



IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDIA ESPECIALLY TO RURAL WIDOWS: TO ENSURE LAST WOMAN FIRST

15 March 2018

12.30 - 2.00

Vartan Hall, The Armenian Convention Center, 630 2nd Ave

Chair WRI Zarin Hainsworth OBE
Hendrika Okondo -(WREPA),
Rozaria Memorial Trust
Georgia Ford, NAWO YWA
Alais Sima, Coodiator, Naserian
Dianah Kamande Director Come
together Widows And orphans
Organization
Rugya Muttawa – Founder Hope
Libya
Sienna Ambler NAWO YWA
Marthe Vira, National MU
Community Development
Coordinator for DR Congo

Widows are among the most disadvantaged in the world. ICT including apps and mobile phone technology means that they have access to information about their rights that was hitherto denied them. They have increased access to funding using mobile phone financial options.

This interactive event will draw on experts and the voice of young women together with the expertise in the room, to

highlight best practice and ensure that widows are not left behind. It will also highlight the SDGs that relate significantly to enhancing the life of widows across the globe.

Speakers will cover:
Widow land rights in Busia Kenya, implementing SDGs to assist rural widows, using all forms of media, training in ICTs, mobile phone technology, war widows in DR Congo



Hendrica Okondo

Hendrica Okondo is the Global Adviser and Researcher at Women Rights and Partnership in Africa (WREPA) an organisation run by young women and working with young women in rural areas. WREPA works in partnership with Rozaria Memorial Trust. Hendrica has a master's degree is a feminist trained in Agriculture Public Health and Gender studies, who has over 30 years working as a women human rights advocate at Global Regional and National level ; she was formerly Global Programme Manager at the World YWCA for 8years and Country Programme Manager at UNIFEM Regional Office in Africa for 10years UN-World Food Programme for 5years and British Council East Africa Office for 5 years. She worked in many countries in conflict as a Senior Gender Adviser. She has been participating in the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Population and Development since 2007 first as a staff member of UNIFEM and then as head of Delegation of the World YWCA ,where she was a member of the UNFPA CSO Advisory group on Faith and also an active member of the ecumenical women working group on migration. She is also a member of the Women's Major group and has contributed to several position papers on SRHR and Faith

She is a life member of YWCA Kenya and a former board member and Advisory group member for the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance , she has been facilitating and mentoring young women to engage in intergenerational dialogues with faith leaders. She was involved in the SDG Process and presented several statements on behalf of the Youth and Women's Major Group ;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AEv1K2LZdp4>

<https://www.oikoumene.org/.../hiv-still-poses-uncomfortable-questions-for-the-church..>

Georgia Ford

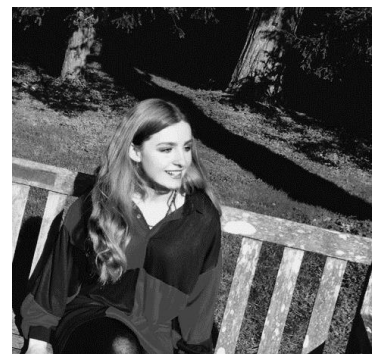
Georgia Ford is a student at Stroud High School sixth form, studying A - levels in History, English literature and Politics. She is interested to see how feminism has grown and developed through the times - from the suffragists to Thatcher and May. Alongside this she is doing an EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) on Cleopatra and the portrayal of her throughout time - often focusing in on the injustice of it; the lack of focus on her intellect with her sexual nature taking the limelight. She is extremely passionate about the outrage of child brides, women's legal and sexual rights - including issues such as female genital mutilation. She believe in intersectional feminism - in the fact that we all have different layers of privilege and struggle and that feminism is not just for white, middle class women but for women of colour, LGBTQ+ people and anyone else who needs the support of those willing to give it.



Sienna Ambler

Sienna Ambler is currently a student at Stroud High Sixth Form, studying Politics, English Literature and Geography, alongside an EPQ. Through these three subjects she is able to learn more about the world and how

all different dimensions of it fit together to create the place that we live today, especially in terms of how women have grown and gained more and more respect and freedom over time, but that there is much more work to be done. She strongly believes that feminism is, or rather should be intersectional and all-inclusive as that is what the feminist movement strives to do, create equality for all. She thinks that it is important to focus on the education of girls from a young age, integrating the ideas of feminism throughout the spectrum of their education and everyday lives so that it becomes normality. She is extremely passionate about giving women a voice, educating young girls and women so that they know that they have the right to govern their own life and their own bodies.



Dianah Wanjiku Kamande

Dianah is 36 Years Old and a Mother of two Girls and has adopted 14 orphaned and vulnerable children. She is from an educated background, she has a Certificate in *Early Childhood Education* from Pet Williams ECDE College, a Diploma In *theology* from Destiny Bible College And Diploma in *Women in Leadership and Governance in Africa* from the African Women Studies Centre Nairobi University. She also has a Degree in *Peace and Conflict Management* from African Nazarene University that is ongoing and is a Founder at *come together widows and orphans organisation*.



Rugya Muttawa

Rugya is the founder of Hope Libya, an organisation which helps young women and widows, and gives them education to set up their own enterprises and businesses. She doesn't believe in financial aid and in stead offers education to those who need it to then be able to earn for themselves.

Executive Summary

The speeches in this report all give very different but equally informative views on the issues of widowhood and the way that the media can help to combat these issues. All the reports highlight how being a widow can mean that your land and property are taken away from you and you are often left with nothing to support you and your children. For all the speakers there was an importance placed upon teaching widows their rights regarding land and the fact that often there isn't any legislation in place to help widows who have had all their property taken off them. The way that they integrated media into this struggle was to raise awareness, get the outside world involved and later support for things such as a widowhood bill. Media is a powerful tool and the speakers insist upon its importance in their speeches as it can not only inform others of the struggles of widows, it can also be used to educate those directly effected and show other widows that they are not alone in the world. The speakers tell us of how communities can be built using media to stop the alienation of widows who live in remote places. The examples given show us the great strides that the media has helped make. However they all still insist that there is more that can be done and tell us how we can use the media to achieve more for the widows of the world.

Please take the time to read all the speeches from our panelists in the report below.

Using media to promote Widow land rights in Busia Kenya - Hendrika Okondo, (WREPA), Rozaria memorial trust

*no powerpoint shown at event because no projector/computer



Using Social Media to address emerging needs of widows in Busia County, Kenya

Background

- ▶ Busia County is located in Western Kenya, within the Lake Victoria Basin
- ▶ Busia County had an estimated population of 823,504 in the 2013/14 planning year, which is 1.9% of the national population
- ▶ The estimated number of households was 164,701 with an average family size of 5.
- ▶ The poverty level stands at 66% while literacy level is at 75.3%
- ▶ Wrepa works with orphaned girls who are involved in fish for sex practices due to The cycle of poverty and vulnerable ensures that older women introduces their younger daughters or orphaned girls to sex for fish trade. In return the young girl sleeps with the fisherman that offers the best deal, when they become pregnant they are forced to marry the fishermen

(Kenya National Bureau of Statistics - KNBS)

Widows

- ▶ HIV/AIDS epidemic - Busia has a prevalence of 6.8% against the national average of 6%
- ▶ sex is a vibrant part of fishing and research has shown a strong link between HIV prevalence and sex for fish trade. Young women identified as vulnerable in negotiations because of existing gendered power structures. Men carrying out the fishing, therefore men controls factors of production, and women processing, drying and selling the fish.
- ▶ When these men die the young women are blamed and ostracized they lose all their rights to land and shelter

Challenges

- ▶ Missing data - no reliable data on the number of young women widows and the consequences they face at the family and community level
- ▶ Informal marriages with no recognition from government leaves widows further exposed
- ▶ Legislation - no laws are in place to protect women from exploitation, no access to social support, pensions, land ownership
- ▶ Lack of knowledge and access to justice systems
- ▶ Experience additional violence including physical, psychological, economic and verbal from extended families, and communities
- ▶ Additional harmful practices such as wife inheritance are practiced in Busia
- ▶ Seen as a bad omens and sometimes blamed for their husband's deaths

Social Media

- ▶ The young women have formed organisations that use social media to highlight issues around widowhood in the family and community level
- ▶ They use facebook and whatsapp group to attract legislators such as Women's Rep in Busia or First Lady of Busia County



Using media

- the widows don't have standard IDs and are basically state less
- at least each household has a smartphone
- even if they don't have fish and food
- 2 girls were going to come to CSW62 to give their story of widowhood but they were denied visas
- the widows have telephones and WhatsApp
- working together and have a support system for the other girls, on WhatsApp
- when the fisherman come they have lots of money and attract the girls with phones and other flash objects to get them to marry them.
- with the WhatsApp they inform other girls not to take that risk

- also some girls who were denied access to land and threatened to being burnt as a witch when she was widowed, used the media in the form of The News on TV to get attention to their situation
- another girl took the government to court over the loss of land and the lack of protection in these cases
- the churches have signed up to the children commitment, they support the young women, they plant trees for the girls and they can use them for income, such as the fruit etc..

Implementing SDGs 5, 9 and 16 assist rural widows - Georgia Ford, NAWO YWA

I would like to begin by thanking NAWO for this incredible opportunity and accrediting me - I am honoured to be here today to speak on the topic of how rural widows can be and are being assisted by SDG 5, 9 and 16.

Of the 7.6 billion people in the world today¹, 49.6% are women. 7% of which are widows². 1 in 7 of whom are living in extreme poverty, according to worldometers.com, weforum.com and . In my view we need to understand the situation of widows is an important global issue and change the idea that widows from all over the world are simply victims- their efforts and strength should not be ignored.

According to a 2001 Census, widows represent over 34 million women in India alone. These women are routinely abandoned in society and put beneath other in the perceived order of who deserves help and when and this cannot go on.

In India when a woman's husband dies, it is seen as a 'social death' for her- a fall down the ladder- a slip from respect. It is social stigmas like these which are so harmful to these rural women but it is not just them that are effected, urban women face the same issues. . Despite this, organisations such as The Guild of Service Working Women's Hostel in India aims to provide safe boarding and lodging for working women from the low and middle income groups, creating a home like environment for its residents³.

SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. According to a document published by womenwatch, the main problems faced by widows are poverty, armed conflict, lack of education and training, health, violence and exclusion from the economy. Seodhi in Malawi is a prime example of how target 16.1 can help if implemented correctly. In the article, she talks of how 'I and my children were kicked out of the house and beaten by the brothers-in-law'. , she was abused and mistreated by her own family. An outrage to any ears. According to the SDG target 16.1.2, it aims to significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere- this could change the lives of people like her. If we can protect more women like Seodhi, widows will no longer have to suffer after the loss of their husband and will be able to thrive in a society which accepts and supports them.

Women in poverty are so very vulnerable and they *need* to be protected- without a husband they are often subjected to violence, witch-hunts, rape and murder. Isabel from Kenya talks of her husband's death from AIDS and how his family blame her for this. In a number of African countries widows are cast down as witches if an illness such as AIDS curses their family- despite the husband possibly having intercourse with numerous others.

SDG 5 focuses on empowering women and the target 5.1 aims to remove discrimination against women and girls. If this target is infiltrated into situations such as witch accusations, widows will be able to live their lives without fear of persecution due to superstition. There are thousands of widows like Isabel who suffer harmful practices merely because their husband has died. It is time to do something about this inhumane and degrading practice

To ensure that conventions such as SDG 5 are being enforced.

¹ <http://www.worldometers.info/>

² <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/which-country-has-the-largest-number-of-widows/>

³ <http://guildofservicecentral.org/programmes-for-children/>

SDG 9 focuses on the development of infrastructure and supporting industrialisation. For rural widows alongside other women in rural areas, a huge issue is that of being in a society in which they don't have access to more developed resources and therefore may not have access to developed infrastructure, technology and a more industrial habitat.

In Kabul, the Taliban prohibition on women working outside the home created extreme poverty for the 500,000 war widows as the sole providers for their families. If the target 9.3 is pursued and achieved, war widows would be able to gain credit and loans- allowing them to generate a sustainable income for their families. This would be hugely influential in the development of widows being able to support their loved ones

By assisting war widows financially, it allows them to use the voices that have often been suppressed and give them a platform to speak from.

The progress in 2017 has been unbelievable regarding SDG 9; Mobile services have spread rapidly and have allowed people living in previously unconnected areas to join the global information society. A survey of people in 11 low- and middle-income countries found women were on average 14 percent less likely to own any sort of phone than men. Assuming some of these women are widows and some live in rural areas- this puts them at again a more vulnerable position, setting them as the inferior gender. In our town of Stroud, the connection is worse than in Arusha in Tanzania – this is a worldwide issue of women being unable to be connected to others.

In 2016, 95 % of the world's population and 85 % of people in the least developed countries were covered by a mobile-cellular signal. These statistics prove that things can and will be done to help all rural widows by connecting them to a world of people that care about them, but the question of whether this is due to the progress with SDG 9 or simply a growth in business does come up

I believe that war widows, rural widows and any women who have been let down by their society deserve better than they have been given. They deserve more. Though it is clear that a vigilant effort is being made to improve the lives of rural widows, such as those of 'guildofservice' in areas such as India we are still seeing a lack of equality and mortality.

But it is not just issues such as economic and technological that rural widows face, more needs to be done in support of women suffering medical issues such as AIDs. People like Isabel will not be held accountable for their medical misfortunes. If more women had access to free media they would know more fully when they need to seek medical attention and how they can get this. Rural widows who are further from a doctor would be able to contact them using online media or a phone, meaning less illness and less death.

There needs to be better education in places with a lower access to the media and accessible information- with this we can provide access to work and therefore more opportunity for widows to stand alone and support themselves and their families. With higher access to media, women can complete online courses and get qualifications which would otherwise maybe not be available. Through the media we can also raise awareness of the challenges faced by rural widows and by doing so, allow more support systems to be put in place.

Human beings suffering the force of a society that does not understand their value.

Furthermore, I believe that violence against these widows needs to be scrutinised better and treated more severely. In some areas, the lack of a husband makes them look weak. But this is not due to the women, the lack of a husband would not be a problem if the law provided inheritance rights and even if the law does provide rights, the widow needs to be empowered to claim them. They need to be supported in their fights against abuse in order to disperse the problem and let these women continue their lives without fear.

Additionally, the financial support of rural widows has room for adjustment. Target 9.3 is an incredible step towards it and this should be extended and forcefully pushed- allowing women to provide for their families, to take back control, is incredible but again, they need the economic education and support to get on their own two feet.

As a rural woman myself, I know first hand how some of these issues assigned to other countries are actually much closer to home than we think. We need to get rid of the assumption that women in places such as India are somehow weaker and less able to fight their battles and overcome social issues. But it is through occasions such as this that everyone is able to come together and collectively give rural widows everywhere the support that they may need. Through lobbying the government, talking to peers and the press and raising awareness I believe that we truly can make a difference.

Of the 7.6 billion people in the world today, 49.6% are women. 7% of which are widows. 1 in 7 of whom are living in extreme poverty. If the SDGs were achieved, these figures would change. Less woman would be suffering a lack of technology or a lack of legal support against violence. More widows would escape poverty and live more stable lives.

Overall, SDG 5, 9 and 16 are wonderful introductions which point to a much more promising future for rural widows and their families worldwide. We need to fight to see the goals implemented and become a global reality, what is the point of the world agreeing to a global document such as Agenda 2030 if we don't all work to see it in action. It's just paper. These goals are something we should all be fighting for and calling out governments to account-all of them- including local. They will no longer have to live in a world in which they are in the shadows.

Thank you

How Naserian is using all forms of media - Alais Sima, coordinator, 'Naserian'

**Powerpoint not shown at event because of no projector/computer.*

Naserian

"Grace of God"

Working With Maasai Widows



Background

- Maasai tribe live in Tanzania & Kenya
- We live in North Tanzania, province of Arusha
- Population of area: 30,000
- Naserian in 10 villages
- 425 widows in 10 villages
- Age range of widows: from 17 to 75 years old
- Widows in 10 villages have nearly 200 children



History

- Started in 2010
- Started in 1 village then 3 villages and now 10 villages
- Full time coordinator (Alais)



Projects

- Training Widows Rights
- Pre-Primary education of children in villages
- Training in Health Education
- Eradicating FGM
- Training about entrepreneurship
- Work with community leaders



Work with Maasai community leaders

- Communication, consultation and close work with community leaders to solve issues and problems
- Monthly meetings with village leaders from all 10 villages
- Naserian coordinator collects all village leaders. Widows create agenda and run the meeting
- As result of regular meetings the widows have managed to secure land for the widows in 7 villages
- Work on land ownership for other 3 villages is in progress

Training widows rights

- Train 10 widows with capacity from each village to train
- Trainer visits from Dar-es-salam and visits Arusha district
- 5 day training course
- 10 widows share training on return to their village

How you can help

- Help with funding
- Skills transfer (Jewellery, IT, Health)
- Come and visit and work with us...

Future plans

- Teacher training for pre-schools
- Health education for children
- Eradicating early marriage
- Educating widows to develop and expand their activities
- Raising money for buying solar panels & car for visiting villages
- Improving quality and design of jewellery



Pre-Primary education of children in villages

- Built school building in 3 villages
- Average of 60 children at school in each village
- 5 teachers in total for the 3 schools
- Small allowance for teachers
- Children classes 3 years up to age of 7
- After 7 years old children go to government school in village



Training in health education

- Training in pregnancy and child bearing & child care
- Training in general hygiene
- Finding clean water and water care
- Training by local Maasai doctor visiting villages



Eradicating FGM

- Before Naserian 80% of girls were subject to FGM
- FGM work started in 2012 and developed widely in 2015
- Before Naserian there were 6 cutters for the villages
- All the cutters trained to become midwives instead
- FGM has now completely stopped in 10 villages
- Naserian is working to expand this to other villages

Training in entrepreneurship

- Before Naserian women was still in home without do anything else
- Training on candle-making and soap-making & Jewellery
- 5 villages now make candles and soap
- Jewellery making in all 10 villages
- Proceeds from candles, jewellery and soap support school materials and cost of education
- Widows now own goats in 8 villages . Widows have goat cooperative
- Naserian funded widows with no money to purchase goats





How Naserian is using media

- where they work with widows is in a rural area.
- they use social media to show their work.
- they use it to explain the widows their rights.
- widows have hard lives, often young girls are getting widowed and their land taken from them.
- they don't have a voice to speak.
- women are not allowed to stand up and speak for their rights in front to the influential members of the community.
- they use a radio to project their views and widows rights and show it to the men to make the men sympathise and to show them the achievements they have made.
- if the men think they have achievements, they are allowed talk with the leaders.
- they need more education for the local community on the rights and plights of widows.
- everyone has a radio, so radio is a really good way of getting their message across to the other massai tribes.
- they give health education through the local radio, they don't have TVs so radio is the best way.
- they have facebook as well to promote to a wider audience
- focusing on education of rights all the time, and education for the children of widows, b/c a lot of widows have lost their property they don't have much money to send their children to school, 'naserian' helps them raise money by getting a market for jewellery that the widows make.
- when they are on the radio they get people interested in that they are talking about rather than being forced from the community.
- some girls who hear on the radio naserian's widow schemes, who are child widows, call 'naserian', telling them that they need help.
- So they went and helped them, the radio meant that more and more people were asking for their help rather than them going to find the widows themselves.
- the radio station is outside of the village, to come to the session it is far from the villages, so they need transport, transport costs money so they still rely on outside funding
- they also don't have solar panels to charge phones so it is hard to charge phones, most people in the villages don't have solar panels to charge phones or have phones so phones don't really come in useful.
- They emphasize that We need to help these women b/c they need to understand their rights so they can have better lives
- They thought they were the only ones who had a problem with widows among the Massai, but since going to other villages and coming to CSW62 they have found that the problem is a global one.

Using all forms of media to ensure no one is left behind - Dianah Kamande, Director 'Come together widows and orphans' organisation

I am Dianah Wanjiku Kamande 36 years old, Widowed in 2013. I am a mother of two beautiful girls Praise Nyokabi and Cate Precious. I became a widow as a result of domestic violence when my husband of ten years came home and planned to kill all of us in the family, when his attempts failed he turned the knife to himself. I survived with a lot of bad injuries and was rushed to Grunank Hospital where an urgent head surgery was done and was fitted with 5 plastic nerves because he had interfered with critical nerves in my head. After a week I underwent a hand surgery and was fitted with multiple metal plates because he had broken my left hand. Finally after the second week in hospital I underwent a breast surgery because he had pierced my right breast. It was a tough time but it was at this time I realised so many of my visitors in hospital were widows and survivors of past cases of violence who had chosen to keep quiet with their stories of violence. As a survivor on that hospital bed I

still went through Widow abuse, my in-laws accused me of my husband's death, I was insulted called a prostitute, While in hospital my property and even household items were taken away including my bed. I understood the real meaning of being disinherited at this time. I took my phone and with my brothers help because I had a plaster on the other hand I googled to check if our constitution of Kenya 2010 had my rights as a widow clearly defined and my rights as a survivor of violence clearly defined, unfortunately I found none on the two and it's in my hospital bed I requested to be given a note book and a pen and started drafting a widows bill.

After I got discharged I invited a group of widows in my house and instead of them coming 15 as I had requested they came 25 in number, the word went out so fast and the second meeting I had 66 widows, the third meeting 337 widows, fourth meeting over 750 widows and I got shocked and said to myself I need to roll up my sleeves and start getting the exact number of widows in this country of Kenya. Unfortunately widows are absent in statistics, the National Bureau of Statistics don't have the statistics of widows neither had they thought they should have widows data. I got contacts from all the morgues both private and public and I started receiving the numbers of married men who die everyday and I started reaching out to widows through media (Radio, Tv, Social Media and formation of Focus Discussion Groups). My organisation that I registered in September 14, 2013 had 1.4 Million Widows by June 23, 2016.

The challenges around widowhood were too many and Ignored by many who think they are cultural practices that they should never go against. I started coming out on media condemning the practices and my voice started getting backup when few politicians and State Department of Gender recognised my work with widows. I introduced a widows hashtag (WidowsRightsAreAlsoHumanRights). I went to all 47 counties in Kenya creating awareness on the plight of widows and Championed for their rights and creating support groups for widows where they started Loss and Grief sharing programmes, Economic Empowerment programmes, Bead work, Financial Training and free medical Camps to ensure widows know their health status. I turned all the challenges they told me into a Widowhood Bill since while in hospital I had learnt that our constitution has not protected the widows, The challenge of finances to move around did not hinder me. Yes, I value education but I had to terminate my children's education policy to get money back to be able to continue running the organisation. Today I struggle to pay my daughters tuition fees to keep them to school but I'm glad that hundreds of widows, survivors of violence and orphans are smiling because of my initiative. I got widowed painfully, faced widow abuse and I purposed that nobody should go through the pain I went through, determination, selflessness, Love, Passion to bring change in my community. To me my JOY is serving God through Others and not forgetting myself and my children

I also continued to raise my voice and introduced a hashtag that was borrowed so much during 16 days of Activism in November-December 2016 (#BreakingTheCultureOfSilenceOnGenderBasedViolence) Since I started Raising awareness and sharing my story and my hospital photos I have over 6,011 women and 4 men who have come out and joined me and are free during our seminars to share their stories.

Why I involved Orphans in my Organisation, I visited a widow in Mathare Slums and found out her girl was working as a house girl for Ksh 3,000 or \$30 to help her mother pay their Ksh 1,500 or \$15 house rent. This started when her father died because she was now a partial orphan and the mother could not cater for all their basic needs alone. I managed to raise my voice on social media and the girl got a sponsor and she is doing very well in school. I realised that education was so important and was the only thing that could better our children's lives as widows I started raising my voice on social media, Televisions, Print Media and got well wisher who empowered sexually abused and girls who were in early child labour to go back to school. Many of these abused girls were total orphans and daughters of widows who could not even put a plate of food on the table. I do teen mentorship in schools, counselling in my house and also keep the girls I rescue in my house as I get them well wishers to educate them.

In company of fellow widows we visited another widow in Gitare Marigu Slums and the widows daughter came asking for money to go and buy sanitary towels, The mother answered her, "Can you go away and get old rags and use them, What you should be asking me is if there is money to buy food "The girl left crying, to this widowed woman a Sanitary towel is a luxury. This made me purpose to be giving out 10,000 Sanitary Towels and panties every year and 10,000 Boys Boxers and school socks every year.

To me all these category of people are wounded, the widow is wounded by loss of spouse and widow abuse she faces, Survivors of violence are wounded by perpetrators of the act, physically, emotionally, socially and even spiritually, The orphans too are wounded by loss of both parents they suffer dropping out of school, early child labor, Misuse of drug and substances, early marriages and unwanted pregnancies embracing them and supporting them through my organisation in education, drafting bills which when passed into law protects them, Provision of shelter, Provision of food and Economic Empowerment is **TURNING THEIR WOUNDS INTO GIFTS** and in life they will Turn other peoples wounds into gifts because they will become the agents of change.

The Power of Media in advocacy

Media is a very powerful tool especially to anyone running an Organisation. I started using Social media, in 2013 very seriously telling people about my work with widows, orphans and survivors of gender based violence. At first people were resistant and were asking what was special with widows? What was special with Orphans? What was special with Survivors of Gender based violence? I utilised my time well and explained why I felt I was dealing with special category of people. The media presenters on Facebook saw my posts and reached to me requesting to be hosted on their National Televisions, Share my journey and my work on Print Media and also share on radio stations. This was the turn around but I still felt the message on widow abuse, violence on women and children had not been heard by the right people and on my twitter I started tagging people who I thought were supposed to get this information first hand, The President and The Deputy President.

The message was so loud even on the banners. The flyers that we gave out on the streets. I introduced slogans 'Widows Rights Are Also Human Rights' and 'Breaking The Culture Of Silence On Widowhood And Gender Violence' I had an opportunity to meet the Mother to our President who was also the first lady of our Country Kenya and a widow to our First President. She listened to me and promised and the widows of Kenya her support. The message landed in the ears of our two top Executive leadership in 2016 and the journey towards justice and equity on widows issues is becoming easier everyday.

Media is powerful, just know how to use it.

Training in ICTs for widows - Rugya Muttawa, founder of 'Hope Libya'

- The organisation Hope Libya are people who value women, change agents no matter how small.
- they try and impact women as much as they can.
- they don't believe in financial aid, instead they offer education to the widows of Libya to see them become financially independent and stable.
- they help the physiological and economic state of the women so they can then give back to society.
- Libya have suffered from a harsh regime, girls faced going to military school, they stopped sending girls to school and languages were taken out of schools, which effected their level of education.
- after the revolution, lots of women stayed at home because they had no proper education to be able to get a job.
- lots of women and children were very helpless because they weren't financially independent so they had to rely on men/husbands.
- their vision after the revolution was to help women to become more independent, giving them training and skills to become financially independent and economically stable.
- one of their aims was to make women eligible to vote
- they believe the future is in internet and social media
- they learn basic computer and social media skills in the centres that 'Hope Libya' has set up for the women's education.
- With the media they were able to make their products that they could then sell on for a stable income.
- They established factories for the women work in.
- Social media helped them sell their products as well as helping promote the centres of education that 'Hope Libya' had set up.
- In order to guarantee these women could work freely they got a certificate from the government to say they can educate and they monitor the education, they have an employment rate of about 60% after they finish their education in the centres.
- the women get better education as a result of the certificate
- The benefits were great and help with advancement
- Widows heard about their centre through social media and came to learn skills and make products in the centre
- The widows are now building a new home for them and their children
- in 2014 there was a civil war, lots of foreigners left and with them most of the doctors and nurses in the country

- *through social media they marketed their nursing course*
- *most women who take this course are employed straight away*
- *One of their best benefits was a campaign called 'you are not alone against domestic violence'*
- *they have a hotline for this and they can be referred to psychiatrists and doctors on the hotline*
- *Able to solve 300 problems through this campaign*
- *page on social media, for social consultants*
- *Women can ask for help and be referred to someone.*
- *they also have a page for job opportunities for the women after they find their Courses.*
- *Social media is truly a great help*

Mobile phone technology that supports rural widows - Sienna Ambler, NAWO YWA

Good afternoon, I would like to begin today by thanking WRI for giving me the opportunity to speak about the issues that rural widows are facing today, and how the use of mobile phone technology can be used to support them.

Dr Nafis Sadik, former Under-Secretary-General of the UN and Executive Director of UNFPA said: -

‘We must not bend under the weight of spurious arguments invoking culture or traditional values. No value worth the name supports the oppression and enslavement of women.’

In the passing of their husbands, rural women can be left isolated, scared and abandoned. These women are treated as tough without their husbands they are worthless and meaningless. We need to let these women know that there are many other just like them and many more who are here to help.

I read about the story of For a Barinaba, a Maasai widow; she was married at the age of 17 as the 5th and last wife to her husband and had 7 children. When her husband died she had all her property taken away from her as it was inherited by someone of her late husband's family. Flora described how she didn't know about the human rights she had and, in the eyes of the community she wasn't seen as a contribution. This happened because, in traditional Maasai culture, widows have very few rights; becoming part of their late husband's family and losing all their property rights. However, when she joined Naserian, the organisation you just heard about from Alais, Flora learnt a lot and saw their successes in championing widows' rights. Through Naserian, her life was transformed. In being educated and introduced to other women in similar situations, Flora has been able to find a sense of solidarity, have a safe space to share stories, and learn about other widows and their lives.

Naserian now work in 10 villages to empower Maasai widows. They found that in meeting other widows and acknowledging that it is acceptable for them to be a widow, more and more women come together and share their experiences in unity.

Although Naserian are making amazing progress and continue to do so, they still face problems. Mobile phones are imperative to the Maasai widows as they are their means of communication to organise meetings and invite other widows, but this comes with its complications. The Maasai women don't all live together and network in the d=ifferent areas is often very poor so they may have to walk long distances to make calls, which costs money and often isn't safe. As well as this, many of the widows can't get credit for their phones and so can't make their own calls, leaving them having to wait for someone who does have credit to contact them. Furthermore, it is difficult for them to find solar panels in order to charge their phones and Naserian does provide solar panels to some women free of charge but that means tat the women without them have to fid the money to pay for charge which is, again, often very difficult.

Similar issues aren't only affecting the Maasai women. According to WRI, more that 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity – that's almost double the population of the US.

However, 'pay-as-you-go' or 'PAYG' offers a solution. PAYG proposes to rent consumers a 'solar home system' that allows someone to have enough power to charge their phones and lights with only the basic system.

A report funded by Exxon Mobil and Cherie Blair Foundation argues that mobile phones paired with added services are the fundamental tools for women's empowerment and for increasing women business owners' productivity and success.

M-Pesa, for example, is a mobile phone-based money transfer and financing service launched by Vodafone in 2007 in Kenya and Tanzania. Other initiatives like MAMA and M-Farm are also very successful and work with many rural women to give them technological freedom.

As a young woman living in a rural part of England it is difficult to relate to the issues that I've mentioned in this presentation, and the daily challenges that I, and women close to me, face may seem trivial when compared to those of the Maasai women, and others around the world. I myself am not a widow, nor do I know what it is like to live in a world without advanced mobile phone technology at my fingertips. I do know, however, that women and widows in the UK still face problems and need and deserve help and that without technology, and group would be disadvantaged.

I could stand here and talk to you for hours, providing endless facts and figures from all around the world. But rather than just talk about these issues I propose we do something.

I urge you to lobby governments, to make a difference here at CSW and to aggregate the massively disaggregated data surrounding rural women.

Let us ensure that no woman, girl child or human being is left behind.

I hope that we can all make a difference here today for women in all societies around our beautiful planet.

Thank you for your time.

Discussion and Q&A

-At what age did you become a widow? (to Dianah)

Dianah

- 30.

-Because you have spoken out, have your lives been threatened ?

Hendrika

- not threatened, traditions are strict and it is a risk for the young widows.
- in-laws have bribed the police, in the case of the young woman who took the government to court, the in laws gave bribed the police to lie for them.
- even the legal state see widows as vulnerable.

Sienna

- there are challenges to speaking out.

Ruyga.

- no, she feels proud of those who have spoken out.

Dianah

- she has helped widows to get their rights.
- she gives education to the widows.
- takes widows from local communities to speak on the radio in their mother tongue to make it more relatable.
- her in-laws were not able to put her down because she had gone to school.

- she got a restraining order against her in-laws.

-

Maria/Alais

- the community respond after seeing their activity.
- they have to have a meeting with the men of the villages.
- they gain support, 7 of the villages have been given the land back to the widows.
- another thing is that they have challenges from the distances between the villages.
- success for the school.
- the community understands once they explain that they need to help the widows.

-We want to help, what is the best way that we could help?

Hendrika

- statistics for widows are an issue, holding them accountable for when they give their reports.
- lobby that government delegations have people who have real experience with these issues.
- these are the girls that we are leaving behind.
- end child Marriage and we will be able to eradicate child widows.
- work with the churches and search for men that are abusing women, and it needs to stop
- hold the member states accountable.

Sienna

- local international scale, lobbying governments and local authorities.
- anything to get the voices of widows heard.
- getting the widows rights into the agreed conclusions.

Ruyga

- training women with new methods, giving new ideas for jobs that these women can be trained for.

Dianah

- widows adult education, widows lack education.
- then they can be empowered.
- ICT materials , t-shirts, brochures help to promote campaigns and organisations.
- come in uniforms and widows apparel rather than colourful clothes, to show that they are all united when protesting or campaigning
- t shirts so they know they are all from the same place, see all the support, widows in uniforms who are not being stigmatised, they are proud, this will encourage more widows to come out when they see they aren't being persecuted and are fighting for better rights.
- finances.

Alais/Maria

- education is powerful, help with getting education resources.
- have to train these women so they can provide for themselves.
- they don't know their rights, if they are being trained they can then gain things for themselves.
- the widows can then share it when they get back to their home town.

