

Mifumi Bride Price Conference 16 Feb 2004
Speech by Lynda St Cooke, Second Secretary (Political),
British High Commission, Kampala

BHC has been engaged with the work of the Mifumi Project since 2000. That year saw the start of our support for the Domestic Violence and Bride Price Project, which ran for two years with funding from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Human Rights Project Fund.

The Domestic Violence and Bride Price Project made some real & significant achievements. Its baseline study provided previously unavailable information on attitudes towards bride price and its link to domestic violence in Kirewa Sub County, Tororo district. Its programme of training and education gave women leaders in the community access to skills in leadership and advocacy, women's rights, children's rights and domestic violence issues. What they learned allowed the women to undertake a campaign of advocacy for women's rights and entitlements. They did this through public debates, workshops, seminars, research reports and an information leaflet. They used the media – they wrote many news articles, and ran radio talk shows. They received an excellent response. Thousands of people attended their sensitisation sessions. Many wrote in to the editors of the papers. It all culminated in the referendum they held in 5 sub-counties of Tororo district at the end of 2001 under the auspices of the Chief Administrative Officer, endorsed by the Chair of the Electoral Commission. They won the referendum, with 60% of respondents voting yes to the question of whether bride price should be non-refundable.

We were delighted to be associated with this programme. The energy and commitment of those working at the Mifumi Project was - and continues to be - most impressive. I don't think anyone attending this international conference could be in any doubt about that. The team has continued to work with women leaders and with the community in Kirewa to empower women and increase their voice and their access to justice.

We are therefore very proud to continue our links with the Mifumi Project, and to have been able to offer further support, again through the FCO's Human Rights Project Fund, for their project in Strengthening Traditional Justice for Women. Under this project, Mifumi has continued its excellent work in training and advocacy for women, and working for equality of access to justice. Mifumi has also carried on its lobbying for the reform of bride price, culminating in this conference over the next three days. Bringing all of you together to take part in such an event is a highly impressive achievement. I hope all of you will enjoy the conference, benefit and learn from it, and come out of it having gained as much as I feel we in the British High Commission have from our links over the years with the Mifumi Project.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to be here today, and to take part in this exciting and impressive event.

