

Södertörns högskola | School of Life Sciences  
Bachelor's Thesis 15 ECTS | Development and International  
Cooperation Spring 2008

# Women and traditional organizations

– A study on traditionally organized women in  
Babati District

By: Sara Hallal  
Supervisor: Lise-Lotte Hallman

## Abstract

The purpose of the study is to examine women and men's perspective on the informal and traditional way for women to organize themselves in relation to formalization. To meet the aims of the thesis qualitative studies through interviews concerning a *protest march* that took place in 2003 Dareda village were performed, and a literature study to supplement the empirical data. Thereafter the purpose was analyzed through both feminist theory and empowerment theory. A majority of both the men and the women were positive opinions towards the traditional way for women to be organized. This might go against the feminist theory and verify that only negative statements are brought up within the feminist discourse. Through this tradition women collectively claim specific rights, because they are more powerful together than individually, but also under the banner of motherhood or as women. In relation to the process of development the women are being hindered from protesting more frequently and urged to act within the formal framework. Their major obstacles with the formalization concerns to the judicial system and some of them claim that corruption will prevent justice for them as women.

Keywords: Informal organization, formalization, feminist theory, empowerment theory

## Table of Contents

1 Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background .....	5
1.2 Formulation of problem .....	6
1.3 Purpose.....	7
1.4 Research questions .....	7
2 Theory .....	7
2.1 Feminist theory and gender.....	8
2.2 Empowerment theory.....	9
3 Method .....	10
3.1 Interviews.....	10
3.2 Literature study .....	11
4 Empirical data .....	14
5 Result .....	17
5.1 Analysis.....	17
5.1.1 Men’s perspectives on traditionally organized women.....	17
5.1.2 Women’s perspective and motivations .....	18
5.1.3 Empowerment and moving from the traditional to the formal .....	19
6 Discussion .....	20
7 Conclusion .....	22
8 List of references.....	24
9 Appendix.....	25
9.1 Interview questions to the informants.....	25
9.1.1 Interview questions to Selena Martin: .....	25
9.1.2 Interview questions to the individual and the group interviews for the women: .....	26
9.1.3 Interview questions to the individual and group interviews with the men: ....	26

## 1 Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNHDR) states that everyone has the right to take part in the government of her or his country. To achieve both a transparent and accountable government and sustainable development the empowerment of women in the public sphere as well as enhancement of economic and social status is fundamental. According to the declaration the structure of power relation as it is today prevents women from fulfilling their lives on both individual as well as public levels. It continues by stating that through achievement of equal contribution of women and men in decision-making processes would present a society that is more balanced and rightly, which is needed in order to build up stronger democracy and improved functioning. The declaration assert that women's presence in the public sphere are vital for the improvement of women's rights in general, not only because of the demand for justice or democracy but also to guarantee that their needs and opinions are taken into account. As conclusion it states that development, equality and peace cannot be achieved if women are not part of the decision-making at all levels<sup>1</sup>.

The Universal Declaration says that nation states have not only established significant leadership in communities and informal organizations but also in public office however the negative stereotyping of men and women still makes decision-making a male dominated sphere. In a sense, women are furthermore prevented from having impact on key institutions due to the lack of inclusion in areas such as culture, sports, media, education and law. The Declaration says that women have gained access to power through alternative structures such as Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) for the most parts, due to their limited right in political parties, trade unions and employer organisations. Women therefore have been able to articulate their interests and opinions and place themselves on the agendas both national and international through NGO's and grass-roots organisations according to the Universal Declaration<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup>The United Nations fourth world conference on Women, Beijing 1995

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. 1995

## 1.1 Background

Tanzania is one of the world's poorest countries and their struggle for independence started in the 1920 and in 1961 Tanganyika claimed their independence. Three years later in 1964 Tanganyika and Zanzibar formed the union called the United Republic of Tanzania. Today Tanzania is considered by the World Bank (WB) and other donors to be developing in a "good" way<sup>3</sup>. The Government of Tanzania has ratified The Convention on Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and it also recognises that gender equality is a matter of Human Rights and a requirement for social justice<sup>4</sup>. Traditionally according to the Tanzanian Government, the position of women in their country has been low compared to men, meaning that traditionally women were not expected to take part in the public sphere in decision- making processes, from the domestic level to the national level. The Government also states that men are considered in families to be the head of households and that these patriarchal structures limits women to influence in the private sphere. This attitude also reinforces the former attitude with fewer women on high status positions and thereby generates less influence on elections, meaning that they are not impacting on decision- making and planning<sup>5</sup>.

Tanzania has since the independence made efforts to distinguish the role of women and are continuously providing opportunities for their participation in the public sphere, although statistics confirm that these women to a large extent still are economically and politically excluded from it.<sup>6</sup> According to the Government regulations have been modified and improved, positive actions has been taken to include women in decision- making. In the election of 2000 women were assured 33% of seats in the local Government Councils and in the Union Government Parliament they were assured 20 % of the seats. Extra efforts were taken by using media campaigns and public meetings to raise awareness to make sure that women went to register for the elections, both as voters as well as candidates.

The Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania recognizes women's capacity and that they have the right to participate in politics, the right to vote and candidate in elections to be equal between women and men<sup>7</sup>. NGO's in Tanzania are working for the enhancement of women and for their right to be included. Changes are coming about, for example with a larger number of women being elected to Parliament in 2005. However not all women are seeking their way into the public sphere through

---

<sup>3</sup> Swedish Regeringskansli 2008, Johan Rydberg

<sup>4</sup>Official online gateway of the United Republic of Tanzania, Retrieved 2008-05-10

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Retrieved 2008-05-10

<sup>6</sup> Katherine A. Snyder, *Mothers on March* 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>7</sup>Official online gateway of the United Republic of Tanzania, Retrieved 2008-05-10

nongovernmental organizations<sup>8</sup>. Other alternative ways to influence decision-makers, exist and in 1996 mothers from the village Bashnet in Babati district northern Tanzania made a protest march in order change their situation they went to see Prime Minister. They had complaints about male primary schoolteachers who were making their daughters pregnant. When protests on village and district levels did not result in changes the women used the traditional way of organization to resolve the problem. A similar incident happened in Murray village in 2000 where the women protested against illegal “hard” alcohol<sup>9</sup>.

In Tanzania formalization is a fact. Laws and policies are being implemented to bring up women’s rights. The consequence of this for women who are organized already, in this case traditionally, are that these women sense that their possibilities to influence decision-makers within their tradition is being limited.

## 1.2 Formulation of problem

Iraqw women from northern Tanzania are claim influence the decision-makers directly through their status of being mothers and through an informal traditional way<sup>10</sup>. Studies about the traditional way for women to organize themselves have been done before and they show that women through this kind of organization are able to regain and maintain their role in the public sphere as well as private sphere<sup>11</sup>. The formalisation process in Tanzania brings up a paradox for the women that are organized traditionally. On one hand the old tradition can be viewed as oppressing where women might not have certain rights, in this sense formalization could mean that the Tanzanian government has obligations to protect the women by laws and policies. But on the other hand the effects of formalization could become oppressing, meaning that women who are traditionally organized will become more marginalized in the public sphere or having to fight more for their rights. The consequence of this modernization is that these women are more often being hindered from organizing themselves in the customary way and urged to act within the “formal” organizations. These women’s movement could also be referred to as a patriarchal power conflict between women and men through

---

<sup>8</sup> Katherine A. Snyder, *Mothers on March* 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 10.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 1. Retrieved 2008-04-17

feminist theory, although it often fails to capture the opinions of men in this declared struggle. It might be claimed by some that third world women are not aware of their rights and subordinated by their men. In 2003 women from Dareda (Babati District) influenced the government directly through their traditional way to be organized, a protest march against taxes was carried out and through this they accomplished a change. It is therefore interesting to examine how these women and men experience these issues.

### 1.3 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to examine women and men's perspective on the informal and traditional way for women to organize themselves in relation to formalization.

### *1.4 Research questions*

- 1.) How do women and men perceive the traditional way for women to organize themselves?
- 2.) What motivates women to continue with the informal and traditional way to organize them?
- 3.) How does formalisation affect the traditional way for women to organize themselves?

## 2 Theory

Two theories are used to analyze the purpose and research questions of the thesis. Feminist theory is used to describe the patriarchal structure that subordinates women and excludes them from the public sphere and empowerment theory is used to explain how marginalized and powerless groups, operate in the society and can gain power by formulating mutual interests and act collectively.

## 2.1 Feminist theory and gender

Feminist theory is based on two vital assumptions. Firstly that women are subordinated to men, secondly that this subordination needs to change. The theory is considered as a political and intellectual movement that focuses on patriarchy, the present social structure and the processes that makes women subordinated to men in every society. Due to the patriarchy men dominate high-powered positions and set the normative framework.

Sex and gender are closely related terms but are separated in gender theory; the term sex is often used to explain the biological belonging whereas gender describes the social sex constructed by the society. Gender does not refer to what women and men are due to their sex; instead it discusses the material and ideological relations between groups of people called "men" and "women" Gender theory focuses on the social construction of men and women, how the constructions is maintained and what the consequences are. The terms "masculine" and "feminine" in this sense are explained as constructions<sup>12</sup>. Looking back at the historical idea of men and women's characteristics, women were seen as more passive, sensitive and emotional whereas men were aggressive, objective and logical. These characteristics were and are used to subordinate women in what feminist theory refer to as patriarchy. Acknowledging that gender is social construction does not mean that it denies the physical existence of differences between men and women. However the theory clarifies our understandings of what is biological and what is influenced by culture<sup>13</sup>. Another interesting point that is brought up by gender theorists is about women as mothers, in this sense women can be seen as the slaves of reproduction or as heroines. The western ideal image of a mother is perceived as a self-sacrificing person that is always available to their child (and husband). She lives for others and her own needs and interests are secondary priorities, i.e. the image of the "good" woman<sup>14</sup>.

Those that criticize gender theory claim that differences between women have been discussed within gender internationally for years. One of these debates that are taking place in Sweden considers the importance of *who* a study is based on and *who* is performing the study. The former raises the question about how the selection is done and if the observations reflect differences in living conditions among women, meaning what is excluded or included in a research. In the question of who has made the

---

<sup>12</sup> Steans Jill, *Gender and international relations* 1998 page 7-8

<sup>13</sup> Ibid 1998 page 7-8

<sup>14</sup> Gemzöe Lena *Bildas ismer: Feminism* 2006 Page 101-102

study the critic is that the majority of these are white, heterosexual middleclass women, so called western feminists. These tend to prioritize the perspective that they are categorized in and does not consider class, sexuality and ethnicity to a greater extent and exclude a Third World perspective<sup>15</sup>.

## 2.2 Empowerment theory

The theory of empowerment is often used in the field of social development; it focuses on marginalised and powerless groups in the society<sup>16</sup>. The term empowerment has become a subject for debate and is used in numerous of different contexts. Through the social field the meaning of it can be described in terms of greater self power, participation. Empowerment also points out that an increased level of consciousness and ability leads to confidence and self trust. It is a strategy for vulnerable groups to gain power and a process that occurs at individual and collective level<sup>17</sup>. Empowerment can be used to characterize certain relations such as in households, between poor people and other actors at global level. Also gender differences are significant regarding causes, forms and consequences of empowerment<sup>18</sup>. The first step for empowerment is social mobilisation, which means that through collective actions people engage to increase their influence and gain the power to affect other groups in the society. Thereby an individual who, together with others, are able to formulate their own goals and interests and through the group attain and practice power can be empowered<sup>19</sup>.

Measuring empowerment can be done through analyzing the social mobilisation of how people are organised, why they organize and what goals the group have. It can also be done by analysing how the group is received in the society and the group's impact<sup>20</sup>. To increase poor women and men's well being, security and self-confidence a variety of material resources and capabilities are needed to increase their possibilities to negotiate with those in power. Capabilities allow people to use their resources in a way to increase their well-being. Material resources are referred to as both financial and physical resources and it includes land, housing, livestock, savings and jewellery. By having these material assets it can increase their capacity to negotiate fair deals for themselves. Good health, education, production and other "life enhancing" capacities are referred to as human capabilities. There are also social capabilities such as belonging, relations of trust, leadership, a sense of identity and the

---

<sup>15</sup> Mulinarim, Sandell och Schömer *Mer än bara kvinnor och män*, 2003 page 13

<sup>16</sup> Forsberg, Starrin *Frigörande kraft: empowerment som modell i skola, omsorg och arbetsliv*, 1997 page 9

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 1997 page 10

<sup>18</sup> Narayan, Deepa *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A source book*, 2002 page 14

<sup>19</sup> Forsberg, Starrin *Frigörande kraft: empowerment som modell i skola, omsorg och arbetsliv*, 1997 page 9

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 1997 page 10

capacity to organize. Concerning the political capabilities it includes the ability to represent oneself or others, to form organizations and take part the political life in a community or country. The collective capability is crucial for poor people to overcome problems with small or no resources and marginalization in society since and their individual voices and power are limited<sup>21</sup>.

### 3 Method

To meet the aims of this thesis, qualitative studies and a case study was made during a three weeks field study in Babati District, Tanzania. To supplement the thesis a literature study was carried out. The intention with these methods is to create profound knowledge within a limited subject, in this case a certain incident (The tax protest). The study is more qualitative since the collected data was gathered by the author in the social context of the informants to capture the people's actions and meaning to get general impression of the topic.<sup>22</sup> A qualitative method can therefore offer a more specific analyze on a given phenomena. Eight semi-structured interviews were completed in a village called Dareda. In this type of interviewing method the informants were not obliged to certain answering alternatives instead the interviews were built on fixed questions about the subject and the informant were allowed to talk freely about the subject. In Dareda village the majority of the people are Iraqws by tribe and worked as farmers. The women that were interviewed were working mothers and fathers. When selecting informants it was required that these needed to be married couples, were the wives involved in the protest march, and if possible in different ages and with dissimilar occupations. The empirical data from the interviews will be analyzed through feminism and empowerment theory.

#### 3.1 Interviews

The first interview with the Spokes woman of Dareda village, Selena Martin detailed information about the incident of the protest march 2003 could be gathered. The selected informants had to be involved in the protest by some means and preferably be married. One group interview and two individual interviews with women that had taken part in the protest were carried out. The intention was

---

<sup>21</sup> Narayan, Deepa *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A source book*, 2002 page 14-15

<sup>22</sup> Nationalencyklopedin 2008-05-21

also to interview their husband's therefore one group interview and two individual interviews were conducted with men.

A decision to make a second group interview with men derived from having problems with the interpretation in the first interview, making it less reliable. The second group interview was therefore vital even though it meant that the informants were not married to the women in the earlier group interview. They were connected to the incident either through their wives or other family members. This could be considered both as a strength and weakness. The strength would be the inclusion of their views on the traditional way for women to organize themselves and their opinions about the situation of formalisation. The weakness would be that these interviews did not include the opinions of their wives or sisters. Another weakness to consider is problems that can occur when having an interpreter, the difficulties to know if the communications between informants, researcher and interpreter was functioning. This also meant that some of the "small talk" that could have been informative for the studies might have been left out. To avoid that some important information was left out, clarification of the questions and answers needed. The following discussion with the interpreter about the answers can also generate further questions about the subject.

Reliability and the quality of the interviews differed depending on the performance of the interview and the possibility for the informants to answer separately and honestly. By separating the women and the men from each other during the interviews an attempt to increase the possibilities for them to give answer independently was made. The literature presented below is used when analysing both the empirical data and the chosen theories.

### 3.2 Literature study

One of the major concerns and weaknesses is that there is not so much written about the traditional way for women to organize themselves that includes a wider perspective on both women and men's opinion of the phenomena and in relation to formalization. This limits the research and what is concluded in this context might not be valid in another.

Concerning the chosen literature a crucial article of [Katherine A. Snyder](#), "Mothers on March", where she studies women (Iraqis) in rural areas of Tanzania and their marches for change was used. The article focuses on women and especially mothers that through the marches achieve a moral authority to act collectively and thereby redefine gender characteristics and roles. In the article she

claims that many women use their role as mothers to enter the public sphere and that it is spread throughout the world. For example women in Mexico are engaged in political activities under “the banner of motherhood”. This phenomenon can also be found in Iran. Snyder states that

*“While motherhood may be a source of activism in different settings around the world, clearly the meaning of motherhood differs greatly according to the ethnographic location.”<sup>23</sup>.*

Snyder also discusses about a need for Western feminists in other societies to look beyond their “cultural blinkers” meaning when analyzing gender. She also states if “we”, meaning western feminists, have the ability to accept different ideas of justice and what we consider to be the best way to influence.<sup>24</sup> Snyder critiques the gender constructions formed by Western feminist that are applied on non-Western societies, not only for being homogenising but also for victimizing and considering them as powerless<sup>25</sup>.

Another important perspective that she discusses is that the colonial era brought with it a tradition of a new colonial public sphere that women were excluded from, meaning that right of power was gender-based and that politics was for men<sup>26</sup>. Snyder also refer to one comment that, according to her, is a complaint that she has heard throughout the field studies that she has made. Lars Hagborg interviewed a 72 year old man from Karatu district in 1990 to uplift men’s perspective on women and this man claims that the Iraqw women:

*“are almost like children. If you are not serious with them, then they will neglect many things in the house. They will not be busy. You will see that everything is carelessly done and without order. . . . Other houses will consider the father of that house to be dead even though he is alive, because it is the woman who makes the decision, and this is not allowed in Iraqw tradition.”<sup>27</sup>.*

Another author that discusses western feminism is Chandra Talpade Mohanty and according to her third world feminist movements need to deal with two evident matters; On one hand they need to criticise the hegemonic “western” feminism by deconstructing it, on the other hand they need to formulate their own independent goals and strategies that have geographical, historical and cultural origins by their own construction. These two matters need to be treated at the same time because if they

---

<sup>23</sup> Snyder Katherine A , *Mothers on March* 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>24</sup> Ibid 2006 page 10.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid2006 page 3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 10.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 8.

are not, Mohanty claims that third world feminist movements will become marginalized by the political (left- right) discourse as well as by the western feminist discourse<sup>28</sup>.

She therefore draws attention to how the “third world woman” is described as a homogeneous and monopolistic subject through texts written by western feminists. These texts represent the feministic interests that are defined in the USA and in Western Europe. Mohanty argues that in order to formulate and understand feminist movements in the third world western feminism discourse to a larger extent should be opposed by putting attention on how textual strategies that codifies “the others” i.e. non-westerns and themselves as westerns. She has three analytical assumptions:

- 1) When considering women as a homogenous group that share the same interests and goals without class, ethnicity or race differences, assumes a theory about gender- and sex differences that be applied universally and cross-culturally.
- 2) On a methodological the researcher remains uncritical towards the “evidence” of these homogenous assumptions of the third world woman as being universal and cross-culturally valid.
- 3) There are specific and political assumptions that constitute the basis for a lot of feministic researchers these are reflected in the research methodologies and analytical strategies, meaning the power and struggle that they insist on exists<sup>29</sup>.

Ann S. Walker discusses the role of women’s movement and its impact on development. She describes the activities of the movements on different levels such as; international, regional, national and local level and her aim is to show how, in general, women activism and organizational skills are not included on the development. Walker claims that women’s movement, regardless the level they act on have been excluded in the history of development. A major reason that she points out, especially for women in “the south”, is that they have not recorded so much about their activism and organized efforts to claim their rights<sup>30</sup>. Therefore she describes different levels of women activism and what they have accomplished through their organization. For instance at local level: a Crisis Centre in Suva Fiji is the result of local women activist that recognised the need for women to have somewhere to stay in cases of rape, beatings and other violation towards women. Walker imply that a serious discussion about gender

---

<sup>28</sup> Mohanty Chandra Talapade *Feminism utan gränser* 2006 page 33

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 2006 page 33-34

<sup>30</sup> Parpart Jane: *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development* 2000 Page 191-192

and development will not occur if women's movements are not acknowledged and that they still have a crucial role in development<sup>31</sup>.

#### 4 Empirical data

The women in Dareda village have a unique way to organize themselves and that is due to a tradition that has been brought upon them by their mothers and grandmothers since they were young. It is an empowering way to make an impact and it can lead to influential changes for them when they organize together instead of separately. They believe that they learn from each other's problems, get experience and also feel secure through the other women's support by this form of organization. This tradition allows the women to act and respond in a situation where a woman has been raped, beaten by her son or daughter or even if a woman is not taking care of the household. They initiate an act by making a certain sound with their mouth. When the women in the village hear the sound they are obligated to meet with the other women and together discuss what has happened. Through these meetings the women decide whether or not there is a need for them to react on the certain matter. If the women believe that an action is essential order to deal with the situation, they first have to ask for permission to react from the Executive Officer. Depending on the answer they can act or not, an action could be that the perpetrator is judged by a traditional court that has the authority to punish or "curse" the person. A punishment can be that a person is forced to pay off the guilt with a bull. When the traditional judges are uncertain if a violation has occurred, they can "curse" a person and if he or she has committed a crime they will be punished by the occult. Both the women and men state that corruption increases with formalization, which means that if their rights are violated the perpetrator can "escape" from justice, therefore they feel more secure with the traditional justice system.

Through all the interviews it has been possible to conclude that the tax incident had happened and it verifies the traditional and informal way for these women to get organized and empowered. In 2003 there was an issue about too many taxes being forced upon the community, which lead to that the men escaped into the woods, leaving the women alone with the children and without money to pay the requested taxes. Due to this issue the women in Dareda village decided to react in the traditional and informal way to change their situations. The women made the certain sound with their mouth and started to gather. The discussion, lead to an organization and a protest plan was conducted. Eventually the

---

<sup>31</sup> Parpart Jane: *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development* 2000 Page 201-202

women made a protest march to a member of the parliament (MP) to state their opinions. The protest made such great impact on the MP that it was decided that four of the women were chosen to be representatives in a meeting with the Prime Minister in Dodoma to discuss the situation and how it could be changed. The result of this meeting led to some of the taxes being abolished. All the informants except one agreed that the protest started in a village called Bashnet in Babati district and then spread to Dareda village.

When interviewing the men about the tax case and the *protest march* of the all the informants except one agreed that the action taken by the women was positive and the right thing to do. The majority also expressed that they are supportive of women being organized in the informal traditional way.

One of my informants said:

*“I believe that it was the right thing to do, the women helped us. The voices of the women made the taxes change. In this way I am positive to the traditional system, women are stronger than men. Sometimes we (men) are discussing something but we do not reach a solution. So we tell the women to make the sound and when the women gather together we ask them if they can solve our problem.”*<sup>32</sup>

The informant that did not think that the action was positive said:

*“I do not think that it is good; there are other ways to protest. Like having someone representing the woman and that person can discuss with the village leaders. In that way women would not have to make a protest walk. My wife goes to other women meetings, but they have to tell the village leaders first. I usually allow my wife to go and I support her and protect her as long as village leaders are aware of their meetings. The traditions go against the formal system, and both women and men are changing. The people want laws rather than the traditional way of handling issues. I think that it is positive that things are becoming more formal”*<sup>33</sup>

They also emphasized that there are a lot of reasons for women to organize themselves in the traditional way, they mention the same reason as the women that women are more powerful when they act together.

---

<sup>32</sup> Baran Miyangy, Dareda village 2008-03-13

<sup>33</sup> Clement Matly, Dareda village 2008-03-13

The women's own opinions about the marches were:

*"It is easier to be heard, we are more powerful together than separate and we learn from each other so that we can solve our problems."*<sup>34</sup>

When discussing the situation of formalisation with the women and their opinions about it some of the informants expressed their concerns:

*"It is not good because it does not include all people of the society. The traditional way includes all people. I am afraid that if the traditional courts disappear it will mean that people do not get justice. Using the traditional courts as a way for women to get justice means that the court can put a curse on a person even without proof that he/she has committed a crime. And if the person actually has done the crime without confessing something bad will happen to him or her and if not, nothing will happen. In that way the person will get a punishment without involving the police and so on. The negative thing with traditional courts is when someone has been murdered, the punishment from the traditional court can be to give the family of the victim a bull and then justice has been accomplished. But if the formal way is used the person could get a longer and harder punishment."*<sup>35</sup>

Another informant stated that:

*"Together we are stronger. When we make the sound and we meet, we try to help the victim but only if they want the government and us to do not stop us. We do not like to be stopped and we feel that corruption is stopping us.*

*There was an incident of a woman getting raped, the woman died from the rape we believe. But in the hospital they said that she died from food poisoning. When we wanted to react the government stopped us. Things are getting more formal and the government wants us to go to the police but the system is corrupted."*<sup>36</sup>

The men also express a fear for the traditional system to disappear one of the men states his opinion:

*"I think that it is not good, because then the government can decide to give you a long punishment. And put you in incarceration for a long time. I do not want the traditional system to disappear."*<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Tumaini Patric, Dareda village 2008-03-11

<sup>35</sup> Spokes woman, Selena Martins Dareda village 2008-03-11

<sup>36</sup> Informant 1, Dareda village 2008-03-11

<sup>37</sup> Baran Miyangy, Dareda village 2008-03-13

## 5 Result

- 1.) Most of the men were positive to the traditional way for women to organize themselves. They support their wives and sisters and believe that it is important.
- 2.) According to the men, women have the right to protest when certain situations occur and they consider it to be their rights.
- 3.) The women traditionally organized because they are more powerful together. It also gives them the opportunity to exchange experiences with each other in order to solve their own problems.
- 4.) The women chose to organize themselves through a tradition that allows them to react when certain rights are being violated.
- 5.) Both the women and men express worries about the society becoming more formal, their most concerns are pointed to the modern judicial system and some of them claim that corruption will prevent justice.
- 6.) With the traditional courts people can be “judged” by a “curse” and if a person is guilty to a crime he or her will get its sentence.
- 7.) They also believe that formalized judicial system does not include all people of the society.

### 5.1 Analysis

#### 5.1.1 Men’s perspectives on traditionally organized women

The empirical data based on the interviews and literature studies reveals different opinions on men’s perspective of women that are organized traditionally. The men in the interviews had positive opinions about women’s engagement in the traditional organization, except one man who prefers the formal institutions instead of the traditional. Although saying that he supports his wife if the organization is done in a “good” way, he believes that there are better ways to be organized, meaning more formalized. Snyder’s article on the other hand points out a statement from 1990 from another author when interviewing 72 years old man giving a negative and distinct view that states women’s

subordination to men.<sup>38</sup> One can consider in what context the statement was made and if a change in opinions has occurred since the man was interviewed 16 years ago. Although the description of women as subordinated like stated by the interviewed man said, it is used a typical statement by western feminists to describe women's subordination to men in the "south".<sup>39</sup> Since these men expressed positive attitudes it is a contradiction to the predetermined assumptions claimed by feminist theories and against the patriarchal structure.

### 5.1.2 Women's perspective and motivations

According to the women from the empirical data they organize themselves through a tradition that allows them to do so when their rights have been violated. That makes them more powerful. Snyder claims in her article the interesting perspective that women organize themselves, but through their role as mothers. However none of the women from the interviews mentioned motherhood as the reason for their organization. This can be seen as either a way to reinforce patriarchal structures that subordinates women by connecting motherhood as a reason to claim certain rights or, it can give the impression that women in "the south" do not prioritize themselves and their right. Their children's rights are prioritized in a sense that it could mean that women are not aware about their own rights or that they do not consider their rights.

The women from the interviews consider their own rights a reason for them to organize themselves referring to their children. From another feministic perspective the term motherhood might not include negative characteristics, claimed by western feminists such as a mother is a passive woman that primarily prioritize her family. If considering the "negative" characteristics, as "positive" motherhood is a way for women to empower themselves, but not considered as less feministic. Empowerment theory would claim that women as a marginalized group have common interest to maintain; these interests could be as mothers or as women.<sup>40</sup> By forming mutual objectives in a collective they can gain more self-confidence and be able to negotiate with those with power. Walker points out the importance of women's movements to be recognized on whatever level they act on, the important thing that they do

---

<sup>38</sup> Snyder Katherine A , Mothers on March 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>39</sup> Gemzöe Lena *Bildas ismer: Feminism* 2006 Page 101-102

<sup>40</sup> Forsberg, Starrin *Frigörande kraft: empowerment som modell i skola, omsorg och arbetsliv*, 1997 page 10

organize themselves.<sup>41</sup> Even on local level the effects can lead to changes that benefit these women but they have to be recognized. The example with the taxes clearly confirm that the local initiatives can have an impact even on national levels.

Women in Dareda might be seen as a marginalized group in need of empowerment since their way of organization does not meet the standards western of formal organization. Or that they are already empowered by their capacity to influence decision-makers. While claiming some rights through the tradition, such as not accepting if a woman has been beaten by her son or daughter, beaten by her husband is not mentioned. Western feminist could victimize these women and consider them powerless. Another aspect would be that western feminists are able to look beyond their own cultural opinions not meaning that they should accept that in some traditions it might be allowed to beat a woman but recognize it and not under value women's movement therefore.<sup>42</sup> Mohanty would claim that the traditionally organized women, by showing that there alternative ways to "act" and gain power they contribute to deconstructing the "western feminism" view of the third world woman.<sup>43</sup>

### ***5.1.3 Empowerment and moving from the traditional to the formal***

Empowerment theory claims that in order for women to increase their well-being, security and self-confidence, social and political material resources and capabilities are essential so they can negotiate with those in power.<sup>44</sup> The empirical data may indicate that the material resources has not a major importance the women organized through the tradition since their resources are not mentioned. Or that that the women already have the material resources that they need and therefore are able to be organized. However the movement can be considered to have great capacity to change their situation with or without material resources and that the traditional organization can be a first step towards social mobilization. Through to the collective and by being traditionally organized it can be stated that these women's possibilities to influence and gain power actually increase their influence and impact on decision-makers.

Concerning the formalization processes both the women and the men expressed their worries. With formalization the government is required to fulfil certain obligations towards women and

---

<sup>41</sup> Parpart Jane: *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development* 2000 Page 201-202

<sup>42</sup> Snyder Katherine A , *Mothers on March* 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>43</sup> Mohanty Chandra Talapade *Feminism utan gränser* 2006 page 33

<sup>44</sup> Narayan, Deepa *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A source book*, 2002 page 14-15

recognize their rights. In this case formalization can be constraining in the sense that it limits these women's power that they have gained by being traditionally organized. Feminists might state that due to the patriarchal structure women are excluded from high status positions in the public sphere and that women's rights are not considered to a larger extent. In relation to empowerment theory this could mean, that although women are collectively organized through their common interests they might not be able to influence decision-makers in the future since they are not considered to do it in the "right" way.

## 6 Discussion

When reading about feminist theories the perspectives of men are often excluded if mentioned negative points of views are stated, the purpose of this study is to include both women and men in relation to the women's organization. When doing so the majority of the men that were interviewed in fact stated that they were positive, not negative to women organized by tradition. Some might claim that the intentions with the study may have had an effect on the outcomes from the statements by the men. It needs to be acknowledged that when speaking of reality the consideration of "who's reality", needs to be discussed and that it is relative, what one might consider to be his or her reality might not be the same reality for another. By excluding the positive perspective of men from feminist discourses and homogenising their opinions, negative opinions towards women always tend to be included. By not bringing up the positive opinions that can be found, it can be considered as preventing changes within a discourse and reinforcing the patriarchal structure.

The study verifies that there is a possibility that men from Dareda perceive traditionally organized women and their rights to be positive. The reasons for this might be that these men are more positive to the traditional system, encourage and accept their wives engagement. If the women suddenly would take part in "western" feminist organizations or other more formalized organisations the men might react in a negative way, and the women might be prevented to claim their rights. Through the old tradition the women are allowed to be organized and if their men try to stop them, they can be punished, by tradition. When asking the women why they engage in protests they answered, that it is a tradition and they have been doing it for a very long time therefore it is natural for them. It is something that they have grown up with and is widely accepted by both women and men. Another perspective on it could be that women are claiming their rights and men are accepting it in whatever type of organization being traditional or formal, this can be seen as a process where women are more empowered and that men's perspectives are changing. Another aspect could be that they continue to be positive, but the lack of such statements verifies that the men constrain the women. It would also be naive to assume that all men are positive to

women being organized traditionally or even formally, since there are men that clearly state negative assumptions about women as Snyder points out. Most likely it is a mixture of these perspectives that exists in a society.

Though the women in Dareda might not be organized in the “right” formal way seen through the western, they are in fact organized and they do have an impact on the society that leads to changes. Therefore it also needs to be recognized by the government as a movement. It does not have to follow the patterns of the “western” organizational forms to grant changes. The women state corruption as a main reason for them to not consider the modern judicial system, because when a crime is committed towards a woman the present corruption makes it possible to escape justice. Formalization for the women can work for them both in that sense that the government is applying laws and policies to include women in the public sphere, although in this case it is decreasing their power. One example is the village Executive Officer that has the power to stop the women from protesting if they choose the “wrong” way to argue their rights.

Another interesting aspect is the statement that the women organize themselves in their role as mothers. Not considering that it necessarily is the main reason for these women to be organized it can however be stated that the mother role might be connected to what situation the women are protesting against. Snyder argues that western feminists need to look beyond their cultural perspectives when connecting motherhood to the protests.<sup>45</sup> Women can, as stated before, be seen as slaves of reproduction or heroines depending on what perspective is applied. Western feminism has a view of the mother role as being sacrificing and available to their children.<sup>46</sup> One of the first feminists (Jessie Bernard 1974) to recognize the gap between the society's idealistic view of a mother and women's experiences of motherhood spoke of a balance between labour and family in women's life. Women were “forced” to go against the mythical vision of mothers, during 1960-1970 motherhood was considered to be the foundation of women's oppression and that it was enslaving for women. This by keeping them in the household, away from work and personal independence, Simone de Beauvoir argued that motherhood excluded women making them “the other” in relation to men.<sup>47</sup>

In 1970-1980 the view of motherhood altered from being oppressive to considering that motherhood and mother/daughter relations as more positive, and feminists claim that women have

---

<sup>45</sup> Snyder Katherine A *Mothers on March* 2006 page 10. Retrieved 2008-04-17

<sup>46</sup> Gemzöe Lena *Bildas ismer: Feminism* 2006 Page 101-102

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 2006 Page 101-102

developed certain skills and knowledge that are valuable outside the family as well.<sup>48</sup> “Black” feministic writers did not take part of “white” feminists exclusion of motherhood, instead writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Audre Lorde described motherhood as a rewarding experience and the mother is also describes in positive terms.<sup>49</sup> Depending on what perspectives coincide with ones beliefs, motherhood can be seen as either beneficial to or reinforcing the patriarchal structures. The categorizing of the conflicts between the perspectives tend to have greater space in the discourse then the empowerment of women it self.

## 7 Conclusion

How do men and women perceive the traditional way for women to organize themselves?

Throughout the interviews it has been verified that both women and men perceive the traditional way for women to be organized as something positive. Due to the tradition men accept that women can claim certain rights and support them, women consider these rights to be something natural for them. The women in the interviews said that this is something that has been brought upon them in early ages. Their mothers and grandmothers have claimed their rights by this tradition and it is how they always have solved their problems. It is by these means that they can influence decision makers in their society. Concerning men’s positive attitudes towards women’s traditional organization they are given limited space in feminist discourse.

What motivates women to continue with the informal and traditional way to get organized?

All of the women talked about women’s rights in the society being the major motivation for them to be organized in the traditional way. Snyder states that it is the role of being a mother is what organizes women, but none of the informants mentioned motherhood as a motivation further to be organized in

---

<sup>48</sup> Gemzöe Lena *Bildas ismer: Feminism* 2006 Page 103

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 2006 Page 103

this specific case, although it might be the motivations in other cases. The women pointed out that in order to claim their rights as women they go together in the traditional way because, together they are more empowered than separate. Men also state that women use the traditional organization because they become more powerful together.

How does formalization affect the traditional and informal way for women to organize themselves?

In the case of having their rights violated in a formalized society their chances to claim justice diminishes, since corruption is still a fact, the women believe that it will be easier for the perpetrator to “escape” justice. The women prefer therefore the traditional organisation.

## 8 List of references

Forsberg Erik and Starrin Bengt: *Frigörande kraft: empowerment som modell i skola, omsorg och arbetsliv* Stockholm Gothia 1997

Genzöe Lena: *Bildas ismer: Feminism* Stockholm Bilda Förlag 2006 (First edition)

Informant 1: Farmer, individual interview in Dareda village 2008-03-11

Martins Selena: Spokes woman, individual interview in Dareda village 2008-03-11

Matly Clement: Farmer/ Village leader, individual interview in Dareda village 2008-03-13

Mohanty Chandra Talapade: *Feminism utan gränser* Sweden ScandBook 2006

Miyangy Baran: Farmer, individual interview in Dareda village 2008-03-13

Mulinarim Diana, Sandell Kerstin and Schömer Eva: *Mer än bara kvinnor och män* Lund Studentlitteratur 2003

Narayan Deepa(Editor): *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction: A Sourcebook*.

Washington, DC, USA: World Bank Publications, 2002. Retrieved 2008-05-16 from

<http://site.ebrary.com/lib/sodertorn/Doc?id=10023671&ppg=39>

Nationalencyklopedin Retrieved 2008-05-21 from

[http://www.ne.se/jsp/search/article.jsp?i\\_art\\_id=234209](http://www.ne.se/jsp/search/article.jsp?i_art_id=234209)

Official online gateway of the United Republic of Tanzania, Retrieved 2008-05-10 from <http://www.tanzania.go.tz/gender.html#Women%20Political%20Empowerment%20and%20Decision%20Making>

Parpart Jane L, Connelly Patricia and Barriteu Eudine: *Theoretical perspectives on gender and development*, Ottawa, Canada IDRC 2000. Author of article: Ann S Walker Retrieved 2008-05-16 from [http://books.google.com/books?id=HU65xdn58z4C&pg=PP3&hl=sv&source=gbs\\_selected\\_pages&cad=0\\_1&sig=LcUDFfUtrDrkxSpPwTR662VFAGc#PPA185,M1](http://books.google.com/books?id=HU65xdn58z4C&pg=PP3&hl=sv&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=0_1&sig=LcUDFfUtrDrkxSpPwTR662VFAGc#PPA185,M1)

Patric Tumaini: Farmer, group interview in Dareda village 2008-03-11

Snyder Katherine A: *Mothers on March* 2006, retrieved 2008-04-17 from [https://muse-jhu-edu.till.biblextern.sh.se/journals/africa\\_today/v053/53.1snyder.html](https://muse-jhu-edu.till.biblextern.sh.se/journals/africa_today/v053/53.1snyder.html)

Swedish Regeringskansli on *Tanzania* 2008, Johan Rydberg Retrieved 2008-04- 28 from <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2574/a/75607>

Steans Jill: *Gender and international relations* Cambridge UK Polity Press 1998

The UN: *The United Nations fourth world conference on Women*, Beijing 1995, retrieved 2008-05-03 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm#diagnosis>

## **9 Appendix**

### **9.1 Interview questions to the informants**

#### **9.1.1 Interview questions to Selena Martin:**

- What is your position in Dareda and how did you get that position?
- Can you tell me about the story of the tax protest in 2003?

- What made the women organize themselves like that?
- Who took the initiative for the protest and how was it organised?
- Were there any meetings or discussions before the action?
- Why do you think it is important for women to go together?
- What did you/ the women wanted to achieve?
- How long have women been practicing these sorts of actions and why?
- Has it changed during the last 10 years?
- Do you know of any other actions that have been made?
- Have you taken part in any other actions?
- What issues in society do you feel are important to change to improve women's situation?
- What does modernization and formalization mean for the traditional way of organizing women and the traditional courts?

### **9.1.2 Interview questions to the individual and the group interviews for the women:**

- Can you tell us about the story of the tax protest in 2003?
- When did you decide to join the other women in the protest march and why?
- Who took the initiative and how was it organized?
- Why do you think that it is important for women to organize themselves?
- What did you want to achieve with the protest?
- How did your husband/husbands respond to you joining the protest?
- Have you taken part in other actions/ protests?
- Do you have any other family members that have joined these types of activities?
- What issues in society do you feel are important to change to improve women's situation in society?
- What does modernization and formalization mean for the traditional way of organizing women and the traditional courts?

### **9.1.3 Interview questions to the individual and group interviews with the men:**

- Can you tell us about the story of the tax protest in 2003?
- Who according to you initiated the protest and why did the women react like this?

- Do you believe that the tax protest was the right thing to do?
- What do you think about your wife joining the women? Why?
- How did it make you feel when your wife joined the other women, was it a positive or a negative feeling and why?
- Has your wife engaged in other actions like this before, for what reasons and do you support her?
- Were there any of your friends that have wives that joined the protest?
- If yes, did you talk to them about the situation and what was said?
- What does modernization and formalization mean for the traditional way of organizing and the traditional courts?