

Press Releases

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East African Experts to Meet on Legal Impediments to Women's Advancement

Addis Ababa, 16 October: Ministers of Justice, gender focal points from U.N. agencies including civil society representatives from Eastern Africa are scheduled to hold a 3-day conference here next week to deliberate issues that impede the advancement of women due to inappropriate protective and enabling legislation.

The conference, to take place from 23-25 October at the UN Conference Centre, is organized jointly by the African Centre for Women -- the Gender division of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) -- and the Africa Region of the World Bank.

Despite past steps taken by governments in East Africa to focus on the nexus between law, gender and economic outcomes, many areas remain where awareness not only needs strengthening but also existing research broadened and deepened.

The donor community recognises the need for a focus on legal and regulatory constraints to gender-sensitive development because it impacts on almost all areas of intervention -- including land reform and agricultural development, education, health and private sector development.

Against a backdrop of ongoing efforts and thinking on gender and law in Eastern Africa, the meeting aims to set the stage for dialogue and discourse that will bring to light and inform on specific country perspectives and priorities. It is hoped that debate on common problems will identify solutions to concerns and priority areas identified as critical to gender sensitive human development.

One expectation of the conference is that country experiences will heighten appreciation and knowledge among senior Government policy makers. Ultimately, the hope is that this knowledge will contribute to the passing of new laws, amendments of restrictive ones and formalizing customary laws where appropriate.

The organisers also expect the conference to provide donors with an opportunity to listen to participants and obtain information that will contribute to achieving better results on the ground for poor women in Eastern Africa in donor-financed projects.

Topics lined up for discussion include:

- Legal framework for economic participation of women in decentralized States
- Economic inequality and land use and ownership in Eastern Africa
- Gender and Economic inequality within the home
- Economic rights of women outside their homes
- Violence against women.

A set of action plans will result from the deliberations with the hope that an improved legal environment will contribute to an accelerated advancement of women. Participants from Eritrea, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe Ethiopia, and Tanzania are scheduled to attend.

<< Back to: [Press Releases for 1997](#)