

## **Opening speech by Dorothee Hutter, GTZ Country Director Uganda**

Worldwide, women and girls are discriminated in the realization of their social, economic and political rights:

Rights, which are set out in the international conventions.

Women often do not use the existent legal rights due to lack of legal knowledge, fear of social sanctions or resignations from inefficient legal institutions.

Women often are especially discriminated in inheritance and family laws, land laws and in their legal status after the death of the husband.

Gender discrimination is not only a result of insufficient legal security of women but also reflects social values and norms, which shape the identities and behaviours of women and men, girls and boys.

At the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, the Federal German Government declared its intention to enhance support for women in the development process by providing legal counselling and social policy inputs.

The contribution to this conference through our project “Strengthening Women’s Rights” represents a step towards fulfilling this commitment.

Apart from that contribution, the project supports innovative pilot activities in over 30 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The focus lies on exemplary development activities of civil society organizations which contribute to the equal participation of women and girls in the social, economic and political development process.

### **What does the project stand for?**

We want to bring to life and actively apply the international human rights conventions and national declarations as instruments for advancing the rights of women and girls.

Discriminating laws should be overcome to the advantage of women and girls; existing rights should be acknowledged and realised by women.

Our work is based on the legal reality women and girls experience in their day-to-day lives. In many countries, this scenario is characterized by the co-existence of a statutory, customary and religious law.

The project focuses not only on the formal legal institutions but also on informal mediation processes.

It attempts to have an impact towards structured changes beyond the grassroots level to the advantage of women and girls. To achieve this, the project supports lobby and campaign activities to influence state politics.

## **What do we want to achieve?**

We want that

- Women perceive law as a resource or a kind of capital that they can use to open up possibilities for making their own choices and to acquire the ability to assert their rights.
- International conventions and national laws stipulating women's rights are put into practice and impact on the lives of women and girls.
- Gender-specific discrimination in national legislation and in customary and religious laws is overcome.
- Women make use of the options for exerting political influence that are already open to them at local, regional and national level.
- Women acquire a voice and can assert themselves both in an everyday context and in political reform processes.

Before I wish you fruitful deliberations, I would like to thank the organizers, Atuki Turner and Mifumi Staff, Co-Funders and for GTZ: Juliane Osterhaus, who is unfortunately not able to attend this conference.