials of FINCA and PRIDE (T) mentioned that their NGOs have been providing loans to women entrepreneurs. They mentioned that rural women rarely seek financial assistance from them. Once encouraged to form business groups, the Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) will be ready to assist them.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concludes that women in the two Districts sometimes participate in decision-making process concerning development activities that take place in their community or village through attending the meetings called by their leaders. However, their attendance was generally poor due to lack of time as a result of heavy workload at home, meetings called at inconvenient time and due to the fact that their views are normally not sought. Even in cases where they attend the meetings, their participation was low due to the following cited reasons: women feel shy to talk in-front of men; women believe that men are their representatives, their views are not sought during meetings and that their culture restricts them to talk in-front of men. The study found that what made them to be in that position was their low education, ignorance and low status. This suggests that women in both districts are not empowered otherwise if they were empowered some of the reasons which they mentioned for their low participation in meetings wouldn't have been there. It is further concluded that women are represented in various development committees such as schools, health, water etc. Their proportion in relation to that of men in the committees was found to be less than one-third in most cases. These findings indicate that women will not have a voice in decision-making process due to their limited number, particularly when it comes to voting. Again, this suggests that women are not empowered at grassroots level in the two districts. The study recommends that men at grassroots level be sensitized to support women in their endeavour to empower themselves. Once that is done, they can support them in projects started by women and shoulder part of workload currently carried by women. It is further recommended that women be encouraged to form small business groups. Through that process, they can easily be assisted by various stakeholders to get financial support and technical skills to conduct business at a profit. In addition,

stakeholders should consider building dormitories for girls who are in secondary schools. Majority of girls fail to complete their secondary education due to pregnancy resulting from their interaction with men while going or coming from school. A long distance to school exacerbates the situation.

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