



INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY ACTIVITIES REPORT 2024

PRE-EVENTS, MAIN EVENT, AND POST-EVENTS SUMMARIES FOR THE YEAR 2024



JULY 24, 2024

COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION

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1.0 ABSTRACT

This internal report provides a detailed summary of the series of activities and engagements that were undertaken by Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization in June and July 2024 during our **9th International Widows Day Celebrations** that was centred around the International Widows Day theme: *"Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality (With Emphasis on Strengthening Land and Property Rights)." Our efforts aimed to empower widows by ensuring they have equal access to and control over land and property, thereby enhancing their economic stability and social standing. This report highlights the significant impact of our events, the challenges raised by widows in the different counties, and the strategic plans for future advocacy and support.*

1.1 REPORT OVERVIEW

June and July 2024 have been very significant months in our calendar as an organization. These months have been filled with series of activities and engagements centred around the **International Widows Day 2024** theme of *Accelerating The Achievement Of Gender Equality (With Emphasis On Strengthening Land And Property Rights)*," emphasizing the critical need to empower widows by ensuring they have equal access to and control over land and property and reflecting the broader goal of enhancing economic stability and social standing for widows, acknowledging their resilience and strength while addressing the unique challenges they face. The celebrations were organized in three phases: **Pre-International Widows Day Celebrations, Main International Widows Day Celebration, and Post-International Widows Day Celebrations** with each phase having specific focus, challenges, and recommendations.

We began by organizing and celebrating Pre-International Widows Day events across **Meru, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Nairobi, and Machakos Counties**. These events which we conducted from **June 7th to June 22nd, 2024**, served as an exciting precursor to our grand International Widows Day celebration on **June 23, 2024, in Vihiga County**. We were able to reach to approximately **300 widows** at each event and this laid the groundwork for our main celebration. Our primary goal was to honor and empower widows, raise awareness about their rights, and promote their prosperity through various empowerment initiatives while mobilizing them for the main event. The celebrations were thoughtfully designed with a multi-location approach to ensure a broader impact on widows from diverse backgrounds and communities. This comprehensive outreach aimed to lay a foundation for collective commitment to equality for all widows across Kenya, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose in advancing gender equality and supporting the well-being of widows nationwide.

June 23, 2024, marked the pinnacle of our International Widows Day Celebrations **at Musungu Grounds in Vihiga County**, graced by **H.E Mama Rachel Ruto, First Lady**, and attended by an inspiring turnout of **over 5,000 widows**.

In a powerful demonstration of commitment and dedication, we extended the spirit of International Widows Day beyond its official celebration on June 23rd. Understanding that the issues faced by widows in Kenya require continuous attention and action, we embarked on a series of Post-International Widows Day events aimed at furthering our mission of championing the rights and dignity of widows. This journey took us from Vihiga County to the Coastal region, and then to Narok and Kajiado Counties, ensuring that our message of hope and empowerment reached as many widows as possible. Our first stop was in **Kilifi and Taita Taveta Counties** on **June 28th and 29th**, respectively. The coastal region's vibrant communities provided a perfect backdrop for our events, where we engaged with local widows, raising awareness about their rights and offering much-needed support. These two days were filled with activities that not only highlighted the challenges faced by widows but also celebrated their resilience and contributions to society. The coastal events were a testament to our belief that every widow deserves to be heard, seen, and supported. From the coast, we proceeded to **Narok County** for two more days of Post-International Widows Day events on **July 4th and 5th**. In Narok, we encountered a community rich in cultural heritage yet burdened by the silent struggles of many widows.

Our presence there was crucial in amplifying their voices and providing them with resources to navigate their unique challenges. The events in Narok reinforced our commitment to reaching out to the most marginalized and ensuring that no widow is left behind. Our journey then took us to **Kajiado County on July 13th**, where we continued our advocacy and support efforts. Kajiado's widows, like those in other regions, face numerous socio-economic challenges that require sustained intervention. By holding our Post-International Widows Day celebration in Kajiado, we reinforced the importance of continuous engagement and the need to build a supportive network for widows across Kenya. The event was a powerful reminder of the collective strength that comes from solidarity and shared purpose.

On **July 20th 2024**, we marked the climax of our International Widows Day celebrations with a significant **Post-International Widows Day event in Mathare Constituency, Nairobi County** which we held in conjunction with a **Free Medical Camp** hence symbolizing our comprehensive approach to addressing all aspects of widows' needs.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Widowhood is a universally challenging phase of life, affecting millions worldwide. Recent statistics reveal there are over 258 million widows globally, with a significant number residing in developing countries. In Kenya, according to the 2019 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), more than 1 million women are widowed, facing severe economic, social, and cultural barriers. Many widows are deprived of their property and inheritance rights, perpetuating cycles of poverty and homelessness. Moreover, widows often confront discrimination and stigma, with some communities wrongly attributing a widow's status to curses or misfortune. They also endure economic insecurity, social isolation, and risks of physical and emotional abuse, making them vulnerable to exploitation and marginalization. In many cultures, widows are denied basic rights such as inheritance, education, and employment, and may face harmful traditional practices like widow burning or widow cleansing.

Recognizing these challenges, International Widows Day was established by the Loomba Foundation in 2005. June 23rd was chosen to commemorate the day the mother of the foundation's founder, Lord Loomba, became a widow. In 2010, the UN General Assembly officially recognized June 23rd as International Widows Day to address the Poverty, Discrimination, and Human Rights violations experienced by widows worldwide. The inaugural UN International Widows Day was observed on June 23rd, 2011.

International Widows Day has since then been commemorated worldwide with every year having a different theme. The main aim of the International Widows Day Celebrations is to promote Gender Equality and Empower widows to lead full and dignified lives. It serves as a platform to advocate for social protection and legal reforms that address the unique challenges faced by widows. This global observance amplifies the voices of widows, celebrates their resilience in adversity, and acknowledges their contributions to society. Through awareness-raising, advocacy campaigns, and support programs, International Widows Day endeavours to improve the lives of millions of widows globally.

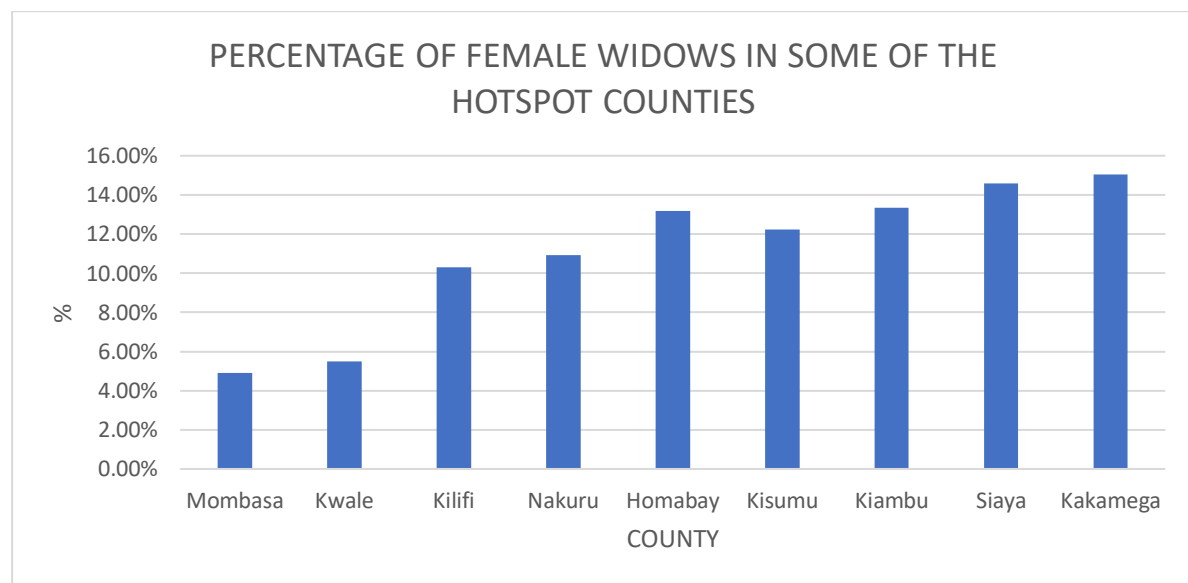
In Kenya, widows frequently encounter barriers to their property and inheritance rights, which exacerbate their vulnerability to poverty and homelessness. Discrimination and social stigma further marginalize them, with erroneous beliefs in some communities attributing a widow's status to being cursed or responsible for her husband's death. To combat these injustices, our organization has consistently led efforts to raise awareness, advocate for policy reforms, and provide direct Psychological, Economical and Legal support to widows in Kenya. We strive to dismantle harmful stereotypes, empower widows with legal knowledge, and foster community acceptance. Through these initiatives, we aim to ensure that widows across Kenya are recognized, respected, and afforded the rights they deserve, promoting a more equitable and inclusive society.

Since 2016, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization has been steadfast in commemorating International Widows Day in Kenya, reaching out to over **200,000 widows nationwide**. Our active engagement and commemorating of this day has served to protect their rights of widows in Kenya,

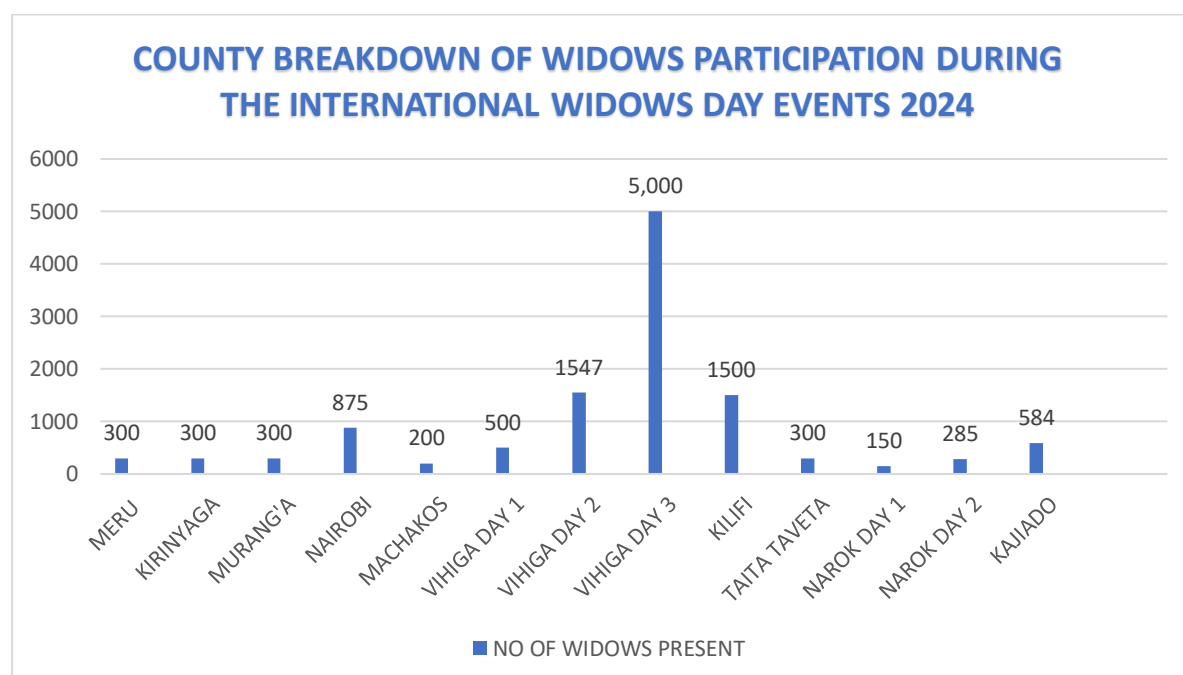
preserve their dignity, and enhance their overall well-being. The pinnacle of these efforts was our **9th International Widows Day Celebration** held on **June 23, 2024**, at **Musungu Grounds in Vihiga County**. This event not only marked a significant milestone in our advocacy on Widows Rights but also reaffirmed our commitment to advancing Gender Equality, with a specific focus on strengthening land and property rights for widows. It served as both a celebration of past achievements and a rallying call for continued action in championing the rights and dignity of widows across Kenya.

This holistic approach ensures a clear progression of ideas, from the global context of widowhood and International Widows Day's inception to its local impact and specific initiatives undertaken by Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization in Kenya.

2.0 GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTATION OF WIDOWS IN THE 47 COUNTIES OF KENYA



2.1 GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTATION OF WIDOWS PARTICIPATION IN VARIOUS COUNTIES DURING INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENTS 2024



3.0 OBJECTIVES OF INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024 COMMEMORATION

- To bring the plight of widows in Vihiga County to their County Government and the National Government.
- To link widows with various institutions that assist Kenyans to follow up and reclaim their right assets e.g., the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA)
- To build widows capacity through Economic Empowerment trainings aiming to equip them with adequate information on Affirmative Action Funds and how to utilize the funds to ensure sustainable economic independence.
- To Promote Legal Empowerment among widows in Vihiga County.
- To provide awareness to widows on Gender-Based Violence among widows and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (PADVA) 2015.
- To unite widows in commemorating International Widows Day on the 23rd June 2024 in Vihiga County and the country at large.
- To provide Accessible Healthcare Services to widows through the Free Medical Camp.

3.1 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Increased knowledge and skills among widows on accessing and effectively utilizing Affirmative Action Funds.
- Improved economic independence and livelihoods for widows through sustainable practices and empowerment.
- Enhanced awareness and understanding of legal rights and protections available to widows.
- Strengthened legal recourse and reduced instances of legal injustices and discrimination faced by widows.
- Increased awareness and recognition of GBV issues affecting widows.

- Improved access to support services and legal protections, leading to reduced instances of GBV among widows.
- Strengthened solidarity and community among widows, fostering a sense of belonging and support.
- Amplified visibility of widows' rights and contributions to society, promoting inclusivity and respect.
- Improved health outcomes and well-being for widows through access to essential healthcare services.

3.2 OUR PARTNERS DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024 CELEBRATIONS

1. **Office of the First Lady of the Republic of Kenya**
2. **Executive Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor**
3. **County Government of Vihiga, Kilifi, Kajiado and Taita Taveta Counties**
4. **Members of County Assemblies of Narok, Taita Taveta, Kirinyaga Counties**
5. **National Council for Population and Development**
6. **Ministry of Public Service**
7. **Agakhan Hospital Kisumu**
8. **Agakhan Foundation Kisumu**
9. **Youth Enterprise Fund**
10. **Mama Doing Good**
11. **GROOTS Kenya**
12. **Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK)**
13. **Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE)**
14. **Kenya Dairy Board**
15. **Absa Bank**
16. **KCB Foundation**
17. **Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA)**
18. **Women Enterprise Fund (WEF)**
19. **National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF)**
20. **Christ Heart Foundation**
21. **Graceful Youth Recovery Centre**
22. **Salvation Army Church**
23. **Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD)**

3.3 JUSTIFICATION FOR COMMEMORATING INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024 IN THE MENTIONED COUNTIES

- The decision to commemorate International Widows Day 2024 in Vihiga County and other specific regions in Kenya mentioned above was grounded in several key justifications which include;
- Vihiga County and other selected regions represent areas where widows face acute challenges such as lack of access to property rights, economic opportunities, and social stigmatization. By focusing on these regions, we aimed to highlight and address these disparities effectively.
- Commemorating International Widows Day in diverse counties allowed us to engage directly with local communities and stakeholders. This localized approach ensured that interventions were relevant, responsive, and tailored to the specific needs and cultural contexts of widows in each region.
- Selecting Vihiga County and other regions facilitated strategic partnerships with County Governments, local government authorities, civil society organizations, and community leaders. These collaborations were instrumental in advocating for policy reforms, increasing awareness, and mobilizing resources to support widows' rights.

- By conducting pre-event activities, main celebrations, and post-event engagements in multiple counties, we demonstrated our organization's commitment to providing comprehensive support to widows beyond symbolic gestures. This approach strengthened community bonds, empowered widows, and amplified their voices.

4.0 OUR ADVOCACY AND REFORM EFFORTS FOLLOWING INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024

- ❖ **Reform:** Presented the KDHS 2022 Report and KNBS Statistics on Widows to the relevant state and non-state actors and requested their support, especially from the National Council for Population and Development, to help us address the pressing needs of widows in Kenya. We emphasized the critical need to have exact and up-to-date statistics on the widow population in Kenya for better policy-making and targeted interventions.

Outcome: The presentation resulted in increased awareness and understanding among the stakeholders about the current challenges faced by widows, as highlighted in the KDHS 2022 Report and KNBS Statistics. The National Council for Population and Development committed to collaborating with us in developing targeted programs and policies aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of widows. Additionally, they acknowledged the necessity of having precise statistics on widows to ensure data-driven decisions. As a result, a plan was set in motion to conduct comprehensive surveys and data collection efforts to accurately capture the widow population in Kenya. Other state and non-state actors expressed their willingness to support initiatives that promote the rights and welfare of widows, leading to a more coordinated and impactful approach in addressing these issues.

Next Reform/ Action Plan: Having recognized the urgent need to empower widows about their legal rights—since many face violations due to a lack of awareness—our organization is poised to extend our ongoing **Widows Paralegal Program** to additional counties, including **Kilifi, Nyandarua, Kisumu, Meru, Kisii, Murang'a, Machakos, Kirinyaga, Migori, and Homa Bay**.

Outcome: This expansion aims to increase awareness of widows' legal rights, enhance their access to justice, and foster community acceptance of widows as autonomous individuals. Through collaboration with existing **legal organizations like FIDA-Kenya, Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Kituo cha Sheria**, our widows' community-based organizations (CBOs), and other **Human Rights Organizations like Equality Now and FEMNET**, we aim to achieve sustained impact by 2027.

The support of state actors who participated in the International Widows Day celebrations will be instrumental in this expansion. We will work closely with organizations such as **EQUALITY NOW, FEMNET**, and other human rights entities to ensure that widows across these counties receive the necessary legal support and advocacy.

- ❖ A key partner during the International Widows Day commemoration in Vihiga County was the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA). UFAA played a crucial role in assisting widows by providing them with vital information and resources to reclaim unclaimed financial assets. This initiative was pivotal in helping widows recover assets that rightfully belonged to them, thus contributing significantly to their economic empowerment and stability. The collaboration with UFAA included workshops and informational sessions where widows were guided on the processes involved in reclaiming their financial assets. UFAA's support helped bridge the gap between widows and their rightful property, thereby addressing one of the critical challenges of property disinheritance.

Outcome: The success of these sessions was evident in the positive feedback from the widows, who felt more empowered and informed about their rights. Many widows accessed UFAA services,

discovering streamlined processes and receiving hands-on assistance in reclaiming their assets. This newfound knowledge and support were transformative, leading to numerous success stories of widows reclaiming what was rightfully theirs and achieving greater economic stability.

5.0 UNVEILING THE PLIGHT OF WIDOWS: CHALLENGES ACROSS MERU, KIRINYAGA, MURANG'A, NAIROBI, MACHAKOS, VIHIGA, KILIFI, TAITA TAVETA, NAROK, AND KAJIADO COUNTIES

Hosting the Pre-International Widows Day (IWD), Main IWD, and Post-IWD celebrations across various counties provided a holistic approach to understanding the diverse challenges faced by widows in different regions. This strategic spread allowed us to uncover the unique struggles and needs specific to each locality, ensuring that our Advocacy efforts and interventions are precisely targeted and impactful.

Throughout these celebrations, we provided platforms for Widow Representatives from each county to voice their concerns and share their experiences. This helped us to gain invaluable insights into a wide array of issues that affect widows.

1. MERU COUNTY

i) Land Disinheritance

Ms. Esther – Widow representative highlighted Land Disinheritance as a major challenge that widows in Meru County face. She mentioned that widows often face systematic exclusion from inheriting land upon the death of their husbands, a practice rooted in their cultural norms and patriarchal traditions. This denies them access to property ownership, economic security, and the ability to provide for themselves and their families.

ii) Stigma/Discrimination

Ms. Esther also mentioned that widows often face stigma and discrimination exacerbated by a lack of support from their in-laws. She described that this lack of support often manifests in various forms, including denial of inheritance rights, exclusion from family decision-making, and social isolation. Such attitudes stem from deeply ingrained cultural beliefs and patriarchal traditions that marginalize widows, hindering their ability to assert their rights and participate fully in community life.

iii) Denial and Rejection

The widow representative also mentioned that they often confront denial and rejection from their deceased husbands' families, which significantly compounds their challenges. This denial typically manifests in the form of refusal to recognize widows as rightful inheritors of property and assets, despite legal provisions. Such rejection has often resulted in economic insecurity, loss of shelter, and social marginalization that has further exacerbated widows' vulnerability. Addressing this issue necessitates robust advocacy for legal reforms that enforce widows' inheritance rights, alongside community education to dispel harmful beliefs and promote inclusivity within families and society at large.

2. KIRINYAGA COUNTY

- We found out that most of the widows were facing legal issues such as being deprived of their spouses' properties.
- The widows also were facing discrimination by the family members and the society at large.
- Most of the widows were having health related problems such as Diabetes, Hypertension and nutritional related diseases.
- Most of the widows present mentioned financial challenges and burdens as the most pressing challenges.

3. MURANG'A COUNTY

Many widows in this region have expressed struggles with economic burdens exacerbated by the high cost of living. Additionally, a notable concern raised by elderly widows is the lack of caretakers and support systems.

4. NAIROBI COUNTY

Many of the widows we serve face serious health issues that require urgent medical attention. For instance, we recently attended to a widow from Bethel Widows CBO in Kasarani who had been bleeding for two years, resorting to using rags in the absence of proper sanitary supplies. Fortunately, we were able to refer her to Kenyatta Teaching and Referral Hospital, where we covered the costs of her treatment. In addition to this, we shared her story on our social media pages, which caught the attention of some generous well-wishers who donated sanitary towels for her.

During the Post-IWD Celebration in Mathare Constituency, Nairobi County widows highlighted poverty, health issues, and GBV as their most pressing challenges which has often been exacerbated by the city's high cost of living. These widows struggle to provide for their children and find employment, making their daily lives burdensome and dire.

5. MACHAKOS COUNTY

We learned of significant challenges the widows face, including misinformation by coordinators and a lack of awareness about accessing government funds. This has led to some being misled to repay the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF).

6. VIHIGA COUNTY

- During International Widows Day celebrations in Vihiga County, Land Disinheritance was highlighted as one of the major challenges that widows in Vihiga County face alongside discrimination, abuse and difficulties in accessing justice for their violated rights.

7. KILIFI AND TAITA TAVETA COUNTIES

In Kilifi and Taita Taveta counties, widows confront harmful cultural practices that perpetuate their marginalization and vulnerability. In Kilifi County, we encountered a heart-wrenching case involving a young widow, just 20 years old, and mother to four young children. This widow faced a grave injustice: her late husband's land, which they had purchased together, was forcefully taken from her by her in-laws and her late husband's colleague. Stripped of everything, she and her children were left homeless, forced to live on the streets. This dire situation led to frequent hospital stays due to the adverse health effects of their living conditions. Recognizing the urgency of her plight, we shared her story widely and reached out to well-wishers. Their generosity made a significant impact, with donations providing rent and essential household items. Today, this brave widow and her children are living in a safer, healthier home, free from the perils of the streets.

8. NAROK COUNTY

We uncovered a deeply troubling issue at the Post-International Widows Day celebrations in Emurua Dikir Ward and Mogondo Ward, Narok County. A staggering 90% of the widows present were still using their late husbands' ID cards because they had no idea they should be holding death certificates instead. Many of these widows also lacked knowledge on how to obtain these crucial documents. Those who had managed to process death certificates mentioned that they faced the additional hardship of mistreatment and exploitation, with exorbitant fees imposed on them.

9. KAJIADO COUNTY

In Kajiado County, widows highlighted a significant challenge in inheriting their late husbands' properties, particularly in cases where multiple widows are involved. The absence of a will has led to disputes and difficulties in sharing the property, leaving these widows in a vulnerable and uncertain position.

6.0 GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There's an urgent need to enforce widows' land and property inheritance rights as outlined in the 2010 Kenyan Constitution. To make sure this is made possible, we need to engage the relevant authorities, such as the National Land Commission, to ensure that widows' land inheritance rights are protected and enforced. This collaboration will help address legal barriers and facilitate the rightful transfer of property to widows.
2. From our many years of advocacy in this field we have noted there is a need to engage traditional leaders and gatekeepers within communities in **Meru, Vihiga, Kilifi, Kajiado, Machakos, Kirinyaga, Kisumu, Migori, Siaya, Taita Taveta, Lamu, Tana River, Garissa, Samburu, Laikipia, Isiolo, Embu, Murang'a, Nyandarua, Narok, Nandi, Kwale, Kericho, Baringo, West Pokot, Elgeyo Marakwet** to foster a cultural shift. By involving these influential figures, we can challenge and change the norms that perpetuate land disinheritance
3. We must make efforts to ***Combat GBV Against Widows and their Children Now***. There is a critical need to Create Awareness on Gender Based Violence meted on Widows and their children tagged as 'Our Culture' by different communities yet in reality its Sexual Harassment, Physical Violence, Emotional Violence, Financial Violence, Technology Facilitated GBV (TF-GBV) especially after winning court cases in-laws and other community members decide to fight back on social media and this affects Widows and their Children Emotionally.
4. Psycho-social Support- The immediate need of Widows and their Children is psycho-social support so that they are able to pick up their broken pieces. Psycho-social support is highly recommended for the Widows and their children in their villages. CTWOO has a vision if resources are available will start a hot line for counselling the Widows/ers and their children so that they can be able to go through Loss and Grief because it is a non-negotiable path that needs help.
5. Local government officials in every county must urgently prioritize the plight of widows. From MPs to Members of County Assemblies and all county government staff, their immediate action is needed to ensure robust social welfare programs are in place. These programs should focus on providing crucial support and care for elderly widows who have no one else to turn to. It's time for local governments to step up, act decisively, and make widows' well-being a top priority in every county. Additionally, awareness campaigns should be conducted to educate widows on the importance of obtaining official death certificates for their late husbands'. rather than relying on identity cards, emphasizing how these certificates are essential for legal and administrative purposes. By enhancing accessibility and awareness through these measures, we can empower widows to navigate administrative procedures effectively and secure their entitlements with greater ease and dignity.
6. To tackle the Gender Gaps that have perpetuated Widow Abuse in Kenya for years, we urgently need to expand our network of Civil Society Organization partners. Strengthening these alliances is crucial not only for bridging the gender disparity but also for addressing the comprehensive needs of widows, especially concerning their health. The issues highlighted during our Free Medical Camps underscore the pressing need for robust partnerships that can deliver essential health support and solutions.
7. Ensure widows have access to clear and reliable information so that they are never misguided and exploited.
8. Raising awareness about the critical importance of drafting clear and fair wills can prevent asset disputes and provide essential security for widows. Death is a certainty, and planning ahead is essential for everyone. Every woman is a potential widow, so let's encourage everyone to prepare their wills early. This will help to ensure our loved ones are protected and our wishes are honoured.

7.0 CHALLENGES THAT OUR ORGANIZATION EXPERIENCED DURING THE INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY CELEBRATION

1. LANGUAGE BARRIER

While conducting our impactful events across various counties, we faced language barrier that necessitated interpretation services, which unfortunately we were unable to provide adequately due to limited resources. This barrier hindered effective communication and understanding between the facilitators and the widows during the events. Furthermore, there was a specific case involving widows who were deaf, requiring sign language interpretation for effective communication. Regrettably, due to the same resource constraints, we were unable to meet this crucial need, which posed additional challenges and barriers to their access to necessary information and support.

2. LACK OF ENOUGH LEGAL OFFICERS

During the International Widows Day celebration in Vihiga County, one of the significant challenges we encountered was the absence of several legal organizations, including FIDA, whom we had invited to participate. Consequently, we had only one legal officer from our office available to provide legal empowerment to the widows present. The number of cases requiring attention far exceeded the capacity of our legal officer and this created a situation where the workload became overwhelming and the ability to effectively address each case was compromised. This shortage of legal expertise meant that many widows did not receive the comprehensive legal support they needed, highlighting a critical gap in resources and support services during the event.

3. LACK OF SENSITIZATION AMONG OUR WIDOWS ON HEALTH ISSUES

Many widows attending the Free Medical Camp on 22nd June 2024 were unfamiliar with the importance of blood donation and the process involved. This necessitated an urgent need to educate and sensitize them about the significance of blood donation and other pertinent health issues. The absence of this knowledge among the widows underscored a gap in health education and awareness within the community, highlighting the importance of integrating such education into future events to ensure broader understanding and participation in health initiatives. Addressing this gap became crucial for promoting community health and well-being among widows in similar settings.

4. GENDER BASED VIOLENCE CASES EMERGED

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases emerged as a significant and concerning challenge during the International Widows Day Celebrations. Several widows attending the event disclosed instances of GBV they had experienced, ranging from physical and emotional abuse to economic exploitation. The prevalence of these cases highlighted the urgent need for support services and interventions aimed at addressing GBV within the widow community. Many widows expressed fear and hesitation in reporting these incidents due to social stigma, fear of retaliation, and a lack of accessible legal and counselling support. The event served as a crucial platform to raise awareness about GBV issues among widows and underscored the importance of establishing robust mechanisms for prevention, protection, and support for survivors within the community. Efforts to address GBV during such events are essential for promoting the rights and well-being of widows and fostering a safer and more supportive environment for all attendees.

5. CHALLENGES IN RAISING RESOURCES FOR HOSTING THE INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENTS

Resource mobilization poses a significant challenge when addressing issues concerning widows, particularly during International Widows Day in Vihiga County. The lack of adequate funding has created a stark picture of unmet needs and limited support for widows in Vihiga County. Our efforts to support widows are frequently hindered by insufficient financial resources, impacting critical areas such as healthcare, education for children, housing, and economic empowerment programs. This scarcity of funds prevents initiatives aimed at improving the lives of widows from reaching their full potential.

During International Widows Day, the spotlight on these challenges became particularly poignant. The day served as a reminder of the hardships widows face, exacerbated by the inability of local organizations and authorities to secure adequate funds for targeted interventions. As a result, widows often find themselves marginalized and unable to fully participate in societal activities or access essential services that could alleviate their plight. Furthermore, the lack of funding perpetuates a cycle

of dependency and vulnerability among widows, making it difficult for them to break free from economic hardships or discriminatory practices they might face within their communities. Addressing these challenges requires a concerted effort from government bodies, NGOs, and the private sector to prioritize and allocate sufficient resources towards programs that support widows. This includes not only financial support but also capacity building, advocacy for policy changes, and creating sustainable mechanisms for ongoing assistance.

While International Widows Day aims to raise awareness and mobilize support for widows worldwide, the persistent challenge of resource mobilization in Vihiga County highlights the urgent need for greater financial commitment and innovative solutions to improve the lives and prospects of widows in the community.

8.0 REQUEST TO SUPPORT OUR ORGANIZATION'S MISSION

Having experienced the challenge of **inadequate funding and financial support** that made it difficult for us to make our International Widows Day celebrations the best they could be, and to fully address the needs presented by the widows who participated in these events, we are reaching out to potential donors and funders to help us expand our reach and efforts in championing the rights of widows in Kenya. Widowhood is a difficult journey, and as an organization, we continue to face obstacles in securing the necessary funds. The struggle for resource mobilization was strongly manifested in the limitations we faced, hindering our ability to provide essential services and support to widows.

We urge like-minded organizations, both legal and economic, as well as national and international entities, to support our cause. The challenges widows face is multifaceted and require a robust, collaborative approach to address effectively. By pooling resources and expertise, we can create sustainable solutions that empower widows, enabling them to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. We believe that when we get the necessary support, we can be able to bridge the gap between the current state of under-funding and the potential for transformative change in the lives of widows in our nation.

Moreover, the impact of our work extends beyond immediate assistance. Our programs aim to provide long-term solutions, including healthcare, education, housing, and economic empowerment. These initiatives are crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty and dependency that many widows and their families face. However, without sufficient funding, our capacity to implement and sustain these programs is severely limited.

In addition to financial support, we seek partnerships that can offer technical assistance, capacity building, and advocacy support. Strengthening our organizational capacity is essential for scaling our impact and ensuring that our interventions are effective and sustainable. We are committed to transparency and accountability, ensuring that every contribution is used efficiently to maximize its impact on the lives of widows.

The persistent challenge of resource mobilization in that we experienced during our International Widows Celebrations in the various counties where we hosted these events, highlighted the urgent need for greater financial commitment and innovative solutions to improve the lives and prospects of widows in the community. We believe that by joining hands, we can ensure that widows receive the support they need to overcome the challenges they face.

We call on government bodies, NGOs, the private sector, and individuals to step forward and contribute to this critical cause. Together, we can create a future where widows are empowered, respected, and integrated into the fabric of our society.