

## International Women's Day, Uganda

by Laura Leach, Volunteer in Uganda, '09-'11

MIFUMI, an organization devoted to preventing domestic violence and protecting the rights of women and children, hosted a celebration for International Women's Day in Uganda on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2011. The day was kicked off with a karate demonstration by the Sure Start club from Police Primary School. The Sure Start program trains girls throughout the district in karate while building their self-confidence. Next we enjoyed a performance by a music, dance, and drama group. Their energetic performance contributed to the celebratory tone of the event. Several women spoke giving testimony regarding their experiences as women in Uganda and how they have overcome the challenges they face. The highlight of the day was definitely the message shared by Guest of Honor, Beth Amoit. She really captured the theme of the day which was "Equal access to education, training, and science and technology: Pathway to decent work for women." Ms. Amoit shared her experience of returning to school after having her children. She is currently working towards her Master's degree. She encouraged women to return to school regardless of what stage their formal education ended during their childhood and shared the opportunities available in the community for women to return to school. She also encouraged women to not underrate themselves and what they might accomplish. Her message extended to men who she encouraged to support their wives in any endeavor to improve themselves because when a woman is uplifted the entire family is uplifted. Following Ms. Amoit's address, the crowd enjoyed another performance by the music, dance, and drama group with some members of the audience getting in on the action. The day was capped off with lunch and more music and dancing. I was grateful to be present and part of the celebration, and ended my International Women's Day feeling hopeful for the futures of the women in Uganda.