



COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION
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REPORT ON THE PRE-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS' DAY CELEBRATION, MAIN INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS' DAY CELEBRATIONS AND POST-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS' DAY CELEBRATIONS 2024

A faint watermark of the CTWOO logo is centered on the page, featuring the same circular emblem and the text "CTWOO NATIONAL ORGANIZATION" in pink.

JULY 11, 2024

COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION



CTWOO
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

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.

Widowhood is a universally challenging phase of life affecting millions worldwide. Recent statistics reveal there are over **258 million widows globally**, with a substantial 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 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.

Since 2016, Come Together Widows and Orphans has diligently marked International Widows Day in Kenya, reaching out to over **400,000 widows nationwide**. These celebrations have significantly impacted their lives, protecting their Rights, safeguarding their Dignity, and Promoting their overall Well-being. Our organization's dedication to improving the lives of widows and orphans was showcased through a series of events leading up to, during, and following the International Widows Day (IWD) celebrations throughout the months of June and July 2024. Each phase of our activities had specific goals which included honouring widows' resilience, raising awareness about their challenges across various counties, providing direct support, and advocating for policy reforms as well as gaining the support of State and Non-State actors who joined us during these celebrations hence signalling a united front in championing Widows' Rights.

By organizing these events, we aimed to create a ripple effect of positive change in our community and beyond. Our targeted media campaigns, interviews, and feature stories aimed to challenge stereotypes, dismantle harmful myths, and foster a more inclusive society where widows are recognized for their resilience and contributions to community development.

This report provides a detailed summary of the Pre-International Widows Day Celebrations, the Main International Widows Day Celebration, and the Post-International Widows Day Celebrations that we organized throughout June and July 2024.



REPORT ON PRE- INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY

CELEBRATIONS 2024

We organized and celebrated a series of Pre-International Widow's Day events across several counties in Kenya, including **Meru, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Nairobi, Machakos and Vihiga**. These events were conducted between **7th June 2024** and **22nd June 2024** and served as a precursor to our main International Widow's Day celebration that was scheduled for 23rd June 2024, in Vihiga County. The primary objective of these build-up events was to honour and empower widows, raise awareness about their rights, and promote their prosperity through various empowerment initiatives as well as mobilizing them for the Main International Widows Day Celebration.

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.

Hosting these events in various regions ensured a wider reach and engagement, allowing for a more inclusive and impactful recognition of widows' plights, their contributions and promoting their rights. During the celebrations, the main challenges recognized were **the systemic barriers affecting Widows' Access to Land and Property Rights**. These barriers include legal complexities, cultural norms that undermine women's inheritance rights, and administrative challenges that hinder widows from securing ownership or control over assets after their spouses' deaths. These challenges perpetuate economic vulnerability and social exclusion among widows, denying them essential resources for livelihood and independence.

These events facilitated crucial discussions and advocacy efforts aimed at addressing these challenges. Recognizing these challenges, we ignited critical conversations on land and property rights for widows, engaging policymakers, community leaders, and widows themselves. Through enlightening educational sessions and dynamic policy forums, our widows were able to gain deep insights into legal frameworks and rights protections. This empowerment encouraged widows to assert their rights more confidently and provided a platform for them to voice their concerns directly to decision-makers in their various communities and to the policy makers. Furthermore, the celebrations served as a catalyst for local initiatives and partnerships aimed at improving widows' access to land and property. Collaborative efforts between civil society organizations, government agencies, and community groups were strengthened, leading to advocacy campaigns for policy reforms and the implementation of supportive measures. By leveraging these platforms, we were able to create a supportive environment where widows were able to access legal aid, financial literacy programs, and practical resources to navigate complex inheritance processes. Ultimately, these events contributed to broader societal changes by promoting Gender Equality and enhancing widows' socio-economic empowerment across Kenya.

Looking forward, we aim to build on the momentum generated during these celebrations. Our future goals include expanding our outreach programs, increasing community involvement, and strengthening our advocacy efforts to ensure that widows and orphans receive the recognition, support, and opportunities they deserve. We believe that by continuing to work together, we can create a society where widows are empowered, respected, and able to thrive.

PRE- INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD AT KATHERA CHIEF'SCAMP-MERU COUNTY

On 7th June 2024, we organized our 1st Pre- International Widows' Day Celebration 2024 at **Kathera Chief'sCamp- Meru County**. The event brought onboard more than 300 widows who got empowered and felt loved and valued because of this special celebration. The theme of the Pre- International Widows' Day was 'ACCELERATING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF GENDER EQUALITY (WITH EMPHASIS ON STRENGTHENING LAND AND PROPERTY RIGHTS.)'

INSPIRATIONAL SESSION

Understanding the Challenges Faced by Ms. Esther, Chairlady, South Imenti Widows CBO



Ms. Esther – Widow representative highlighting challenges faced by widows in Meru County during the Pre- International widow's day celebration

She began by shedding light on the multifaceted challenges widows' encounter. She highlighted the pervasive social stigma attached to widowhood, which often leads to marginalization and discrimination. This stigma not only affects their emotional well-being but also hinders their access to resources and opportunities. Additionally, she emphasized the economic hardships widows face, exacerbated by limited access to employment and property rights. Furthermore, she discussed the lack of social support structures, leaving many widows vulnerable to exploitation

and abuse. Overall, her testimony underscored the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address the complex issues widows confront, including social, economic, and legal reforms aimed at promoting their rights

and empowerment.

WIDOWS CAPACITY BUILDING

Economic Empowerment by Ms. Asenath Murungi- South Constituency NGAAF Coordinator.



Ms. Asenath Murungi- South Imenti Constituency NGAAF Coordinator highlighting Economic and Legal Empowerment among widows in Meru County During the Pre-International Widows Day celebration

During the pre-International Widows Day event, the representative from the NGAAF sub-county passionately advocated for the economic empowerment among widows in this area and legal empowerment of widows, emphasizing its pivotal role in ensuring their rights and dignity. She eloquently described the community's proactive measures to empower widows by providing widows funds that will enable them to start their own businesses, including providing legal education and assistance tailored to their needs. Through these efforts, she emphasized the transformational impact of recognizing widows as integral members of society and ensuring their access to essential services and opportunities for self-reliance.



SPEECHES

ADMINISTRATION (CHIEFS AND SUB CHIEFS IN MERU COUNTY LED BY TIMOTHY MURITHI-CHIEF KATHERA LOCATION)



Chiefs in Meru County led by Timothy Murithi-Chief Kathera Location addressing Legal Empowerment among Widows in Meru County during the Pre-International Widows Day

The administrators, chiefs, and sub-chiefs, recognized the critical role they play in supporting widows within our communities. They affirmed their commitment to ensuring that widows are not marginalized or left without the necessary support systems. By fostering inclusive policies, providing access to resources, and promoting social cohesion, they can create an environment where widows feel empowered, respected, and valued members of society. They promised to work together to address the unique challenges faced by widows and strive to build a more equitable and compassionate community for all.

ECONOMIC, LEGAL EMPOWERMENT AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT BY MR. MUGAMBI MURITHI-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICER SOUTH JIMENTI SUB-COUNTY



Mr. Mugambi Murithi-Social Development Officer South Jimenti Sub-County highlighting Economic, legal Empowerment and Psychosocial support among widows in Meru County during the Pre-International widow's day celebration

He promised he must engage in proactive outreach initiatives, conducting needs assessments to understand the specific challenges widows face, be it economic, social, or emotional. Through targeted programs, such as vocational training, access to microfinance, and psychosocial support groups, he can empower widows to regain their independence and rebuild their lives.

Additionally, advocacy for policies that protect widows' rights and combat discrimination is crucial in fostering an environment of inclusivity and equality. He finished his speech saying, "let us seize this opportunity to

demonstrate our unwavering commitment to the well-being and empowerment of widows in our community.



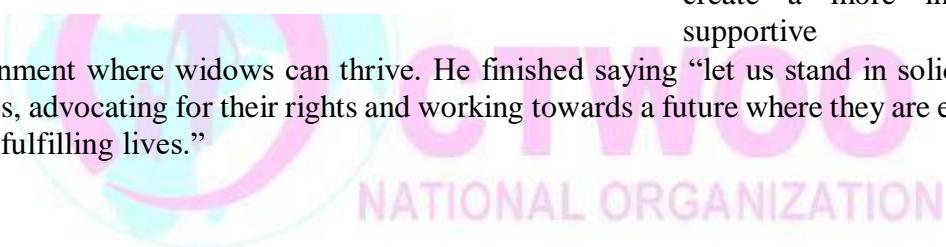
LEGAL AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT BY REPRESENTATIVE OF SOUTH IMENTI MP



South-Imenti Sub-County MP representative addressing Economic and Legal Empowerment among widows in Meru County during the Pre-International widow's day celebration

As the representative of South Imenti MP, he gave his speech and said how it is imperative for them to recognize the invaluable contributions widows make to our community and to ensure they receive the support they deserve. On this pre-International Widows Day, he was sent by the area MP to pledge on how they will prioritize initiatives aimed at providing widows with access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. By implementing targeted policies, such as widow-specific welfare programs and initiatives to promote gender equality, they can create a more inclusive and supportive

environment where widows can thrive. He finished saying “let us stand in solidarity with widows, advocating for their rights and working towards a future where they are empowered to lead fulfilling lives.”



DR. DIANAH KAMANDE- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CTWOO



Dr. Dianah Kamande HSc- Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, encouraging widows on Economic and Legal Empowerment in Meru County during the Pre-International widow's day celebration

She began by saying such Special Celebrations remind her of the journey that led to the inception of CTWOO since it was formed out of a deep-seated desire to create a positive impact in the lives of widows and orphans, who are often overlooked and forgotten by society. She mentioned that on this Pre- International Widows Day, as we celebrate the theme of "Accelerating the achievement of Gender Equality with emphasis on strengthening land and property

rights," let everyone renew his/her commitment to empowering widows. She encouraged them to be relentless in pursuit of Justice, Equality, and Economic

Opportunities for Widows. She mentioned that the strangest journey is Widowhood where no preparation is done. When widowhood strikes actually friends run away or they are the first ones to stigmatize you. Widowhood comes with tears while other life events come with laughter. She emphasized that it is important for the world to know that Widows have rights that are even recognized in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the **Maputo Protocol**. She ended her speech by extending a heartfelt invitation to widows to attend and participate in the **Main International Widows Day event** which was scheduled to take place in **Vihiga County on 23rd June 2024**. She encouraged the widows to attend that particular event because the event would offer a larger platform for them for their voices to be heard.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the Pre-International Widows' Day Celebration held in Meru County on 7th June 2024, organized by us, was a resounding success, bringing together over 300 widows who were empowered and uplifted through various activities and speeches focused on the theme of 'Accelerating the achievement of Gender Equality with emphasis on strengthening land and property rights. From inspirational sessions highlighting the challenges widows face to cultural performances celebrating their resilience, the event showcased solidarity and support for widows within the community. Key stakeholders, including local administrators, social development officers, and political representatives, pledged their commitment to ensuring the well-being and empowerment of widows through policy initiatives and practical support. Dr. Dianah Kamande's closing remarks emphasized the importance of recognizing widows' rights and invited them to participate in the upcoming International Widows Day event in Vihiga County, offering a larger platform for their voices to be heard. Overall, the event served as a rallying point for advocacy, awareness, and action to promote justice, equality, and economic opportunities for widows in society.

PRE- INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD IN MUKURE WARD, KIRINYAGA COUNTY

On Tuesday, 11th June 2024, we were in Mukure Ward, Kirinyaga County where we hosted an impactful Pre-International Widows Day that brought together 100 widows from Mukure ward. The event aimed at empowering widows recognizing their struggles and offering support in collaboration with key stakeholders, aligning with this year's International Widows Day's theme '*Accelerating the achievement of gender equality with emphasis on strengthening land and property rights.*' We were honored to have the Area Member of County Assembly as our guest and our Founder & Executive Director, Dr. Dianah Kamande, Founder Executive Director CTWOO as the chief guest of honor of this event.

ACTIVITY DETAILS

CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION

Economic Empowerment Session by: Mrs. Loise Muriuki- WEF representative Kirinyaga county



Mrs. Loise WEF coordinator Mukure Constituency, Kirinyaga county- conducting economic empowerment for widows during a Pre- International Widows Day in Kirinyaga county

Mrs. Loise Muriuki, Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) Coordinator Mukure constituency, spearheaded the economic empowerment segment of the event. She delivered an insightful session focusing on practical strategies and resources available to empower widows economically. She discussed the significance of financial literacy and business training in empowering widows to make informed financial decisions and manage their businesses effectively. She also elaborated

how WEF as an entity is committed to fostering economic growth and independence among widows to ensure they live a dignified and fulfilled lives. Mrs. Loise Muriuki shared examples of successful widows' groups that have benefited from the Fund's programs and the Thamini Mjane Loan product under WEF that has transformed the lives of many widows. She took the widows through the process of how to access and make commitments in seeking the funds and the Thamini Mjane loan in order to help them achieve Economic Independence. This session

left the widows motivated knowing that they have access to support and resources that can transform their lives.

Psychosocial support session



One of the widows telling her story on her journey to widowhood

Several widows were given an opportunity to share their stories on their loss and grief. They were able to share their stories to the group on how they became widows and the challenges they have gone through and their resilience in fighting for their rights, providing psychosocial support and encouraging and empowering the widows who were present that by working together with the help of CTWOO they will be able to live fulfilled and dignified lives.

SPEECHES

Ms. Charity- Chairperson Mukure Widows group



The chairperson Mrs. Charity addressing the congregation highlighting the resilience that the group has shown towards improving their living standards.

She began by giving a word of appreciation to the chief guest madam Dianah from Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization for holding such a wonderful event with the Mukure widows group and that she was very humbled. She stated that such occasion holds profound significance for all of them, as it not only highlights the resilience and strength of widows worldwide but also serves as a poignant reminder of the challenges widows continue to face. She also gave a vote of thanks to the widows for having endured societal stigma, discrimination, and

marginalization by allowing themselves to get appreciating the guests Hon. Lydia Murithi nominated area MCA for honoring the invitation and Ms. Loise, representative from WEF for the great work and role she has played in empowering the widows Economically. She stated that the Economic Empowerment from Ms. Loise will greatly transform and impact the lives of the widows in Mukure Ward.

Chief Guest: Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director CTWOO



Dr. Dianah Kamande Founder and Executive Director CTWOO, sharing her personal journey and commitment to empowering widows, providing them with legal empowerment in order for them to live dignified and fulfilled lives

Dr. Dianah Kamande, esteemed guest of honor and renowned advocate for widows' rights, delivered an inspiring address. She acknowledged the good work that CTWOO is doing in advocating for widows' rights and promoting legal empowerment. She extended her gratitude to Ms. Charity for organizing such a wonderful event and for the warm welcome she has received from the widows. She shared her personal journey and commitment to empowering

widows which resonated deeply with the audience. She also extended her deepest appreciation to Hon. Lydia for the great work she is doing in the area, all the participants and organizations for their contribution to the success of the event. She ended her speech by extending a heartfelt invitation to the widows to attend and participate in the main international widows' day which will be taking place on 23rd June in Vihiga county focusing on the theme (Financial inclusion to end Gender-Based Violence on widows and children).

Hon. Lydia Murithi, nominated area MCA Mukure ward



Nominated area MCA Lydia Murithi emphasizing the need to address the challenges faced by widows in the ward and providing them with support and empowerment

She began her speech by acknowledging the significance of the occasion extending her gratitude to Dr. Diana Kamande and Ms. Charity for such a wonderful event, emphasizing the need to address the challenges faced by widows and provide them with necessary Support and Empowerment. She promised that her office will stay committed supporting widows by

creating sustainable opportunities for their economic and social empowerment. Hon. Lydia ended her

speech by pledging continued support for widows through advocacy and resource allocation.

CONCLUSION

The Pre-International Widows Day event held on Tuesday, 11th June 2024, in Kirinyaga County was a resounding success. Through comprehensive economic and Legal empowerment sessions, widows were equipped with valuable knowledge and resources to enhance their socio-economic well-being. The collaboration between organizations, dignitaries, and community members exemplifies a collective effort to champion the rights and dignity of widows, paving the way for a more inclusive and supportive society.



PRE- INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD IN NGINDA WARD, MURANG'A COUNTY

On June 13, 2024, we hosted our 3rd Pre- International Widows Day event in Nginda Ward, Murang'a County. The event was held at the AIPCA Church Kaharo in Nginda Ward and focused on economic empowerment, legal empowerment, and psychosocial support for widows.

ACTIVITY DETAILS

1. Opening Ceremony by the hosting pastor AIPCA Church Kaharo



The pastor in-charge of AIPCA church Kaharo opening the event with a word of prayer

The event began with a solemn and heartfelt word of prayer led by the pastor in charge of the AIPCA Church Kaharo, setting a respectful tone for the proceedings. In his opening remarks, the pastor extended a warm welcome to the widows and distinguished guests, expressing his wholehearted support for the event and acknowledging its importance within the community. He graciously granted permission for the church to be used as the venue, emphasizing the church's commitment to fostering community support and engagement.

The significance of the event was further elevated by the presence of the assistant chief, who

represented the area chief, emphasizing the local administration's endorsement and recognition of the group's efforts. This notable presence highlighted the event's importance and reinforced the collaborative spirit between the community and its leaders in addressing the needs and concerns of widows.

2. Welcome Address by Mary Njeri, chair lady 4K widow's group



Ms. Mary Njeri, the chair lady of the 4K widow's group welcoming widows and the guests to the event

The chair lady of the 4K Widows' Group warmly welcomed the widows and distinguished guests present at the event. In her address, she provided a comprehensive overview of the group's history, tracing its journey from humble beginnings to its present status. She eloquently narrated the inception of the 4K Widows' Group, highlighting the challenges faced and the resilience displayed by its members. The chairlady detailed the group's numerous achievements over the years, emphasizing the collective efforts that have led to their current success. Her

speech set a tone of unity and purpose for the day's activities, inspiring attendees with a sense of community and shared goals. Through her words, she conveyed the group's unwavering

commitment to supporting each other and fostering a supportive environment for all members.

WIDOWS CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION

3. Psychosocial Support Session by: Ms. Alice Wambui Chomba- Psycho-social support officer, CTWOO



Ms. Alice offering psychosocial support to the widows in Murang'a County

Ms. Alice Chomba coordinated the psychosocial support session, focusing on several key areas. She began by acknowledging the profound loss experienced by the widows, validating their grief, and establishing a connection. Alice reassured the widows that they were not alone, emphasizing the availability of emotional, social, and psychological support from the community and the organization. She highlighted the strength and resilience demonstrated by the widows, aiming to empower them and

boost their self-esteem. Alice stressed on the importance of being a connected community, encouraging the widows to share their stories and experiences to foster a supportive network and reduce feelings of isolation. The importance of self-care was discussed, emphasizing the need for widows to nurture their physical and mental well-being for their overall health and their ability to support their families. Finally, Alice encouraged the widows to remain hopeful and to focus on the possibilities and opportunities ahead.

4. Economic Empowerment and Legal Empowerment Sessions by Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director CTWOO

I. Economic Empowerment



Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director of CTWOO taking the widows through a session of Economic Empowerment

Dr. Dianah Kamande, the executive director and founder of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, informed the widows about various government funds available to them, providing crucial information aimed at enhancing their financial independence and economic stability. She introduced the widows to the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF), and the Uwezo Fund. Dr. Kamande conscientiously detailed the application processes for each of the funds, ensuring that the widows understood how to access these resources effectively. She

explained that the WEF and Uwezo Fund are refundable, meaning that the recipients would need to repay the funds, which are often provided at low interest rates or with flexible repayment terms to support small business ventures and economic activities. In contrast, she clarified that the NGAAF is non-refundable, serving as a grant intended to support women's economic initiatives without the obligation of repayment. By providing this comprehensive information, Dr. Kamande aimed to equip the widows with the necessary knowledge and resources to leverage these funds, ultimately empowering them to achieve greater economic stability and self-sufficiency. This session was designed to build the widows' confidence in accessing and utilizing government resources to support their financial growth and to help them understand the specific opportunities and obligations associated with each fund.

II. Legal Empowerment



Dr. Dianah Kamande taking the widows through a Legal Empowerment session to enhance their understanding on legal cases they face and how they can acquire help

Dr. Dianah Kamande also conducted a comprehensive legal empowerment session for the widows in Nginda Ward, Murang'a County. During this session, she emphasized the organization's commitment to supporting widows by connecting them with reputable legal partners. Dr.

Kamande highlighted collaborations with key legal entities such as Kituo cha Sheria, FIDA Kenya, and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), among others. These partnerships are designed to provide the widows with access to legal resources and support. They are well-equipped to navigate legal challenges and protect their rights.

challenges and protect their rights. By leveraging these connections, the organization aims to empower widows with the legal knowledge and resources necessary to address issues such as inheritance rights, property disputes, and other legal matters pertinent to their well-being and that of their families.

CONCLUSION

The pre-International Widows Day event was a significant step towards empowering widows in Nginda Ward, Murang'a County. Through economic and legal empowerment and psychosocial support, the event addressed critical areas of need for the widows. The support and empowerment provided aimed to foster resilience, community, and hope among the widows. The Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization remains committed to supporting widows and orphans, working towards a future where they can thrive and achieve their full potential.

PRE-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD IN KASARANI CONSTITUENCY, NAIROBI COUNTY

On **15th June 2024**, we held a transformative Economic Empowerment event as our **4th Pre-International Widows Day event in Kasarani Constituency, Nairobi County**. This event, focused on promoting Economic Empowerment for our Widows Group, Bethel Widows Group. Organized with a commitment to addressing the challenges faced by widows, particularly in achieving financial independence, the event gathered **50** widows to discuss, learn, and strategize on effective ways to enhance economic opportunities and socio-economic inclusion for widows. Throughout the day, widows engaged in enriching activities including workshops and practical skill-building sessions. The event not only highlighted the importance of economic empowerment but also underscored the resilience and determination of our widows who are striving to improve their livelihoods despite various obstacles.

The event featured poignant success stories from widows who have benefited immensely from various empowerment programs facilitated by the CBO. These programs include the **Brook Bank Kitty** from that is funded by our partner the **Global Fund For Widows** and supported by the **National Government Affirmative Action Fund through Woman Representative Hon Esther M. Passaris OGW**. Widows shared transformative experiences, showing our organization programs like the Table Banking Kitty and the Skills Training program which have not only provided financial stability but also fostered a sense of community and empowerment within their group. Their stories underscored the profound impact of economic empowerment, illustrating how these initiatives have enabled them to develop sustainable livelihoods and become self-reliant entrepreneurs. The success stories served as powerful reminders of the resilience and potential of widows when given the necessary support and opportunities.

CAPACITY BUILDING SESSION



A widow, beneficiary of the Brook Bank project sponsored by Global Funds for Widows shared her journey on how the resources enabled her to start up her tailoring shop business

During this event, widows witnessed inspiring presentations and testimonials that highlighted the transformative impact of our Economic Empowerment initiatives on widows' lives. Beneficiaries of the Brook bank project from Global Fund For Widows and support from the National Government Affirmative Action Fund shared their journeys, showing how these resources enabled them to start and expand their businesses. These widows spoke passionately about overcoming financial constraints and societal challenges, emphasizing how access to the Brook bank project has empowered them to become successful entrepreneurs and community leaders. Additionally, testimonials came in from widows who have directly benefited from the Table Banking project

and the Tailoring and Design Center established by Bethel Widows CBO. These programs have not only provided essential financial resources but also equipped widows with valuable skills in tailoring and design. Many shared stories of resilience and growth, expressing gratitude for the opportunities that have allowed them to support their families independently. Their testimonials underscored the importance of tailored support and inclusive economic initiatives in fostering sustainable livelihoods among widows.

EXHIBITION BY BETHEL WIDOWS GROUP

1. Tailoring and Design Training Centre

The widows were able to show us through their Tailoring and Design Training Centre, where they earn their daily income. This training center, offers practical sessions designed to enhance skills and display products developed by widows of Bethel Widows CBO. This work is led by experienced instructors and skilled widows within the group, and provides them with hands-on training in various aspects of tailoring and design. These widows have been able to learn. These widows have been able to learn fundamental techniques such as pattern making, cutting, stitching, and finishing garments. They also had the opportunity to engage in interactive sessions where they could ask questions, receive personalized guidance, and share their own experiences.



photo of a tailoring and design training centre owned and managed by Bethel Widows CBO

The widows demonstrated their proficiency in tailoring and design by showcasing a range of products including traditional attire, modern clothing, and customized pieces tailored to meet diverse customer preferences. This practical approach not only enhanced their skills but also boosted their confidence as entrepreneurs in the fashion industry.

2. Baking and Catering Training Centre



Baking and catering workshop designed to empower widows with practical skills they need to thrive in fostering their economic empowerment in the competitive market place

This Baking and Catering skills training center has introduced widows to basic cooking techniques and essential business management tips to support the launch of their new catering business. They have been able to gain hands-on experience fundamental cooking and baking skills such as ingredient selection, food preparation, baking techniques, and presentation.

The classes are designed to empower widows with practical skills that not only enhance their culinary abilities but also equip them with the knowledge and confidence to establish and manage their own catering businesses. Through these interactive

workshops, Bethel Widows CBO continues to foster economic empowerment by providing widows with the tools and training needed to thrive in the competitive marketplace while celebrating their resilience and entrepreneurial spirit.

Chairperson Bethel widows CBO, Rose Ndunge

Rose Ndunge, chairperson of Bethel Widows CBO, expressing her gratitude to the widows for their dedication and collaborating towards achieving economic empowerment

Madam Rose Ndunge, Chairperson of Bethel Widows CBO, expressed sincere gratitude to the widows for their dedicated collaboration and hard work towards achieving economic empowerment. She highlighted their resilience and unity as key factors in the success of their initiatives, emphasizing how their collective efforts have transformed not only their own lives but also their community. Madam Rose went on to extend her thanks to Hon. Esther Passaris for her instrumental role in securing Economic empowerment through the National Government Affirmative Action

Fund. She acknowledged Hon. Passaris's advocacy and support, recognizing that it has significantly contributed to the empowerment and upliftment of widows within their organization. Furthermore, Madam Rose expressed heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Brook Hazelton, the owner of Brook bank, and Ms. Heather Ibrahim Leathers for their generous contributions and continuous support. She noted that their belief in the vision of empowering widows through the Brook Bank Kitty has provided essential resources and opportunities for growth, enabling widows to develop sustainable livelihoods and thrive independently. She expressed optimism for the future and reaffirmed their commitment to continuing their mission of empowering widows and creating a lasting impact in their community

Dianah Kamande, Founder and Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization



Madam Dianah Kamande acknowledging the resilience, innovation and dedication of the widows towards achieving sustainable economic empowerment.

In her remarks, Madam Dianah Kamande, expressed heartfelt gratitude to the widows of Bethel Widows CBO for the commendable work they have accomplished through the economic empowerment initiatives provided by the organization. She emphasized the profound impact their dedication and entrepreneurial spirit have had in transforming their lives and communities. Madam Dianah reflected on the key insights and takeaways from the event, highlighting the importance of resilience, innovation and community support in achieving sustainable economic empowerment. She acknowledged and

thanked the sponsors, partners and volunteers whose steadfast support contributed to the success of the event and the empowerment programs. She eloquently highlighted the importance of International Widows Day, emphasizing its role in raising awareness about the challenges widows face globally and the need for empowering initiatives. She concluded with a message of encouragement, urging continued collaboration and empowerment efforts to create lasting change and opportunities for widows to thrive independently.

CONCLUSION

The Pre-International Widows Day event held on 15th June at Sunton, Kasarani, was a resounding success in promoting economic empowerment for the Bethel Widows Group. Through engaging discussions, informative sessions, and practical workshops, participants gained valuable insights into financial management, entrepreneurship, and skills development. The event underscored the importance of empowering widows economically, not only for their own self-sufficiency but also for their communities' overall socio-economic growth. As we reflect on the event, it's clear that initiatives like these that we conduct as an organization are crucial in fostering resilience, independence, and dignity among widows, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable society. We extend our gratitude to all participants, speakers, and organizers for their contributions to making this event impactful and inspiring.

PRE-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD IN MATUNGULU WEST WARD, MACHAKOS COUNTY

On Tuesday, June 18, 2024, we hosted our 5th Pre-International Widows Day event in Matungulu West Ward, Machakos County. The event was held at the Redeemed Gospel Church Koma and was marked by a series of empowering activities to address the needs of widows in the community.

ACTIVITY DETAILS

1. Welcoming by the chair lady of Mashujaa widow's group, Ms. Nyambura Shirandula



Ms. Nyambura Shirandula, chair lady of Mashujaa widow's group welcoming widows and guests during the Pre-International Widow's Day celebration.

The event commenced with an uplifting session of praise and worship, creating an atmosphere of unity and spiritual reflection. This was followed by a heartfelt word of prayer led by Nyambura Shirandula, the esteemed chairlady of the Mashujaa Widows' Group. With grace and reverence, she invoked blessings upon the widows, setting a tone of solemnity and purpose for the day's proceedings. Following the prayer, Nyambura Shirandula

extended a warm and sincere welcome to all the widows in attendance, acknowledging their strength and resilience. She then proceeded to introduce the distinguished guests, highlighting the significance of their presence. Among the notable guests was Reverend Julius Musyimi of the Redeemed Gospel Church Koma, who graciously hosted the event, providing a supportive and welcoming venue for the gathering. Additionally, she introduced Thomas Musau, the area chief, and his assistant, Christine Daniel, whose presence underscored the local administration's endorsement and commitment to supporting the widow's community. Their attendance was a powerful testament to the community's solidarity and collective support for the widows, reflecting a shared commitment to addressing their needs and fostering an environment of care and inclusion. The recognition from both religious and administrative leaders emphasized the event's importance, reinforcing the collaborative spirit necessary to uplift and empower the widows within the community.

2. Psychosocial Support Session by: Miss. Alice Chomba- Psycho-social support officer, CTWOO



Ms. Alice Chomba taking the widows through a psychosocial support session

Miss Alice Wambui Chomba conducted the psychosocial support session, focusing on several critical areas. She began by acknowledging the profound loss each widow has experienced, honoring their grief, and emphasizing that it is normal and acceptable to feel all the emotions that come with their loss. This validation was essential in creating a supportive environment. Alice reassured the widows that they are not alone in their journey, highlighting the availability of support from the organization and the wider community, fostering a

sense of solidarity and understanding. Alice encouraged the widows to recognize the strength and resilience they have shown in the face of their challenges. By acknowledging their inner strength, she aimed to empower them and boost their self-confidence. She emphasized the importance of building a connected community where widows can lean on each other for support. Sharing their stories and experiences can foster a supportive network, reducing feelings of isolation and promoting a sense of belonging. Alice also discussed the importance of self-care and taking time to nurture their physical and mental well-being, noting that self-care is a vital part of the healing process and helps in maintaining overall health. Finally, she encouraged the widows to remain hopeful and to focus on the possibilities and opportunities that lie ahead, providing a sense of hope that can help them navigate their journey with a more positive outlook. Throughout her session, Miss Alice validated the widows' emotions and experiences, emphasizing that validation is crucial in helping them feel understood and supported.

3.Empowerment Session by: Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director CTWOQ



Dr. Dianah Kamande, The Founder and Executive director of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization conducting the economic empowerment session

Dr. Dianah Kamande conducted an in-depth session on economic empowerment, informing the widows about various government funds available to them. She introduced the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), Uwezo Fund, and National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF), explaining their purposes and how they can benefit the widows. Dr. Kamande detailed the application processes for these funds, ensuring the widows understood how to access these resources.

effectively. During the session, a widow raised a question about the application process for the National Government Affirmative Action Fund (NGAAF). Dr. Kamande provided a thorough explanation, addressing the concerns and clarifying the procedures involved. She also responded to the challenges raised by the widows, such as misinformation by coordinators and a lack of awareness about accessing government funds.

MOST PRESSING CHALLENGE REALIZED

One of the major challenges that the widows raised was the issue of repayment of NGAAF Funds where they are being forced by their NGAAF Coordinator to pay back the grant given to them support their group income generating activities. This emphasized the need for accurate information and proper guidance to help in ensuring that widows are not taken advantage of because of their situations.

CONCLUSION

The pre-international widows Day event in Matungulu West Ward was a significant step towards empowering widows through psychosocial support and economic empowerment. The sessions provided valuable information and support, addressing both emotional and practical needs.

REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT TRAINING FOR WIDOWS HELD ON 21ST JUNE 2024 AT MUSUNGU GROUNDS, VIHIGA COUNTY

As widows move through their own experiences of grief, loss, or trauma after the death of a spouse, they also face *Economic Insecurity, Discrimination, Stigmatization, and Harmful Traditional Practices* based on their marital status. In many countries, Widows do not have equal Inheritance Rights, they may be stripped of their Land, evicted from their home, or even separated from their Children. They may be denied access to Inheritance, Bank Account, and Credit, which can significantly impact them, their children, and future generations.

It is estimated that nearly one in ten widows worldwide lives in extreme poverty. As an organization championing for the Rights of Widows and Orphans in Kenya, we have worked with various like-minded organizations and state actors to bring interventions through Economic Empowerment for Widows.

According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) 2019, **over 1,000,760 widows** are living in Kenya, with a total of **43,748 widowed persons** in **Vihiga County, covering 37,477 widows and 6,271 widowers**. However, the number increased due to Covid-19, which turned out to be like a widow-making machine. Shockingly, most of these widows often face psychological challenges such as grief and loss. Sadly, **1 out of these 10 widows'** lives in acute poverty with the majority facing **Economic, Legal, and Social** challenges that are coupled with Emotional, Physical, and Psychological Abuse inflicted on them by the society and their in-laws.

In collaboration with the **Executive Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor**, we were happy to partner with several civil society organizations (CSOs), financial institutions, and government agencies. Among our partners were the **Youth Enterprise Fund, GROOTS Kenya, Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK), Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE), Kenya Dairy Board, Absa Bank, KCB Foundation, Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA), Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), Christ Heart Foundation, Graceful Youth Recovery Centre and the Salvation Army Church**. Together, we hosted Economic and Legal Empowerment Trainings that aimed at educating widows about their rights and providing them with avenues for economic independence. We hosted this event on 21st June 2024 serving as a precursor to our Main International Widows Day that was scheduled to take place in the same venue at **Musungu Grounds, Vihiga County**. **Our partnership with the above-mentioned partners helped in ensuring a collective responsibility and pool of resources for the success of our Pre-International Widows Day and Mai International Widows Day Celebrations.**

The event brought together **over 567 widows** from Vihiga County. These trainings focused on crucial areas such as financial literacy, Access to credit and assets, business development, and legal rights. By equipping widows with these skills and knowledge, we aimed to foster their independence and improve their economic conditions, thereby breaking the cycle of poverty and dependence. The involvement of financial institutions was particularly beneficial, as it provided widows with access to much-needed financial services and support.

Furthermore, we recognized the crucial importance of addressing the psychological and emotional well-being of widows. The church played a pivotal role in this aspect, providing a sanctuary of support and solace for grieving widows. We strongly advise widows to seek help from the church, as it offers a compassionate community that understands their struggles and provides unwavering emotional and spiritual support. With the church's guidance, widows can find strength, hope, and a renewed sense of purpose, ensuring they are not alone in their journey toward healing and empowerment.

EVENT DETAILS

WELCOMING REMARKS BY MUNGOMA AREA CHIEF

Ms. Esther Kisaranja expressed her gratitude to the organizers of the event, including the Executive Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, Youth

Enterprise Fund, GROOTS Kenya, Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK), Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE), Kenya Dairy Board, Absa Bank, KCB Foundation, Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA), Women Enterprise Fund (WEF), Christ Heart Foundation, and the Salvation Army Church. She acknowledged the invaluable efforts and collaboration in making the event possible.

She welcomed everyone to the significant event, expressing great honor and heartfelt warmth. She emphasized the importance of unity in addressing the pressing challenges faced by widows, acknowledging their immense hardship and incredible strength. Being both a widow and privileged to serve as an Area Chief, she highlighted that the gathering was not just a testament to the resilience of widows but also a beacon of hope for a brighter future. She thanked the widows for attending the event, assuring them that its purpose was to empower, educate, and uplift, ensuring that every widow knows her rights and is equipped with the necessary tools for economic independence and personal growth.

WIDOWS CAPACITY BUILDING (ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT)

Mr. William Osundwa- Youth Enterprise Fund Officer

Mr. William Osundwa from the Youth Enterprise Fund addressed the widows during the Economic and Legal Empowerment training highlighting the critical issue of youth unemployment in Kenya and its adverse effects on the children of widows. He expressed deep concern for the significant number of young people struggling to find meaningful employment and informed the widows about opportunities through the Youth Enterprise Fund, which provides access to credit, business training, and mentorship programs to promote financial independence. He highlighted the Fund's holistic development programs and urged the widows to encourage their children to seek help. He assured them of the Fund's commitment to supporting their children's journey toward economic independence and personal growth, expressing hope for a brighter, more prosperous future for the youth of Vihiga County.

Mr. Simon Mwangi-A representative from ADAK



Mr. Simon Mwangi addressing widows in Vihiga County during a Pre-International Widows Celebration 2024

Mr. Simon Mwangi from the Anti-Doping Agency of Kenya (ADAK) informed the widows about ADAK's role in promoting fair play and protecting athletes from the dangers of doping, aligning their mission with the empowerment theme of the day. Mr. Mwangi highlighted the detrimental effects of alcohol addiction on the children of widows, emphasizing the importance of awareness and prevention measures. He discussed ADAK's efforts in educating communities about the risks associated with substance abuse and encouraged the widows to educate their children about making healthy choices. Mr.

Mwangi assured them of ADAK's commitment to supporting initiatives that promote health and well-being, ensuring a safer and more empowered future for widows and their families in Vihiga County.

Mr. Makarios Moseti- An officer from Kenya Dairy Board



Mr. Makarios Moseti addressing widows in Vihiga County during a Pre-International Widows Celebration 2024

He began by informing the widows about the Kenya Dairy Board's pivotal role in supporting dairy farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. He later emphasized how empowering widows as farmers can contribute to household income and food security. He discussed various programs and resources available through the Kenya Dairy Board, such as training on modern dairy farming techniques, access to markets, and quality assurance standards. Mr. Moseti encouraged the widows to consider dairy farming as a viable economic opportunity, highlighting its potential to improve livelihoods and foster community development.

development. He assured them of the Kenya Dairy Board's commitment to providing continued support and resources to empower widows in Vihiga County, ensuring their active participation and success in the dairy sector.

Mr. Samuel Otiato- Emuhoyo Constituency, Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) Coordinator



Mr. Samuel Otiato informing widows about the WEF products during the Pre-IWD Celebrations 2024

Mr. Samuel introduced the widows to the comprehensive support offered by the Women Enterprise Fund. He elaborated on WEF's range of products designed to empower women across Kenya, emphasizing their accessibility to loans tailored to boost group businesses and promote sustainable economic growth. He highlighted essential topics typically covered in WEF training sessions, including personal finance management, budget development, group dynamics, credit and debt management, and the importance of maintaining daily records. In his engaging presentation, Mr. Otiato also informed the widows about the Thamini Mjane Loan, a specialized, interest-free financial product specifically crafted for widows.

product specifically crafted for widows. He elaborated on its significance as a tool for fostering economic independence among widows, enabling them to pursue entrepreneurial ventures with confidence.

However, Mr. Samuel highlighted critical barriers that restrict women, including widows, from accessing the Thamini Mjane Loan. One significant challenge he addressed is the requirement for a group registration certificate that specifies registration solely as a widows' group. This restriction excludes many women who may not be part of such specialized groups, limiting their eligibility for the specialized loan product. Another obstacle Mr. Otiato discussed is the digital WEF loan application process, which poses difficulties for women, particularly widows, who may have limited access to technology or face challenges navigating online platforms. This digital barrier further impedes their ability to access WEF loans effectively.

To mitigate these challenges, Mr. Otiato recommended reviewing and potentially revising the group registration requirements to include broader categories of women's groups, beyond solely widows' groups. He also recommended prioritizing a manual loan application process alongside the digital option. He emphasized that offering a manual application alternative would involve facilitating in-person assistance

and support for women throughout the application process, thereby overcoming digital literacy barriers and enhancing their chances of successfully accessing financial resources through the Women Enterprise Fund.

Mr. Joseph Ayieko- An Officer from Kenya Industrial Estates



Mr. Joseph Ayieko addressing widows during a Pre- International Widows Day Celebration 2024 in Vihiga County

Mr. Joseph Ayieko served as a knowledgeable facilitator, enlightening the widows about the pivotal role of Kenya Industrial Estate in fostering economic development. He emphasized that Kenya Industrial Estate provides essential support to entrepreneurs, including widows, by offering affordable industrial spaces, business incubation services, and access to financing solutions tailored to small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Mr. Ayieko highlighted how these resources can empower widows to establish and scale their businesses effectively, contributing to local economic growth and sustainability. He also discussed the importance of leveraging Kenya market competitiveness, and overall business resilience among widows and SMEs in Vihiga County.

Mr. Jacob Kipturgo- Representative, Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA)



Mr. Jacob Kipturgo informing widows about the mandates played by UFAA and the CSR products offered by UFAA

Mr. Jacob Kipturgo delivered a compelling address to the widows, shedding light on the crucial role of the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA). He outlined UFAA's mandate to safeguard and manage unclaimed financial assets on behalf of Kenyan citizens, emphasizing that as of January this year, a staggering total of 60 million Kenyan shillings remains unclaimed. Mr. Kipturgo stressed the importance of this information for widows, highlighting that some of these unclaimed assets could rightfully belong to them or their families, potentially offering much-needed financial relief and stability. Furthermore,

Mr. Kipturgo enlightened the widows on the proactive steps that they can take to reclaim these assets, urging them to utilize UFAA's services to search and reclaim any assets that may rightfully belong to them. He emphasized that reclaiming these assets not only provides financial benefits but also serves as a means of honouring the legacy and contributions of their deceased loved ones. He concluded by urging the widows to ensure that they receive their rightful inheritances to promote greater economic empowerment among them.

WIDOWS CAPACITY BUILDING (FINANCIAL LITERACY)

Mr. Antonine Minayo- Head of Sales and Marketing, ABSA Bank, Mbale



Mr. Antony Minayo addressing widows in Vihiga County during a Pre-International Widows Celebration 2024

Mr. Antonine Minayo, Head of Sales and Marketing at Absa Bank began by highlighting Absa Bank's role in enhancing financial literacy among widows and their families. He stressed the importance of financial planning and prudent budgeting as essential skills that widows can pass on to their children, fostering a culture of financial responsibility and resilience from a young age. Mr. Minayo also discussed Absa Bank's CSR initiatives aimed at supporting widows, emphasizing how these programs not only benefit the widows themselves but also create opportunities for their children's education and future financial security. By empowering widows with financial knowledge and accessible banking solutions, Mr. Minayo ensured intergenerational financial stability and prosperity in Vihiga County, especially among the widows.

KCB Foundation Representative

The KCB Foundation, represented during the training, highlighted its pivotal role in enhancing financial literacy among widows. Through their representative, the Foundation emphasized its commitment to equipping widows with essential financial knowledge and skills, empowering them to effectively manage their finances. Widows were educated on vital aspects such as budgeting, savings, and investment strategies that are critical for securing their financial futures and promoting economic independence. In addition to financial education, the KCB Foundation's representative discussed the Foundation's tailored Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives that seek to benefit widows and their children. These initiatives include accessible banking products, microfinance solutions, and support for small businesses owned by widows, all aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and economic empowerment within the community. The Foundation clearly outlined its efforts in uplifting widows, strengthening community resilience, and stimulating economic growth in the entire country. The representative encouraged widows to capitalize on these opportunities to build sustainable livelihoods, ensuring their continued impact on local development and the prosperity of future generations.

PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT/ EMOTIONAL EMPOWERMENT FOR WIDOWS

Addressing widows during this event, the Reverend from the Salvation Army church in Vihiga County delivered a compassionate and empowering message. She emphasized the critical need for psychosocial support and emotional empowerment for widows, recognizing the unique challenges they face. The Reverend spoke passionately about the church as an institution driven by love, emphasizing its responsibility to nurture an environment where widows find solace, encouragement, and practical assistance amidst their grief and transition. She encouraged widows to draw strength from their faith and the supportive network provided by the church, highlighting its commitment to fostering resilience and restoring hope among those experiencing loss and hardship. In her address, the Reverend affirmed the inherent strength of widows and their capacity to thrive despite adversity. She underscored the importance of community solidarity and mutual support, urging widows to embrace their journey with courage and dignity. By emphasizing the church's role as a sanctuary of healing and empowerment, the Reverend inspired widows to lean on their faith and each other for emotional well-being and renewed purpose. Her words resonated with empathy and conviction, affirming that through collective compassion and support, widows can navigate their challenges and emerge stronger, contributing positively to their families and community.

PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE ROLE PLAYED BY THE PARTNERS IN PROMOTING ECONOMIC AND LEGAL EMPOWERMENT AMONG



Representatives from partner organizations present during the panel discussion held during an Economic Empowerment Training in Vihiga County on 21st June 2024

As the widows mentioned the challenges that they face as they seek both legal and economic support, these organizations and institutions showcased the support/assistance that they provide to widowed women to help them overcome their challenges.

- ❖ The Executive Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor affirmed all the women and widowed women present during our Pre-International Widows Day Celebration of its mandate of fighting for the Rights of Women in Kenya. Representing the Executive Office of the President's Women Rights

Advisor, Ms. Romana Yego and Ms. Sylvia urged the women to be fearless women so that they can always fight for their rights and report any cases that infringe their rights i.e. Rape and GBV cases.

- ❖ The Women Enterprise Fund Officers from Emuhoyo Constituency informed the widows about the Thamini Mjane Loan that is specifically designed for them. Thamini Mjane is a special loan product that is interest-free and is a great economic empowerment tool for widows. WEF officers also mentioned about the Women Enterprise Fund which is a loan product for all women in Kenya that is designed to ensure that all women are economically empowered through access to these loans to help them boost their group businesses.
- ❖ The Youth Enterprise Fund officers informed the widows about their loan products and services that the widows' children can have access to and support themselves as widows. Through these loan products and services, the widows' children can achieve independence and even pursue higher education.
- ❖ KCB Foundation also confirmed that they stand in solidarity with widows and their children since they have loan products that widows can have access to in order to support themselves economically. The foundation implements a program called *Vijana Tujajiri* which widows children can benefit from.
- ❖ Absa Bank informed the widows about their loan products and encouraged the widows to apply for these loans so that they can support their income-generating initiatives. The bank also has a CSR product for widows where widows can come up with funding proposals seeking to promote economic independence as widows.
- ❖ Mr. Jacob Kipturgo from Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority educated the widows and other women present on how to claim back their assets including those that were left behind by their loved ones. This was quite an informative and insightful empowerment that enlightened the majority of the participants present during the event since many citizens are still not aware that they have assets that they have not been reunited with and they have no idea on how to claim these assets. Apart from reuniting citizens with their unclaimed assets, UFAA also provides economic assistance for widows through the CSR product called *Wezesha Mjane* which is a proposal that widows are allowed to apply for and get funded to support themselves and their children.
- ❖ Kenya Industrial Estate (KIE) staff members who encouraged widows to begin with self-empowerment so that they can access all the available loan products from both government institution and financial institutions without discrimination Mr. Joseph Ayieko who represented KIE encouraged widows and all women to engage in income generating activities even if it is farming so that they can get to support themselves and avoid being beggars in the society.
- ❖ The church talked about its role in providing spiritual empowerment and counselling to widows. Through spiritual empowerment, the widows were able to learn about the benefits of seeking God's face in their walk as widows.
- ❖ As Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, we were able to advocate for male engagement in our Cause of ensuring Widows' Rights are protected and safeguarded. Men are the gatekeepers of our culture and by including them in widows' conversation and for this reason, they can understand the Societal challenges and challenge the harmful norms and practices that deny the widows their rights and dignity. Engaging men in our Widows' Rights Advocacy efforts will help us

to fight some of the cultural practices like widow inheritance and widow cleansing that widows face especially in the Nyanza and Western Region of Kenya.

CONCLUSION

The Economic and Legal Empowerment training for widows in Vihiga County stood as a testament to the transformative impact of collective action and unwavering dedication to the rights and well-being of widows. Through the collaborative efforts of diverse organizations and dedicated individuals, we have not only empowered widows with vital knowledge and skills but also instilled in them a renewed sense of hope and determination. By equipping widows with financial literacy, legal awareness, and access to essential resources such as loans and business support, we have paved a path toward economic independence and societal recognition of their invaluable contributions.

Moreover, this event has reinforced the crucial role of community solidarity and institutional support in overcoming the multifaceted challenges faced by widows. From the profound insights shared by various stakeholders to the practical solutions offered by financial institutions and government bodies, each contribution has been instrumental in fostering a supportive environment where widows can thrive. As we look forward, let us continue to advocate for policy reforms, challenge harmful cultural practices, and expand access to resources that uphold the dignity and rights of widows across Kenya. Together, we can ensure that every widow is empowered to lead a life of dignity, resilience, and prosperity, leaving a lasting legacy of positive change in our communities.

REPORT ON THE FREE MEDICAL CAMP HELD ON 22ND JUNE 2024 AT MUSUNGU GROUNDS, VIHIGA COUNTY

On Saturday, **22nd June 2024**, we continued with our Pre-International Widows Day Celebrations at Musungu Grounds, Vihiga County marking our **7th Pre-International Widows Day Celebration** in partnership with the **Executive Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor** and the **Aga Khan Hospital Kisumu**. During this Pre-IWD Celebration, we held a Free Medical camp that brought **1,547** widows from **Vihiga County** on board. This Medical Camp played a vital role in ensuring that widows live healthy lives and that they stay physically and mentally fit. Concurrently, we held an Economic Empowerment Training that aimed at empowering and educating widows, particularly on their rights and avenues for economic empowerment.

Widows encounter several hurdles that greatly limit their access to basic medical services. Social stigma and discrimination frequently isolate widows, leaving them feeling marginalized and disregarded in their communities. This isolation might result in a lack of knowledge about accessible healthcare services or a reluctance to seek medical attention for fear of being judged or mistreated. Economic constraints compound their plight, since widows may struggle to cover healthcare costs, such as transportation to medical facilities or the cost of treatment itself. Without sufficient financial resources, widows may postpone obtaining medical care, resulting in aggravated health concerns that may have been controlled or treated earlier.

Furthermore, cultural norms and gender inequality significantly hinder widows' access to healthcare. Patriarchal structures in many nations limit widows' mobility or deny them decision-making control over their own health. This absence of autonomy and control may discourage widows from obtaining timely medical attention or following treatment regimens. Additionally, widows frequently lack social support networks that may encourage and help them in accessing healthcare services, further isolating

them from the medical care they so desperately require. Addressing these multidimensional difficulties necessitates a holistic approach that addresses both systemic hurdles and societal views towards widows, ensuring that they have equal access to healthcare and assistance.

EVENT DETAILS

Flag off ceremony



Hon. Harriet Chiggai ceremoniously waving the flag to signal the start of the Free Medical Camp and the commemoration of the International Widows Day

The event commenced at 10:00 am with a flag-off ceremony that was graced by **Hon. Harriet Chiggai - President's Women Rights Advisor**. In attendance were; Dr. Diana Kamande - Executive Director and Founder of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, Jacob Kipturgo – Officer of Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority, Elizabeth Okech- Chief Executive Director of Mama Doing Good organization, Dr. Leah Kasera- Office of Head of Public Service and Mr. & Mrs. Dr. Imbuki of Heart of Christ Foundation.

Free Medical Camp



The widows receiving free medical services from the staffs of Aga Khan Hospital Kisumu
NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

Following the Flag off ceremony, medical professionals and volunteers from the Aga Khan Hospital Kisumu provided free medical check-ups, consultations and essential medications to the **1,547** widows who attended the medical camp. These professionals provided services including general health screenings, blood pressure checks, diabetes screenings and counseling on nutrition and hygiene.

SPEECHES

Dr. Leah Kasera- Representative from the office of Head of Public Service



Dr Leah Kasera advising the widows to engage in income- generating activities

Being a representative from the Office of Head of Public Service, Dr. Kasera began her speech by providing psychosocial support to widows who were experiencing profound grief due to the loss of their spouses. She emphasized the importance of not only addressing their emotional needs but also empowering them economically. She informed the widows about various strategies they could employ to achieve economic independence. One key strategy she highlighted was the formation of groups among the widows. These groups, she explained, could facilitate access to financial resources such as loans. By pooling their resources and supporting each other, the widows could strengthen their financial capabilities and create a supportive network. Additionally, Dr. Kasera advised the widows to consider engaging in income-generating activities, such as chicken rearing. She mentioned that both broilers and layers could serve as viable options, providing a sustainable source of income. She stressed that these activities not only offered financial stability but also contributed to the widows' sense of purpose and empowerment.

Dr. Diana Kamande- Founder and Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization



Dr Diana Kamande appreciating Hon Chiggai for her support and participation in the event dedicated to the welfare of widows

Our Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Diana Kamande expressed her gratitude to all the guests who graced the occasion, with a special acknowledgment to Hon. Harriet Chiggai for her esteemed presence. She conveyed her appreciation for their support and participation in the event dedicated to the welfare of widows. Dr. Kamande also took the opportunity to inform the widows present about a significant avenue for reclaiming their properties through the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority, which was represented at the event. She emphasized the importance of understanding and utilizing such resources to empower themselves economically. In her address, Dr. Kamande highlighted the role of the Authority in assisting widows in reclaiming any unclaimed financial assets, thereby ensuring they receive what rightfully belongs to them. She encouraged the widows to take proactive steps in navigating these processes, underscoring the importance of empowerment and financial security.

Jacob Kipturgo- Officer, Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority(UFAA)



UFAA officer, Jacob Kipturgo advising the widows on how to access UFAA services and reclaim their properties

Jacob Kipturgo, officer from the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA), reportedly informed the widows present about the substantial amount of unclaimed financial assets under UFAA's management, estimated at **60 billion shillings**. He emphasized that these assets include properties that rightfully belong to individuals across the country, including widows. In his address, Kipturgo provided guidance on how widows could access UFAA's services to reclaim their properties. He advised them to visit UFAA tent which was just near the tent they were in, where comprehensive information and necessary forms are available. He highlighted that UFAA's team is committed to assisting widows through the entire process, ensuring it is accessible and supportive. Furthermore, Kipturgo mentioned that UFAA supports projects aimed at benefiting widows and orphans, provided they are registered. He underscored the importance of these projects in promoting sustainable livelihoods and community development, expressing UFAA's readiness to provide financial and logistical support to eligible initiatives.

Elizabeth Okech- Chief Executive Officer, Mama Doing Good Organization



Elizabeth Okech, Chief Executive Officer of Mama Doing Good, encouraging the widows to register with Joyful Women in order for them to gain economic support

Elizabeth Okech, Chief Executive Officer of Mama Doing Good, addressed the widows on the organization's efforts to empower women economically nationwide. She explained that they run initiatives like Joyful Women, through which they offer economic support to participants. She encouraged the widows to register with the group to benefit from this impactful program. Elizabeth advised them to participate in table banking as a means to foster economic growth. She closed her speech by giving a vote of thanks to the dignitaries who were present for making the event a success.

Hon. Harriet Chiggai- President's Women Rights advisor



Hon Harriet Chiggai highlighting the government's commitment to enhancing support for women nationwide

Hon. Harriet Chiggai, addressing the audience as the chief guest, outlined the government's commitment to enhancing support for women nationwide. She highlighted that her office focuses on safeguarding the rights of women and children across all genders. Chiggai underscored the importance of unity among stakeholders and dignitaries in advancing the rights of widows, emphasizing collaborative efforts as pivotal to achieving meaningful progress. In her closing remarks, Hon. Chiggai extended a heartfelt vote of thanks to the organizations and bodies in attendance, acknowledging their steadfast dedication to empowering widows and women in general. She expressed gratitude for their continuous support and encouraged them to sustain their efforts towards fostering gender equality and empowerment initiatives across the country.

CONCLUSION

The flag-off event of the medical camp for widows in Vihiga County was a resounding success, marked by meaningful speeches, impactful healthcare services and a renewed commitment to advocating for the rights and well-being of widows. It underscored the importance of collaborative efforts between governmental bodies, non-profit organizations and local communities in addressing the unique challenges faced by widows. As the event concluded,

widows left with not only medical relief but also a strengthened resolve to continue supporting each other and advocating for change in their communities. We look forward to building on this success and expanding its outreach to further empower widows in Vihiga County and beyond.

PICTURES OF THE EVENT







CONCLUSION

The Pre-International Widows' Day celebrations held across Meru, Kirinyaga, Murang'a, Nairobi, Machakos and Vihiga counties in June 2024 marked a significant milestone in our collective efforts to uplift and empower widows. These events underscored the dedication and commitment of diverse stakeholders in advancing gender equality and supporting widows on their journey to prosperity.

The initiatives undertaken during these celebrations, including legal and economic empowerment programs, as well as psychosocial support sessions, have undoubtedly left a profound and enduring impact on widows and the broader community. We are optimistic that these efforts will continue to resonate, inspiring further actions aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for widows.

We extend heartfelt appreciation to all widows' groups and their representatives, as well as our esteemed partners who responded to our call and generously dedicated their time to walk alongside us in this journey towards ensuring prosperity for widows. We also express gratitude to government officials whose steadfast commitment to supporting widows has laid a solid foundation for ongoing initiatives aimed at uplifting and empowering them.

Together, through collaboration and shared dedication, we are establishing a path towards ensuring that widows live dignified and fulfilled lives, fostering a future where their rights are upheld and their potential fully realized.

INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024 HELD IN MUSUNGU GROUNDS, VIHIGA COUNTY

MESSAGE FROM DR. DIANAH KAMANDE HSC

It is with profound gratitude and immense joy that I reflect on the remarkable event we held on June 23, 2024, at Musungu Grounds in Vihiga County to celebrate International Widows' Day. This day was not only a momentous occasion for the widows but also a testament to our collective strength, resilience, and commitment to championing the rights and well-being of widows in our society.

The warmth and enthusiasm that greeted Her Excellency Madam Rachael Ruto, alongside our esteemed guests, set the tone for a day filled with hope, encouragement, and solidarity. The spiritual sessions, led by our diverse religious leaders, provided a foundation of faith and unity, reminding us of the power of coming together in prayer and worship.

I am deeply moved by the performances that followed, particularly by the widows' children, the Lliduguye Friends Choir, and the Naomi Team. Their heartfelt expressions through song, poetry, and drama poignantly highlighted the daily struggles and emotional toll faced by widows and their families. These performances were more than just entertainment; they were powerful advocates for empathy and awareness, underscoring the importance of community support.

As we listened to the speeches from our local leaders and government dignitaries, it became clear that our mission aligns with the broader goals of national development and gender equality. We have been reminded of the critical articles in the Kenyan Constitution that protect the rights of widows and the need for collaborative efforts to enhance their sustainability.

Our organization, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, has undertaken significant initiatives in Advocacy, Psychosocial support, Economic Empowerment, and Education. The call to action for both County and National Governments is crucial to ensuring that widows are not left behind but are empowered to contribute meaningfully to our society.

As I wrap up, I extend my heartfelt appreciation to everyone who participated in making this day a success. To Her Excellency Madam Rachael Ruto, our dedicated Government Officials, and all our supporters – your presence and commitment have strengthened our resolve to continue this important work.

Let us remember that a transformed mind, a transformed widow, means a transformed community. Together, we can eradicate poverty, promote equality, and create a society where no woman loses her Rights, Dignity, or Property due to widowhood.

Thank you, and may we continue to support and uplift each other in this journey.

With heartfelt gratitude,

Dr. Dianah Kamande, HSC

Founder and Executive Director, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization

June 23, 2024, marked the epitome of our International Widows Day Celebrations at Musungu Grounds in Vihiga County. The event commenced with a warm welcome by Evarlene Sayo, a resident of Vihiga County, who graciously greeted Her Excellency Madam Rachael Ruto, widows, and all the esteemed guests. The ceremony began with prayers led by both a Muslim clergy and Pastor Beatrice, representing the diverse religious attendees. The Heart of Christ Choir then led a spirited praise and worship session, followed by an uplifting sermon from Reverend Melab Baya, who shared words of hope and encouragement with the widows. The church session concluded with an offering, blessed through prayers led by Dr. Alice Imbuki from Heart of Christ Ministries.

Following the spiritual session, the Mistress of Ceremony from State House took over the event. She invited all attendees to honor the day with the Kenyan National Anthem and the East African Anthem. After the anthems, she recognized the dignitaries present, including Her Excellency the First Lady of Kenya, Madam Rachael Ruto, the President's Advisor on Women's Rights Harriet Chiggai, Vihiga County Governor Dr. Wilber Otichilo, various government officials, religious leaders, widows, and all other guests. An entertainment segment ensued, featuring performances by students from a local school, Liduguyu Friends Choir, and a group of widows under the care of Apostle Ken Imbuki and Dr. Alice Imbuki from Hearts of Christ Mbale.

ENTERTAINMENT

This session was not just about enjoyment but also about education and advocacy. A significant part of the program was represented by a group of widows' children, the Liliiduguye Friends Choir, and the Naomi Team. The performance was through; Traditional song, Poem, as well as a skit. The entertainment team captivated the audience with their moving performances, which were not only entertaining but also served as a poignant reminder of the struggles that widows and their families endure. Through their music and dramatizations, they vividly depicted the daily hardships and emotional toll experienced by these women and their children. The performances provided a powerful platform for raising awareness and fostering empathy to different stakeholders including the Government of Kenya. It underscored the importance of community support and the need for collective efforts to address the socio-economic challenges faced by widows in Vihiga County.

OPENING REMARKS

Representing the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, Dr. Dianah Kamande, HSC, who is the founder and Executive Director, opened her remarks by quoting the former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon: "No woman should lose her rights, status, dignity, or property just because she lost her husband, and vice versa." She commenced by thanking the Office of Hon. Harriete Chiggai for partnering with her organization and the Office of PS Anne Wangombe for taking part in the economic empowerment of widows through the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF). She mentioned that they are celebrating the 9th International Widows Day, marking a credible journey since they started the celebration.



Dr. Dianah Kamande, the Founder and Executive Director of Come Together Widows and Orphans addressing the audience, wishing them a happy International Widows Day and highlighting her organization's work in advocacy, support, and empowerment for widows.

Dr. Dianah continued by giving a brief introduction of the organization, highlighting its foundation and the key programs undertaken. In her remarks, Dr. Dianah Kamande mentioned the extensive work done by her organization to recognize and address the challenges facing widows in Kenya. She outlined the key initiatives as follows: Advocacy, Psychosocial Support, Economic Empowerment, Table Banking for Widows, Skills Training for Widows, Connecting Widows with their Unclaimed Financial Assets, and an Education Program for orphans left behind by widows in her program.

In her remarks, Dianah analyzed the current situation of widowhood in Kenya, citing the 2019 KNBS data which reported 1,000,760 widows. According to her, this number must have increased due to Covid-19, which she likened to a "widow-making machine." Narrowing it down to the county level, Vihiga stands out among counties with a higher number of widows, recording a total of 37,477. She emphasized that this significant number could contribute greatly to development if supported adequately. Therefore, she called on the County Government to respond to the needs and challenges of these individuals.

Dr. Dianah proceeded by outlining the articles in the Kenyan Constitution that protect the rights of widows. These include:

- Constitution of Kenya Article 10: National Values, specifically Non-Discrimination.
- Article 27(2): Equality, ensuring full enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedoms as provided for in the Constitution and law.
- Article 60(1) (F): Principles and policies, including the elimination of gender discrimination in laws, customs, and practices related to land and property.

In relation to this, Dr. Dianah emphasized the need for collaborative action to protect the rights of widows and enhance their sustainability.

In conclusion, Dr. Dianah ended her remarks with a call to action to both the County and National Governments, proposing the following:

- Setting aside funds to support widows in their registered groups (County Government).
- Domestication of the 2021 Widows Resolution by the UN (National and County Government).
- Developing economic empowerment programs tailored for widows at the County level, similar to those implemented by the National Government through the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority, which includes initiatives like Wezesha Mjane and the Women Enterprise Fund's Thamini Mjane.

Her closing remarks expressed appreciation and recognition for all widows, including those from distant counties like Kilifi and Baringo. She wished all the widows present a happy International Widows Day.



Mrs. Mildred Afande talking about the challenges faced by widows in Vihiga County during the IWD Celebrations 2024 at Musungu Grounds, Vihiga County

Miss Lulu Aginga, Secretary of Muslim Women Network Kenya, addressed the gathering with humility. She spoke about her network's efforts to elevate the status of women, children, and the broader society through various programs, including disaster management and flood mitigation. Miss Lulu acknowledged the challenges widows

face, such as loneliness, inheritance issues, cultural prejudice, stigma, financial constraints, and limited knowledge. She emphasized the importance of collective efforts to help widows overcome these challenges and expressed her network's readiness to partner with like-minded organizations to support widows and orphans. She concluded by wishing the widows a happy International Widows' Day and emphasizing the importance of unity.



Miss Lulu Aginga of Muslim Women Network Kenya addressing the challenges faced by widows, emphasizing the importance of community support and collaboration. She highlights her network's initiatives and calls for collective efforts to uplift widows and orphans.

SPEECHES FROM THE LOCAL LEADERS

Vihiga County Commissioner Mr. Felix Watakila recognized all dignitaries and introduced his team of commissioners. He acknowledged the constitutional rights of widows

in Kenya and pledged to safeguard their property rights. He informed the First Lady about the numerous cases of land grabbing faced by widows in the county and urged residents to prioritize education for their children. He then welcomed Principal Secretary, State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, Ms. Anne Wangombe.



County Commissioner of Vihiga county, Mr. Felix Watakila, addressing the difficulties faced by widows, and pledging to safeguard their property rights.

SPEECHES FROM GOVERNMENT DIGNITARIES



Ms. Ann Wang'ombe the Principal Secretary in the State Department for Gender and Affirmative Action, emphasizing the Government's commitment to Women's Empowerment at the International Widows' Day event, highlighting policies and initiatives aimed at gender equality and economic empowerment.

Ms. Anne Wang'ombe began her speech by recognizing all dignitaries and guests. She conveyed apologies from Hon. Aisha Jumwa and highlighted the day's purpose of celebrating widows and shedding light on the challenges they face. Ms. Wang'ombe reaffirmed the government's commitment to supporting widows through various policies and initiatives aligned with sustainable development goals. She mentioned the National Gender Policy and the National Policy on the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence, which aim to promote gender equality and empower women economically, socially, and politically. She discussed government programs like the Women Enterprise Fund, Uwezo Fund, and the AGPO program, which support women entrepreneurs, including widows. Ms. Wang'ombe emphasized the government's holistic approach through the BETA agenda, aiming to empower women at the grassroots level. She concluded by urging everyone to respect widows' rights and work towards an equal society.



Dr. Wilber Otichilo giving his speech During the International Widows Day, role of Government in addressing the needs of widows,

Governor Dr. Wilber Otichilo expressed gratitude to the national government for allowing Vihiga County to host the event and thanked the First Lady and Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization for their efforts. He acknowledged the challenges widows face, especially regarding land issues, and committed to working closely with the national government to implement constitutional provisions protecting widows' rights. He introduced his wife, who thanked the dignitaries and guests for their attendance, and then invited the Sabatia area MP to address the audience.



Hon. Harriet Chiggai, the President's Advisor on women's rights, highlighting the government's support for widows, medical camp benefits, and the importance of unity. She introduces the First Lady, emphasizing love and empowerment for widows and orphans.

Hon. Harriet Chiggai, the President's Advisor, started her speech by acknowledging the First Lady's presence and the successful event. She highlighted the support provided by government bodies like Uwezo Fund and UFAA in helping widows trace their late husbands' assets. Hon. Chiggai emphasized the importance of unity and love for widows and orphans, noting the significant impact of the medical camp held the day before, which benefited over 1536 widows. She assured the widows of the government's commitment to supporting them through policies and grassroots initiatives. She then invited Her Excellency the First Lady to the podium.

Her Excellency Madam Rachael Ruto expressed her gratitude to organizations championing the rights of widows and orphans. She highlighted the neglect, abuse, and harmful cultural practices often faced by widows and emphasized the significance of International Widows' Day, established by the United Nations in 2011 to amplify widows' voices and support their unique needs. The First Lady spoke about the day's theme, "Accelerating the Achievement of Gender Equality (With Emphasis on Strengthening Land and Property Rights)," emphasizing the urgency of ensuring widows' rights and societal recognition. She shared a biblical story of Tabitha, who helped those in need, particularly widows, and encouraged attendees to support widows in rebuilding their lives and caring for their families. Her Excellency concluded her speech by praying for the people of Vihiga County, especially against the premature death of spouses.



Her Excellency the First Lady of Kenya, Madam Rachael Ruto, addressing the audience at the International Widows Day celebration, emphasizing the importance of recognizing and supporting widows.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we thank God that we were able to bring together **more than 6,000 widows** for the celebration of International Widows Day 2024 at Musungu Grounds, Vihiga County. This momentous event, marked by prayers, spirited performances, and impactful speeches, highlighted the critical socio-economic challenges faced by widows and emphasized the urgent need for community and government support. The collective efforts of various stakeholders, including the National Government, local leaders, and religious organizations, were instrumental in making this day a success. Their collaboration underscored the importance of unity, empowerment, and the protection of widows' rights, paving the way for a brighter, more inclusive future for widows and their families across Kenya.

MOST PRESSING CHALLENGE RAISED BY WIDOWS

The most pressing challenge raised by widows is **Land Disinheritance** and **Denied Access to Land Rights**, which has left them vulnerable and deprived of their livelihoods. This critical issue underscores the urgent need for reforms to ensure widows can claim and retain their rightful property, so as to promote economic stability and dignity.

REPORT ON POST-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY

CELEBRATIONS 2024

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 here, 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.

As we approach the climax of our Post-International Widows Day celebrations in Mathare Constituency, Nairobi County, on July 20th, our resolve remains unwavering. This final event, will be held in conjunction with a Free Medical Camp for widows hence symbolizes our holistic approach to address widows needs in all aspects.

POST-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2024 HELD IN KILIFI COUNTY ON 28TH JUNE 2024

INTRODUCTION

On 28th June 2024, we organized a Post-International Widows' Day Celebration at Barani Secondary School at Malindi Sub-County in Kilifi County. The event brought onboard more than 2000 widows who got empowered and felt loved and valued because of this celebration. The theme of the Post-International Widows' Day was '*Accelerating the achievement of Gender Equality with emphasis on strengthening land and property rights.*'

DETAILS OF THE EVENT

i) Welcoming

The event began at exactly 10:00 am with the opening prayer, singing of the National and East Africa Anthem, mentions and welcoming of the event participants, Organizational partners present, Dr. Dianah Kamande our Founder and Executive Director CTWOO, deputy governor, Kilifi County Hon. Flora Mbetsa and Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage Hon. Aisha Jumwa Katana who was the chief guest of the event.

ii) Entertainment presented by widows



Kilifi County Widows entertaining guests during the Post-International Widows Day Celebration

Widows showcased Swahili dance performances, celebrating their cultural heritage and resilience. The dance presentation was a vibrant display of unity and strength, as widows came together to share their stories through movement and music. Through these performances, they honored their culture and demonstrated their resilience in the face of adversity. The activity served as a powerful expression of solidarity and empowerment, highlighting the importance of cultural expression in the journey towards healing and empowerment for widows.

SPEECHES

MCA Representative- Malindi Ward



Hon. Flora Mbetsa-Kilifi County Deputy Governor highlighting on Economic and Legal Empowerment among widows during Post-International Widows Day Celebration

During the post-International Widows Day celebration in Kilifi County, a representative from the Malindi Ward MCA emphasized the importance of economic and legal empowerment for widows. In her speech, she extended a heartfelt vote of thanks to everyone involved in organizing the event, acknowledging their efforts in making it successful. She appreciated those who contribute to making widows feel significant and cherished. Addressing the pressing issues widows face, such as discrimination, forced participation in harmful cultural practices, and the denial of inheritance rights, she assured the audience that support is available. The representative highlighted organizations such as the Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority and the Women Enterprise Fund, which are dedicated to empowering widows both economically and legally.

She promised continued support for widows in the Malindi Ward, reinforcing the community's commitment to uplifting and empowering them.

Hon. Flora Mbetsa-Deputy Governor Kilifi County



Hon. Flora Mbetsa-Kilifi County Deputy Governor highlighting on Economic and Legal Empowerment among widows during Post-International Widows Day Celebration

Hon. Flora Mbetsa, Deputy Governor of Kilifi County, delivered a message of hope to widows during the post-International Widows Day celebration. She addressed crucial issues such as legal rights, gender-based violence, and widow discrimination. Hon. Mbetsa provided strategies to help avoid discrimination against widows and emphasized the importance of economic, social, and academic empowerment. She discussed the necessity of access to legal rights and condemned harmful cultural practices. Additionally, she highlighted the implementation of a cash transfer program aimed at supporting widows, reinforcing the county's commitment to their well-being and empowerment.

Hon. Aisha Jumwa Katana-Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage



Hon. Aisha Jumwa-Cabinet Secretary of Public Service, Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage encouraging on Economic and Legal Empowerment among widows during Post-International Widows Day Celebration

During the post-International Widows Day celebration in Kilifi County, Hon. Aisha Jumwa delivered a compelling speech emphasizing the critical role widows play in society and the need for their empowerment to benefit the entire nation. She highlighted the current lack of specific government funds for widows due to insufficient advocacy for their rights and pledged to address this issue by bringing it to the attention of the government. Hon. Jumwa proposed the establishment of a Widows' Fund to safeguard the rights of widows and orphans, expressing confidence in the President's support given his track record of aiding vulnerable groups. She announced her plan to assemble a capable team to present their case to the President, seeking his endorsement and support. Additionally, the event included a food drive generously donated by Hon. Jumwa, further demonstrating her commitment to

supporting widows in the community.

Dr. Dianah Kamande- Executive Director, CTWOO



During the post-International Widows Day celebration, our esteemed Executive Director and Founder, Dr. Dianah Kamande, emphasized the critical need for economic and legal support for widows from the government and stakeholders present. She highlighted the importance of creating policies and programs that specifically address the unique challenges faced by widows, ensuring they have access to financial resources and legal protections. Dr. Kamande called for collaborative efforts to empower widows, advocating for their rights and well-being, and underscored the significant impact such support would have on improving the lives of widows and their families.

Dr. Dianah Kamande HSc-Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization highlighting on the importance of legal and economic empowerment among widows during Post-International Widows Day

CONCLUSION

The post-International Widows Day celebration in Kilifi County was a resounding success, marked by the full participation of local widows. The event was attended by the Deputy Governor of Kilifi County, the Cabinet Secretary for the Ministry of Public Service, Gender, Culture, the Arts, and Heritage, Hon. Aisha Jumwa Katana, and Dr. Diana Kamande, the esteemed Executive Director and our Founder. The program began with welcoming speeches and entertainment by the widows, followed by an inspirational session, empowerment activities, and concluding speeches. A food drive generously donated by Hon. Aisha Jumwa Katana was also a highlight of the day. The widows left the event filled with hope and happiness, inspired by the promises made to empower them and support their families.

POST – INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY HELD ON 4TH AND 5TH JULY 2024 IN NAROK COUNTY

DAY 1

REPORT OVERVIEW

Narok County, located in the southern part of Kenya, is known for its rich cultural heritage and breathtaking landscapes. However, behind the beauty and tradition lies a series of challenges faced by a significant yet often overlooked group-widows. Widows in Narok County, particularly those in remote areas, encounter a myriad of obstacles that impact their social, economic, and psychological well-being. Widows in remote areas of Narok face significant economic challenges. Traditionally, men are the primary breadwinners, and the death of a husband can leave a widow without a stable source of income. Limited access to employment opportunities and financial resources exacerbates their vulnerability. In many cases, widows are left to fend for themselves and their children without adequate means to do so.

On Thursday, **July 4th, 2024**, we held an impactful **Post- International Widows Day event at Ololmosani Ward, Narok County**, in observance of International Widows Day. The primary aim of this event was to empower these women both legally and economically, providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to improve their lives and secure their futures. The day was filled with informative sessions and interactive workshops designed to address the unique challenges faced by widows in our community. By fostering an environment of support and education, we sought to uplift and inspire these women, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate their individual journeys with greater confidence and resilience. The event was graced by our chief guest Hon. Samuel Towet, area Member of County Assembly Ololmosani ward. In attendance were; Dr. Diana Kamande, our Founder and Executive Director, Hon. Nicolas Mutai, Chief Ololmosani ward, Hon. Janet Ngeno, Assistant chief Mogondo ward, Regina Tai, chairperson Kamoit Widow's group and madam Elizabeth chairperson Mulot widows' group.

EVENT DETAILS

I. Welcoming ceremony



The widows singing and dancing traditional songs, welcoming our founder Dr. Diana Kamande

The widows singing and dancing traditional songs, welcoming Dr. Diana Kamande in the occasion. The event commenced promptly at 4:00 p.m., with an air of anticipation and excitement enveloping the venue. The ceremony began with vibrant and heartfelt traditional dances performed by the widows.

themselves. These dances, rich in cultural heritage and emotion, set a celebratory tone for the evening and showcased the deep-seated traditions of the community. The widows, with their warm and spirited welcome, welcomed our founder Dr. Kamande, celebrating her unwavering dedication to advocating for widows' rights and welfare. Her presence underscored the importance of the occasion and the impact of the collective efforts towards empowering widows.

II. Prayer session



Rev. Rono delivering a powerful sermon of hope to the widows

Following the welcoming ceremony, the event transitioned into a solemn and uplifting prayer session led by Rev. Rono. He began with a heartfelt prayer, invoking blessings and strength for all the widows present. Rev. Rono then delivered a powerful sermon of hope, drawing inspiration from the Book of Job. Rev. Rono spoke of the metaphor of a tree that, though cut down, has the hope of growing again. This biblical reference served as a poignant reminder of resilience and renewal, shining a light of hope on the widows and encouraging them to embrace their inner strength. The

sermon resonated deeply with the widows, as Rev. Rono emphasized that just like the tree, they too can rise and flourish despite past hardships. His words were a beacon of hope, instilling a sense of optimism and faith among the widows, reminding them that their lives can be renewed and filled with purpose.

SPEECHES

Mrs. Regina Tai- Chairperson Kamoit Widow's Group



Mrs. Regina Tai urging the MCA to consider widows' children for job and education opportunities

Regina Tai, the chairperson of the Kamoit Widows Group, delivered an inspiring speech to the widows gathered at the post-International Widows Day event in Narok. She began by congratulating the widows for their remarkable turnout, emphasizing the importance of their presence in efforts to be empowered both economically and legally. Regina Tai highlighted the significance of unity and collective action in advancing their rights and opportunities. During her speech, she addressed the Member of County Assembly (MCA) present at the event, requesting their support in establishing a representative for widows in the government. This representative, she noted, would be instrumental in advocating for the economic rights of widows, ensuring their voices are heard and their needs are met at the governmental level. Furthermore, Regina Tai urged the MCA to consider widows' children for job and education opportunities. She stressed that providing these opportunities would not only benefit the children but also help uplift entire families and communities. Her speech resonated deeply with the audience, leaving a lasting impression of hope and determination.

Mrs. Elizabeth- Narok Widow leader, chairperson Mulot widows



Mrs. Elizabeth expressing the challenges the widows are experiencing, especially the challenge to register with KEBS for the widows' Dairy farming project

Mrs. Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to the guests and the widows present, acknowledging the challenges that widows face, such as social exclusion in society. She educated the widows on how they can acquire legal aid through FIDA. Additionally, she mentioned a project they have started with the Mulot widows on dairy farming, specifically producing yoghurt to help them economically and boost their living standards. However, she noted that the project faces a significant challenge: registration with KEBS. She urged the MCA and Dr. Diana to assist in overcoming this obstacle so that they can sell their produce nationally for more profit, enabling them to become independent.

Mrs. Janet Ngeno- Ass. Chief Mogondo ward



Mrs. Janet Ngeno speaking to the widows on the importance of anti- FGM practices to protect their female children

Chief Janet Ngeno of Mogondo Ward expressed her gratitude to Hon. Samuel Towet and Dr. Diana Kamande for their esteemed presence at the event. She also extended her thanks to the widows for the great turnout. Mrs. Ngeno urged the widows to educate their children for a better future and spoke on the importance of anti-FGM measures to protect their female children.

Hon. Nicolas Mutai- Chief Ololmosani ward



Chief Nicolas assuring the widows that he will observe and safeguard their rights in the location

Chief Nicolas of Ololmosani Ward expressed his pleasure at the presence of Dr. Diana Kamande and Hon. Samuel Mutai, the area MCA, for gracing the event. He promised to safeguard and observe the rights of the widows in the location to ensure they live dignified and fulfilled lives. His statement shone light in the lives of widows giving them hope and a promising future.

Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization



Our Founder Dr. Diana urging the MCA to draft a policy that will protect the rights of widows starting with the widows in Narok County.

Dr. Dianah Kamande who was an esteemed guest began her speech by giving psychosocial support to the widows on their loss and grief. She acknowledged Mrs. Elizabeth for the good work she is doing to ensure that the widows in Narok County live fulfilled and dignified lives. Dr. Diana Kamande promised to support Elizabeth on the project they started to ensure that they register with KEBS so that they can be able to sell their dairy products nationwide for economic sustainability of the widows. She also urged the area MCA to join forces so that they ensure the widows register their Project with KEBS. She also spoke on the importance of anti-FGM measures to protect the female children of the widows. She concluded her speech by requesting Hon. Samuel Towet to draft a policy that will protect the rights of the widows. She stated clearly that the widows cannot have a representative in the national assembly since there is no policy that safeguards their rights.

Hon. Samuel Towet- Member of the County Assembly, Oloolmosani ward.



Hon. Samuel Towet assuring the widows that he will draft a policy that will protect their rights and present it to both County and National Assemblies

Hon. Samuel Towet, MCA, Oloolmosani ward was our guest of honor. He gave an inspiring speech to the widows shining hope for a better future. He expressed his gratitude to Dr. Diana Kamande and all who were in attendance for making the event a success. He promised to draft a policy concerning the widows rights and presenting it to both the county Assembly and the national Assembly. Mr. Towet also talked on looking into the matters of the widows that were presented by them on Economic support and also Education support. He promised to give bursaries to the widows' children for them to acquire education so that they can help boost their living standards.

CONCLUSION.

The Post-International Widows Day event held on 4th July 2024 at Oloolmasani Ward, Narok County, was a resounding success, bringing together widows, community leaders, and stakeholders in a united effort to address the challenges faced by widows in the region. The event not only highlighted the ongoing struggles but also showcased the resilience and strength of the widows, empowering them with resources, support, and a platform to voice their concerns. The collaborative efforts of various organizations and the active participation of the community have set a strong foundation for continued advocacy and support for widows' rights and welfare, fostering a sense of hope and progress for the future.

DAY 2

INTRODUCTION

On Friday, 5th July , 2024, we held another significant and impactful Post- International Widows Day event at ACK church in Mogondo ward , Narok County, in observance of International Widows Day. This gathering brought together 171 widows from Mogondo ward. The primary aim of this event was to shine light and hope in the lives of our widows by empowering them both legally and economically, providing them with the tools and knowledge necessary to improve their lives and secure their futures. The day was filled with informative sessions and interactive workshops designed to address the unique challenges faced by widows in our community. By fostering an environment of support and education, we sought to uplift and inspire them, ensuring they are well-equipped to navigate their individual journeys with greater confidence and resilience.

EVENT DETAILS

The ceremony began with vibrant and heartfelt traditional songs performed by the widows. These songs and dances, rich in cultural heritage and emotion, set a celebratory tone for the day and showcased the deep-seated traditions of the community. The widows, welcomed our founder Dr. Kamande, celebrating her unwavering dedication to advocating for widows' rights and welfare. Her presence underscored the importance of the occasion and the impact of the collective efforts towards empowering widows. Our founder Dr. Diana Kamande was the chief guest of the event. In attendance were: Hon. David Kipkoech the area chief Mogor Location, Hon. Jeanet Ngeno the area chief Mogondo ward, Mrs. Elizabeth Narok widow's leader and Chairperson of Mulot Widows' group and Mrs. Regina Tai chairperson Kamoit Widows' group.

SPEECHES

Regina Tai- Chairperson Kamoit Widow's Group



Mrs. Regina Tai highlighting the significance of unity and collective efforts in advancing the widows rights and opportunities

Regina Tai, the chairperson of the Kamoit Widows Group, delivered an inspiring speech to the widows

gathered at the post-International Widows Day event in Narok. She began by congratulating the widows for their remarkable turnout, emphasizing the importance of their presence in efforts to be empowered both economically and legally. Regina Tai highlighted the significance of unity and collective action in advancing the Widows' Rights and opportunities. She also highlighted the challenges that the widows were experiencing due to lack of enough awareness creation and education since the widows were living in remote areas. She stated that most of the widows had no death certificates of their late spouses and that they have no knowledge on how to apply for the processing of their late husband's death certificates. She concluded her speech by urging Dr. Diana to give guidance on how the widows can acquire the death certificates of their late spouses. Her speech resonated deeply with the audience, leaving a lasting impression of hope and determination.

Mrs. Elizabeth- Narok Widow leader, chairperson Mulot widows



Mrs. Elizabeth educating the widows on how they can acquire legal aid through organizations like FIDA

Mrs. Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to the guests and the widows present, acknowledging the challenges that widows face, such as social exclusion in society. She educated the widows on how they can acquire legal aid through FIDA. Mrs. Elizabeth appealed for the widows to have a representative in County and National Assemblies so that there can be relief for widows. She stated that the widows are unable to access these reliefs because they are not organized into groups. She urged the widows to form groups and register the groups in order for them to acquire reliefs and aid from the County and National Governments.

Mrs. Janet Ngeno- Chief Mogondo ward



Chief Janet urging the widows to educate their children for a better future

Chief Janet Ngeno of Mogondo Ward expressed her gratitude to Dr. Diana Kamande for her esteemed presence at the event. She also extended her thanks to the widows for the great turnout. Being a widow, she expressed the challenges that are encountered in the widow-hood. She promised to look into the challenges the widows are facing and help to provide support for the betterment of their lives and their living standards. Mrs. Ngeno urged the widows to educate their children for a better future and spoke on the importance of anti-FGM measures to protect their female children. She educated the widows on the importance of educating their children so that they can break the poverty cycle in the community.

Hon. David Kipkoech Korir- Chief Mogor Location



Mr. David Kipkoech emphasizing the importance of recognizing the resilient and strength of widows in the community

Mr. David, the area chief Mogor Location, emphasized the importance of recognizing the resilience and strength of widows in the community. He acknowledged their unique challenges and highlighted the need for continued support and empowerment. Mr. David underscored the collective responsibility of the society to ensure that widows are not marginalized but are instead given opportunities to thrive and contribute positively to the community. Furthermore, he expressed his commitment to advocating for the rights and welfare of widows, promising to work closely with relevant organizations and stakeholders. He called for unity and compassion, urging the community to extend a helping hand to widows and their families. He concluded by reiterating his dedication to fostering an inclusive environment where widows can live with dignity and respect.

Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans

Organization



Dr. Diana Kamande educating the Widows on Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority(UFAA) and how they can access UFAA's services to reclaim their properties

Dr. Dianah Kamande who was the esteemed guest began her speech by giving psychosocial support to the widows on their loss and grief. She narrated her story to the widows encouraging them that nothing is impossible before God urging them to be resilient and of strong faith in the journey of transforming their lives. Dr. Diana Kamande educated the widows on Unclaimed Financial Assets Authority (UFAA) and their products and how they can reach them in order to reclaim their properties. Dr. Diana also gave Economic Empowerment to the widows urging them to work hard, engage in income-generating activities so that they can become self-independent. She urged the widows to ensure their children are educated to help break poverty in the region. Finishing her speech, she urged the widows to form groups so that they can benefit from Government initiatives like Women Enterprise Funds (WEF).

CONCLUSION

The Post-International Widows Day event held on 5th July 2024 at ACK Church in Mogondo Ward, Narok County, was a resounding success. With heartfelt speeches, empowering workshops, and a strong sense of community, the widows who attended left the event feeling hopeful and inspired. This gathering not only highlighted the challenges faced by widows but also showcased the collective strength and resilience of these women. Through shared stories, practical advice, and support networks, the event provided a platform for widows to envision a brighter and more secure future. As we move forward, the bonds formed and the knowledge gained during this event will continue to empower and uplift the widows of Mogondo Ward, driving positive change in their lives and communities.

POST-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY EVENT HELD ON 13TH JULY 2024 AT ST LUKE

CATHOLIC CHURCH, LOITOKTOK PARISH IN KAJIADO COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

The Post-International Widows Day event was held on 13th July 2024 in Oloitoktok, Kajiado County. The event took place at St. Luke's Catholic Church Loitoktok Parish and was organized by Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO) in collaboration with Osiligi Lenkolia Widow's Group. The gathering brought together widows from the region, government officials, legal advocates, financial institutions, and representatives from various supportive organizations.

WELCOME ADDRESS



Mama Saitoti, Chair Lady of Osiligi Lenkolia Widow's Group, welcoming participants, emphasizing love and unity in community projects for widows

Mama Saitoti, the Chair Lady of the Osiligi Lenkolia Widow's Group, officially welcomed all attendees. She emphasized the importance of love and unity among widows, regardless of their tribal backgrounds. She highlighted the ongoing projects aimed at benefiting widows and other women in the community.

ACTIVITY DETAILS

LEGAL RIGHTS AND ADVOCACY



Cherop and Marete Advocates provided Legal insights on inheritance and land rights, addressing widows' questions and clarifying complex issues

Cherop and Marete Advocates delivered an enlightening session on the legal rights of widows, emphasizing inheritance, land rights, and other relevant legal matters. During the session, the widows actively participated in a Q&A segment, voicing their specific concerns. One widow inquired about the possibility of selling land that was previously owned by her husband but has now been transferred to her name. The advocates confirmed that she had the legal right to sell the land as it was now her property. Another widow questioned whether a married daughter could inherit land from her biological parents, to which the advocates responded affirmatively, stating that marital status

does not bar a daughter from inheritance. Additionally, a question was raised regarding inheritance in polygamous marriages, particularly when a husband left rental houses to two wives. The advocates clarified that such complex inheritance matters should be resolved in court to ensure fair and legal judgment.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

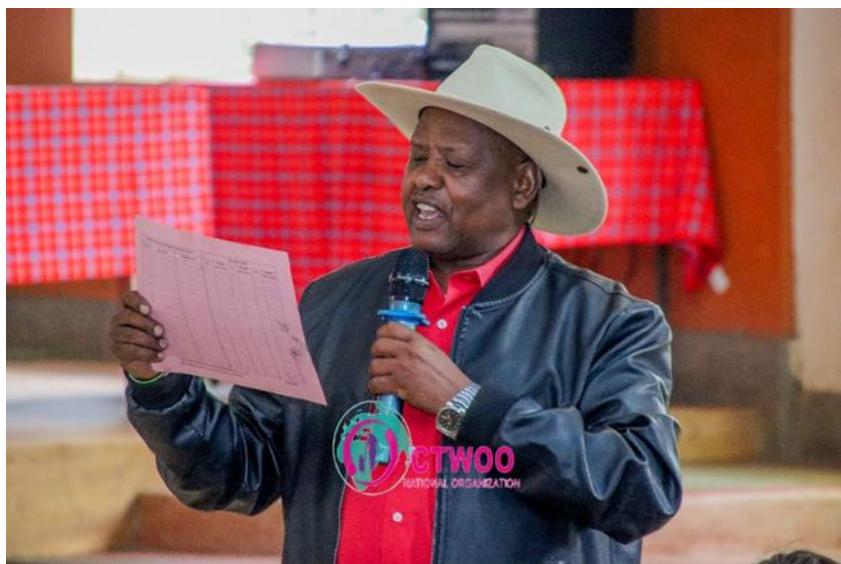


The Assistant County Commissioner of Kajiado South Sub- County affirming the government's commitment to supporting widows, highlighting ongoing initiatives and dedication to improving their quality of life

The Assistant County Commissioner of Kajiado South Sub-county took the stage to express the government's recognition of the challenges faced by widows and to affirm its commitment to their welfare. He emphasized that the government acknowledges the unique difficulties widows encounter and is dedicated to providing the necessary support to improve their quality of life. The Commissioner highlighted ongoing initiatives and programs specifically designed to aid widows, ensuring they receive the assistance and resources they need. He reassured the attendees that the government is continuously working to implement policies and allocate funds aimed at supporting widows' economic, social, and legal needs. His message

conveyed a strong sense of solidarity and commitment from the government, reinforcing its role as an ally in the widows' journey towards empowerment and self-sufficiency.

ONGOING PROJECTS



The leader of the widows' projects highlighting the success of the goat and chicken rearing initiatives, now providing widows with valuable assets for sustainable income and economic stability

The leader of the ongoing widows' projects took the opportunity to discuss in detail the current initiatives aimed at empowering widows through sustainable agricultural activities. He focused particularly on the goat and chicken rearing projects, which have been designed to provide widows with viable sources of income and economic stability. He elaborated on the substantial progress made in the goat rearing project, highlighting the careful planning and hard work that had gone into ensuring its success. The project, which began as a pilot with a few goats, has now grown significantly, thanks to the dedication and commitment of the widows

involved. He proudly announced that the goats were now ready for distribution, marking a significant milestone in the project. Each widow would receive a goat, providing them with a valuable asset for investment and livelihood. He emphasized that this initiative not only offered immediate financial benefits but also promoted long-term economic independence and resilience. By engaging in goat

rearing, widows could generate continuous income through breeding, milk production, and potential sale of offspring. This project, along with the chicken rearing initiative, underscored the organization's commitment to creating sustainable economic opportunities for widows, fostering a sense of community, and empowering them to take control of their financial futures.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND EDUCATION



Equity Bank representative explaining their support for widows, covering financial products, education funding and the Wings to Fly scholarships, aimed at fostering financial independence and empowerment for future generations

Representatives from Equity Bank Loitoktok addressed the gathering, each focusing on specific aspects of the bank's support for widows. Misheck, one of the representatives, spoke in detail about the bank's dedicated efforts to assist widows, particularly in the realms of children's education and capital provision. He outlined the various financial products and services designed to meet the unique needs of widows, emphasizing the importance of access to education for their children as a foundation for future success. Misheck also mentioned the specific price of goats available through the bank's program, set at 25,000 Kenyan shillings, which provides a tangible investment opportunity for widows.

discussed the various loan options tailored for widows, especially those who are organized into groups, explaining how these loans could help them achieve financial independence and improve their livelihoods. Following Misheck, Macharia, the Chairman of Kajiado South, delved into more detailed aspects of financial literacy and empowerment. He discussed the importance of financial and debt management training, explaining how such knowledge is crucial for widows to manage their finances effectively and avoid common pitfalls. Macharia provided step-by-step guidance on how to open an Equity Bank account, ensuring that the widows understood the process and the benefits associated with having a bank account. He also highlighted the numerous investment opportunities available through the bank, encouraging the widows to take advantage of these options to grow their wealth and secure their financial future. Macharia paid special attention to the Wings to Fly educational scholarship, a flagship program of Equity Bank. He explained that this scholarship offers comprehensive financial support and mentorship to children from disadvantaged backgrounds who achieve a score of 350 marks or higher in their Kenya Certificate of Primary Education. The scholarship covers full school fees, pocket money, and shopping, and provides continuous mentorship throughout the four years of secondary education. Macharia emphasized the transformative impact of this program, not only in providing financial relief but also in empowering the next generation with the education and skills necessary to break the cycle of poverty. This detailed presentation underscored Equity Bank's holistic approach to supporting widows and their families, demonstrating a commitment to their long-term well-being and success.

UWEZO FUND



Winfred Mwikali from Uwezo Fund highlighting the interest-free financial support available to widows , emphasizing group applications for enhanced funding and community support

Winfred Mwikali, a dedicated representative from Uwezo Fund for Kajiado South Sub-county, provided an in-depth overview of the Uwezo Fund during her address. She detailed the purpose and benefits of the fund, which is specifically designed to support the economic empowerment of youth, people with disabilities, and women. She emphasized that the fund is an excellent opportunity for widows to access much-needed financial resources to start or expand their businesses. Winfred highlighted the unique aspect of the Uwezo Fund, which is its interest-free nature, making it an accessible and attractive option for those who might be deterred by the prospect of accruing

interest on loans. She encouraged the widows to form groups, as the fund is structured to support collective applications, thereby fostering a sense of community and mutual support among the participants. Winfred explained that by working in groups, the widows could not only access larger amounts of funding but also benefit from shared knowledge, skills, and experiences, which could enhance the success of their ventures. She assured the attendees that the application process is straightforward and that she was available to assist them with any questions or guidance they might need.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SUPPORT



Ruth Nashipae from CCGD detailing their support for GBV survivors, including counselling, legal aid and advocacy, aimed at empowering and protecting victims

Ruth Nashipae, representing the Collaborative Centre for Gender and Development (CCGD), outlined the organization's pivotal role in supporting survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). She explained that CCGD specializes in providing comprehensive assistance, including counselling, legal aid services, and advocacy, tailored to the needs of GBV survivors. Their efforts extend to raising awareness about GBV, encouraging survivors to report incidents, and ensuring they receive essential support and protection. It is committed to empowering survivors by equipping them with knowledge of their rights and avenues for seeking justice. Through collaborative efforts with diverse stakeholders, CCGD fosters safe

environments and implements initiatives aimed at preventing GBV and advancing gender equality within communities.

CTWOO'S COMMITMENT



Dr. Dianah Kamande praising the Osiligi Lenkolia Widow's group for their resilience, highlighting government funds for economic empowerment and urging widows to advocate for their rights and leadership roles

Dianah Kamande, the founder and executive director of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO), delivered an inspiring speech in which she shared the history and achievements of the Osiligi Lenkolia widow's group. She recounted how the group was established in 2020 with Mama Saitoti as the chair lady, and highlighted the remarkable progress they have made since then. Dianah provided valuable information to the widows about various government funds available to support them, including Uwezo Fund, and Women Enterprise Fund (WEF). She emphasized how these funds are designed to empower widows economically and help them achieve

financial independence. Dianah took a moment to thank Mama Saitoti for her unwavering dedication and tireless efforts in leading the group and supporting its members. She promised to continue seeking additional resources and support to further benefit the widows. Addressing the leaders of the widows' groups, Dianah urged them to be proactive in advocating for the rights of widows and to take on leadership roles within their communities. She acknowledged the incredible strength and resilience of the widows, commending them for their perseverance in the face of adversity. Dianah concluded her speech by expressing her hope for the development and implementation of a policy or bill specifically tailored to allocate funds and services to widows, ensuring they receive the support and recognition they deserve. Her heartfelt words aimed to inspire and motivate the widows, reinforcing the organization's commitment to their ongoing empowerment and advocacy.

LEADERSHIP ENCOURAGEMENT



The chair lady of Women Development Kenya urging women to embrace leadership roles, emphasizing their unique strengths and potential to drive positive community change

The Chair Lady of Women Development Kenya encouraged women to actively pursue leadership positions, emphasizing their inherent strength and capability to serve effectively. She highlighted the importance of women's involvement in leadership roles, noting that their unique perspectives and skills are essential for driving positive change in communities. By stepping into these roles, she assured, women could make significant contributions and inspire others to follow suit, fostering a more inclusive and empowered society.

CHIEF GUEST OF HONOUR



Senator Judy Pareno commending the Osiligi Lenkolia widows' achievement and pledging further support including legal aid and psychosocial services, to enhance their empowerment and well-being

Senator Judy Pareno, the Chief Guest of Honour, praised the remarkable efforts and achievements of the widows working under the Osiligi Lenkolia umbrella. She acknowledged the dedication and hard work of the widows in improving their lives and contributing positively to their communities. Senator Pareno emphasized the importance of continued support and pledged to facilitate additional awareness creation forums. These forums would include crucial services such as legal aid to help widows navigate their rights and psychosocial support to address their emotional and mental well-being. She assured the widows that these initiatives would be prioritized to ensure they have access to the resources and support necessary for their empowerment and growth.

PROJECT LAUNCH



A photo showcasing some of the goats introduced during the launch of the Osiligi Lenkolia goat project

The event concluded on a high note with the official launch of the goat project for the Osiligi Lenkolia widow's group. This momentous occasion was a testament to the widows' unwavering dedication and commitment to improving their livelihoods. The project, which focuses on goat rearing, aims to provide a sustainable source of income and food security for the widows and their families. The widows were celebrated not only for their hard work but also for their resilience and determination to achieve economic independence. This project marks a significant step forward in their journey towards

self-sufficiency and empowerment, highlighting the transformative impact of community support and collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The event was a heart-warming and empowering experience for all attendees, showcasing the strength, resilience, and unity of widows in Kajiado County. It reinforced the support from various stakeholders and set a positive tone for future initiatives aimed at improving the lives of widows.

POST-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY AND FREE MEDICAL CAMP HELD ON 20TH

JULY 2024 AT NDURURUNO PRIMAY SCHOOL IN MATHARE CONSTITUENCY, NAIROBI COUNTY

INTRODUCTION

We are delighted to share the success of our recent post-International Widows Day event, held on Saturday 20th July 2024 in Mathare constituency. This event was a significant initiative aimed at supporting the widows and community members of Mathare through a free medical camp. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our esteemed partners: Nairobi Outpatient Gulf Ltd hospital, Hope Leadership Trust, November Rapid Response Team, stakeholders, and our gracious hosts, the Shining Widows Self-Help Group. We came together to provide essential medical services and support to those in need, with a special focus on the widows of the area. The collaboration and dedication of all involved made this event a profound success, reinforcing our commitment to enhancing the welfare and empowerment of widows and vulnerable individuals in our community. In this report, we highlight the impact of our collective efforts and the meaningful contributions made towards fostering health, dignity, and community support. We invite you to explore the outcomes and stories from the event, showcasing the spirit of compassion and solidarity that drives our mission here at Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization.

EVENT DETAILS

The event commenced at 11:00 am with a heartfelt prayer from Pastor Rose of Bethel Widows CBO. Later, the Chairperson for Widows in Mathare Constituency warmly welcomed everyone. The guests who graced the event were; Dr. Romana Yego from the office of the President's Women Rights Advisor, Dr. Florence Chemutai from the State Department for Gender Affairs and Affirmative Action, Pastor Ben from Hope Leadership Trust (USA), Ms. Faith of Certified Homes, Ms. Nkatha Founder of Graceful Youth Recovery Center, Mr. Marwa the area Chief Kamaiko location, Madam Asha Assistant Chief Ndururuno Sub-location, Mr. Jacob from Ombudsman Kenya (CAJ), Madam Sarah November from November Rapid Response Team and Dr. Diana Kamande our founder and Executive Director.

CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS

i. Free-Medical Camp

The primary objective of the medical camp was to address the healthcare needs of widows and community members in Mathare constituency, ensuring access to quality medical services free of charge. The scope of services offered included general medical consultations, basic health screenings, distribution of essential medications, and referrals for specialized care where necessary. The success of this initiative was made possible through collaborative efforts and generous support. Nairobi Outpatient Gulf Ltd, a leading healthcare provider, contributed medical expertise, resources, and logistical support to facilitate the smooth operation of the camp. Their commitment to community welfare and healthcare accessibility was evident throughout the event. The medical camp featured a dedicated team of healthcare professionals, including doctors, nurses, and support staff, who volunteered their time and expertise to serve the community. Services were organized in a structured manner to ensure efficiency and maximize outreach. Participants underwent medical assessments, received personalized consultations, and were provided with necessary medications as prescribed.

Here are the highlights of the Medical Camp





ii. Fire Safety Measures



November Rapid Response Team showcasing the widows the safety precautions to take while using electricity and practical steps to manage fire incidents

November Rapid Response Team (NRRT) provided vital training on safety and fire management. They emphasized the importance of individual responsibility in safety, discussing precautions while using electricity and practical steps to manage fire incidents at home. The training included demonstrations on extinguishing fires from cooking gas and managing smoke from burnt

food, as well as the correct methods to handle fires caused by cooking oil.

iii. Support for the widows

The collaboration with Hope Leadership Trust played a crucial role in ensuring the success and effectiveness of the initiative, particularly through their generous support in providing Maize flour to participants our widows and members of Mathare constituency who participated in the event. Hope Leadership Trust's contribution was instrumental in enhancing the event's impact. Their provision of Maize flour significantly alleviated the immediate needs of participants, ensuring that widows and community members could access maize flour to take home. This support not only met a basic necessity but also symbolized a gesture of care and solidarity towards the beneficiaries. The impact of the partnership was profound, as evidenced by the positive feedback and gratitude expressed by beneficiaries. The provision of Unga from Hope Leadership Trust not only met practical needs but also fostered a sense of dignity and empowerment among widows and community members. This support contributed to the event's success in promoting community well-being and resilience.

Here are the highlights of the Maize Flour donation from Hope Leadership Trust





The widows expressing their happiness after receiving the maize flour donated by the Hope Leadership Trust

SPEECHES

Mr. Brian Ojumbe-Representative from the Ombudsman Kenya



Mr. Brian, providing information to the widows on how they can access their services

Mr. Brian Ojumbe from the Ombudsman Kenya (CAJ) addressed the widows, emphasizing the vital role of their organization in providing aid and support to fight all forms of injustices. He stated, that the organization, is dedicated to safeguarding your rights and ensuring justice. Located at Sheria House, where they listen to grievances and provide assistance where needed. Mr. Ojumbe encouraged the widows to approach their office with confidence, assuring them that their concerns would be heard and addressed with the utmost seriousness and commitment.

Ms. Nkatha Mwenda- Founder of Graceful Youth Recovery Center



Ms. Nkatha Mwenda, advising the widows to seek help at the Graceful Youth Recovery Center for those whose children are involved with the issues of drug addiction

Ms. Nkatha Mwenda, founder of Graceful Youth Recovery Center, addressed the widows, sharing her organization's mission to assist those struggling with addiction. She opened up about her personal journey, revealing, It has been seven years since she freed herself from the bondage of addiction. Ms. Mwenda emphasized the importance of seeking help, urging those battling addiction not to lose hope. She passionately encouraged them, stating, that they can overcome this by Reaching out for support at Graceful Youth Recovery Center where they will be helped to reclaim their life and also that of their children. Her heartfelt message resonated with the widows and the community, inspiring hope and determination in their own journeys towards recovery.

Ms. Faith- Representative from Certified Homes



Ms. Faith explaining their housing and development services to the widows

land ownership, Certified Homes intends to empower individuals and communities, enabling them to build stable and prosperous futures.

Ms. Caterine Ngina- Chairperson JCM Widows



Ms. Catherine Ngina encouraging widows to take initiative of improving their lives despite the loss of their partners

Ms. Faith, the senior marketing manager of Certified Homes, explained their housing and development services, highlighting their commitment to improving economic well-being. She emphasized their initiative to sell affordable land to widows and the community of Matahare, aiming to uplift their financial status and create opportunities for sustainable growth.

Ms. Faith stressed that by providing access to

Ms. Catherine Ngina, chairperson of JCM Widows, encouraged widows to take the initiative to improve their lives despite the loss of their partners. She emphasized the importance of hard work and resilience in achieving personal and economic growth. Ms. Ngina also mentioned that JCM owns Air View Driving School, which provides driving lessons to the community, contributing to skill development and empowerment. She expressed gratitude to Dr. Diana Kamande, for her invaluable support during her own challenges as a widow. Ms. Ngina highlighted that Dr. Diana's assistance was instrumental in navigating difficult times, underscoring the impactful role of their organization in providing essential aid and fostering a supportive community for widows and orphans.

Madam Yvone Aluodo- Assistant county Commissioner Matahare Constituency



Madam Yvone encouraging the widows to apply for government funds in order to improve their lives and that of their children

Madam Yvone, the Assistant County Commissioner reiterated the government's support for widows and vulnerable children (orphans) and encouraged widows to apply for government funds designed to assist women and youths. She also addressed the ongoing fight against drug and alcohol abuse, cautioning widows against involvement in the preparation of chang'aa, a prevalent issue in Mathare.

Dr. Dianah Kamande- Founder and Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans

Organization



Dr. Dianah spreading Love and hope to the widows

Dr. Diana Kamande, our founder, addressed the widows with a message of support and encouragement during the event, focused on managing loss and grief. She emphasized the importance of acknowledging and processing their emotions, reassuring them that healing is a gradual process that requires patience and self-compassion. Dr. Kamande expressed her heartfelt gratitude to Nairobi Outpatient Gulf LTD for their invaluable partnership with their organization. She highlighted their collaboration in providing free medical services to the widows and the broader community of Mathare, underscoring the significance of accessible healthcare in enhancing overall well-being. During her address, Dr. Kamande spoke passionately about spreading love and hope among the widows. She encouraged them to see the light amidst their challenges and find moments of happiness in their lives. Her words were intended to uplift their spirits and remind them that they are not alone in their journey. Furthermore, Dr. Kamande reassured the widows that our organization is committed to supporting them through every step of their lives. She encouraged them not to lose hope, emphasizing that the organization will always be a steadfast source of assistance and solidarity. Dr. Kamande's speech was a beacon of empathy and resilience, instilling a sense of empowerment and community among the widows as they navigate their personal struggles. She also acknowledged the presence of Hon. Romana Yego and Florence Chemutai for gracing the event.

Dr. Florence Chemutai- Ministry of Gender Affairs and Affirmative Action



Madam Florence Chemutai condemning the ongoing cases of Gender Based Violence

Ms. Florence Chemutai from the State Department for Gender Affairs and Affirmative Action read a speech on behalf of the PS Ms. Anne Wang'ombe which reminded the Widows about Governments commitment into supporting its Widows. She condemned the ongoing cases of Gender Based Violence against women and provided a toll-free harassment response number (1195) for the widows to reach out and seek for help in such cases.

Dr. Romana Yego- Office of the President's Women Rights Advisor



Dr. Romana sharing her personal story of resilience after her husband's death, encouraging the widows to stay strong, resilient and happy

Dr. Romana Yego from the office of Women Rights Advisor who represented Hon.Harriet Chiggai appreciated all partners of the medical camp and reaffirmed their office's commitment to addressing widow issues. She shared her personal story of resilience after her husband's death and encouraged widows to stay strong and happy.

CONCLUSION

The medical camp held on July 20th, 2024, in Mathare constituency was a resounding success, leaving a profound impact on both widows and members of the community alike. The event, facilitated through a collaborative effort between Come Together Widows and Orphans and Nairobi Outpatient Gulf LTD, provided crucial free medical services that addressed immediate health concerns and promoted well-being. Additionally, the generosity of Hope Leadership Trust added a heartfelt touch to the event by distributing 4kg of maize flour to each attendee, especially benefiting the widows in meeting their immediate nutritional needs. This act of kindness not only provided sustenance but also symbolized solidarity and support for those facing challenges within the community.

