

Refugee Review Tribunal

AUSTRALIA

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: TZA30796
Country: Tanzania
Date: 30 November 2006

Keywords: Tanzania – Witchcraft – Internal relocation – Employment

This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

If a person was suspected of witchcraft in a rural area, could they relocate to another region, or to Dar-es-Salaam, that is:

- (1) Is it practicable for a Tanzanian person to relocate within the country? Can they survive without family support? For example, could they obtain housing and employment in an area other than their place of origin?**
- (2) Would their reputation as a suspected witch follow them throughout the country so that they could be identified and harmed anywhere they went?**

RESPONSE

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- (1) Is it practicable for a Tanzanian person to relocate within the country? Can they survive without family support? For example, could they obtain housing and employment in an area other than their place of origin?**
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Abdul Jetha, Country Director of Help-Age International Tanzania, was contacted in regard to this matter on 18 October 2006 and 26 October 2006. On 18 October 2006, Abdul Jetha advised that he would seek assistance from his project staff in north Tanzania. No reply has been received to date. Any reply received will be forwarded to the Member (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 18 October – Attachment 1; RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October – Attachment 2; and Jetha, Abdul 2006,

Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 18 October – Attachment 3).

Abdul Jetha replied on 20 November 2006. The information is as follows:

A point that cuts across all your questions is that witchcraft accusations are predominantly made against older women, especially those widowed and are subject to asset claims from husband's family, or other reasons. Young men are seldom at risk, even by association, and they usually relocate within the country quite freely.

...Publicly available country information suggests that elderly women are the primary victims of witch killings in Tanzania. Is this an accurate statement or are men at risk? If so, are particular men at risk, eg elderly or young?

- That's correct. For example, in the Sukuma culture, elderly women are more likely to be accused of being witches; especially if they are living alone, are widowed, or are subject to property or asset claims by family of the deceased husband. For men, this risk is limited – and many might hide behind the practice of traditional healing.
- Elderly are always at risk.

Is an individual suspected of being a witch able to relocate safely to another region of Tanzania or to Dar-es-Salaam? That is, would their reputation as a witch follow them through-out Tanzania such that they would be identified and harmed where ever they went?

- Relocation is often forced upon the accused, mainly older women. They would go to distant villages where they are not known; but for the elderly, such relocation would be difficult owing to age, and support.
- The potential of this danger – of reputation as a witch following them through-out Tanzania is present – , but the danger is no small.

Is it practicable for an individual to relocate to another region of Tanzania or to Dar-es-Salaam? Is an individual's ability to relocate within Tanzania affected by their age or gender etc?

- It is practicable for an individual to relocate to another region of Tanzania or to Dar-es-Salaam.
- Age is always a factor – an older person would find relocation difficult; but not a young person – who can and do – move freely for employment or other reasons.

Are these claims consistent with your understanding of the situation? That is would a young man who lived with his mother be accused of witchcraft by association with her and subject to harm for this reason?

- It is very rare for witch craft by association. Secondly, it is possible for a young person to move away to avoid such association. Witchcraft label is predominantly leveled at women.

Would a young man accused of witchcraft through association with his mother be able to relocate safely to another region of Tanzania or Dar-es-Salaam?

- Men not at risk but Yes

That is would his reputation as a witch follow him throughout Tanzania such that he would be identified and harmed where ever he went?

- No – as men are very seldom associated with witchcraft

Would it be practicable for a young man in his twenties to relocate to another region of Tanzania or to Dar-es-Salaam?

- Yes – happens all the time (Jetha, Abdul 2006, Email ‘Witchcraft Issues’, 20 November – Attachment 4).

Abdul Jetha clarified his advice on 28 November 2006. The advice is as follows:

I have re-checked the point you are making. It appears that relocation to another area (outside the immediate location or the cultural boundaries where witchcraft is part of the belief system) where the individual is not known, is safe for that individual, where he or she is unlikely to be known, and this safety is particularly assured in Dar es Salaam, or other large cities (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha ‘Re: Witchcraft’, 28 November – Attachment 5; and Jetha, Abdul 2006, Email ‘Re: Witchcraft Issues’, 28 November – Attachment 6).

Dr Simeon Mesaki, Program Coordinator of the Department of Sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam, was contacted in regard to this matter on 17 and 26 October 2006 (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Simeon Mesaki ‘Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)’, 17 October – Attachment 7; and RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Simeon Mesaki ‘Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)’, 26 October – Attachment 8).

Dr Simeon Mesaki replied on 26 October 2006. The information is as follows:

1. Accusations of witchcraft especially of old people in the area popularly referred to as Usukumani (Sukumaland) are rampant and have been so for a long time and the government has failed to grapple with this enigmatic occurrence. However it would be anomalous for a young man to be so accused especially if he/she lives away from the parent. Note that the Sukuma number about 8 million out of 35 million Tanzanians.
2. Relocating of a young person in other parts of Tanzania is possible and is encouraged.
3. Associating a person with witchcraft just because of parentage is not automatic (Mesaki, Dr Simeon 2006, Email ‘Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)’, 26 October 2006 – Attachment 9).

Dr Maia Green, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester, was contacted in regard to this matter on 17 October 2006 (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Maia Green ‘Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)’, 17 October – Attachment 10).

Dr Maia Green replied on 17 October 2006. The information is as follows:

Witchcraft related violence is an important problem in some parts of Tanzania, but not all of them. And in general relocation is difficult, especially for the old and vulnerable, because of issues around cost and the need for some kind of family support (which they may have lost due to witchcraft accusations). The possibility of harm is always present (Green, Dr Maia 2006, Email ‘Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)’, 17 October 2006 – Attachment 11).

Other Correspondence

Dr Maia Green was contacted again on 26 October 2006. On 27 October 2006, Dr Maia Green advised that she “cannot ethically comment on the questions...because I do not have first hand experience of that region” (RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Maia

Green 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October – Attachment 12; and Green, Dr Maia 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 27 October 2006 – Attachment 13).

List of Attachments

1. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 18 October.
2. Jetha, Abdul 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 18 October 2006.
3. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October.
4. Jetha, Abdul 2006, Email 'Witchcraft Issues', 20 November.
5. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Abdul Jetha 'Re: Witchcraft', 28 November.
6. Jetha, Abdul 2006, Email 'Re: Witchcraft Issues', 28 November.
7. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Simeon Mesaki 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 17 October.
8. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Simeon Mesaki 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October.
9. Mesaki, Dr Simeon 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October 2006.
10. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Maia Green 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 17 October.
11. Green, Dr Maia 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 17 October 2006.
12. RRT Country Research 2006, Email to Dr Maia Green 'Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 26 October.
13. Green, Dr Maia 2006, Email 'Re: Request for assistance from Refugee Review Tribunal, Sydney Australia (RRT ref: TZA30796)', 27 October 2006.