

A REPORT OF THE WIDOWS SUMMIT 2018

BY

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HOPE IFEYINWA NWAKWESI
CONVERNER**

AIMS OF THE SUMMIT

- ▶ Inculcating widows' agenda in the political mind and manifesto of prospective political aspirants and getting its agenda into governance.
- ▶ Addressing the issues that have hence to increased the exploitation and abuse of widows through different sectors.
- ▶ Synergising with other NGOs and exposing the ripple effect of widowhood on other gender violation.

Summit Overview

- ▶ Unlocking the Inclosed
- ▶ Widows and Religion
- ▶ Widows and Economy
- ▶ Widows and Government
- ▶ Widows and Culture
- ▶ Widows and Their Offspring
- ▶ Widows and The Society
- ▶ Questions and Answers
- ▶ Recommendations



Mrs Hope Ifeyinwa Nwakwesi Delivering her Paper

UNLOCKING THE INCLOSED BY HOPE

IFEYINWA NWAKWESI

- ▶ Introduced the essence of the summit as follow:
- ▶ To bridge the gap and end the erroneous assumptions and practices of widows as political propaganda and philanthropic grandiosity.
- ▶ To address the financial and socio-emotional implications of widows agenda to women and national planning and way forward through:
 - Religion and the church attitude to issues of widows.
 - The cultural practices and their mental assumptions to widows
 - The government attitude and policy implications
 - The economic loss of widows to national GDP
 - The widows struggle with her offspring and national security
 - The ripple effect of widowhood to social issues"
 - The Widows and way forward

WIDOWS & THE CHURCH BY MRS BOLAJI OGUNBIYI (A WIDOW)

- ▶ Christianity supports widows to remarry.
- ▶ Christianity supports for care of Widows.
- ▶ Churches to put mechanisms in place through;
- ▶ Preaching, customised programmes, conferences, training workshops/seminars, etc.
- ▶ Discussion Session noted:
 - Church neglect for the widows.
 - Some widows faces physical and emotional exploitation from some Churches.

WIDOWS & ECONOMY BY MRS IFEOMA UDDOH (WIDOW'S DAUGHTER)

- ▶ Widows are among the most disadvantaged and poorest in the society.
- ▶ Western world tackles widows problems through policies and schemes [pension, insurance, educational loans etc.].
- ▶ Way out:
 - ▶ Policies and financial facilities for widows is key.
 - ▶ Statistically men between 30 – 80years of age; 80% remain married unlike women who are widowed.
 - ▶ Education of girls from childhood to be economic dependent.



Mrs Hope I. Nwakwesi



Amb. Unyime-Ivy King

Some of the Speakers



Mrs Ifeoma Uddoh



Mr PeterChima Onyia

WIDOWS & GOVERNMENT BY DR OMOLOLA OMOTESO (WIDOW)

- ▶ Elders role to provide peace and stability in the family often are eaten up by greed.
- ▶ Government provision of safety environment, protection, empowerment and information to include widows.
- ▶ Politicising widows' empowerment especially the sharing of all sorts and snapping of pictures is an abuse.
- ▶ Lack of preparedness for the inevitable by the married.

WIDOWS & GOVERNMENT CONT'D

Matter Arising:

- ▶ Women stop the promotion of the injustices in widowhood.
- ▶ Government create a welfare fund for workers to contribute to (widow welfare fund).
- ▶ Establish low cost plans in health and housing.
- ▶ States provide probono services.
- ▶ Reform of probate law to save widows exploitations by in-laws.
- ▶ Empowerment of widows is giving them authority to control and use their rights.



Participants listening During Presentation

WIDOWS & CULTURE BY MRS REGINA CHRIS OGBODO (A WIDOW)

- ▶ Regina is a Northern Nigeria married to the Eastern Nigeria. (A cross cultural marriage)
- ▶ Based on burial experience, I will teach my daughters that love is not enough.
- ▶ The cultural practices and rites in widowhood in Nigeria varies.
- ▶ The Northern Nigeria culture is very supportive to widows in practices and rites.
- ▶ The Southern Nigeria, West and East still have humiliating, abusive and debilitating practices and rites [burial rites; ostracism and
- ▶ relationships with family.

WIDOWS & CULTURE CONT'D

Matters Arising

- ▶ Widows start to speak up, rise to act and stop complaining.
- ▶ Women be knowledgeable and informed [culture and institutional rights]
- ▶ Women trend issues, so why can't they start the abolition of these practices.
- ▶ The “Umuada & idi iyom” in the East, Awon omo obirin ile, & awo iyawo ile in the West, the Women wing and August meeting; to lead in addressing, challenging and eliminating these practices.
- ▶ Women raising daughters to understand that being under a man can be destructive
- ▶ As a Christian Submission does not mean subservient; if I don't have a voice over my husband belongings [absolutely wrong].
- ▶ Issues such as “intestate policy of State government” without proper information dissemination by the government adds to culture of abuse and exploitation from government



Mrs Regina Chris Ogbodo



Mrs Bolaji Ogunbiyi

Some of the Speakers



Dr Omolola Omoteso

WIDOW & THEIR OFFSPRING MR PETER CHIMAH ONYIA (WIDOW'S SON)

- ▶ As a young boy, I saw my mum slept outside one night for refusing to my uncle's demand.
- ▶ Saw my father lands forcefully collected and sold out without my mum's consent.
- ▶ My mum's kitchen broken down by my uncle with my mum almost beaten"
- ▶ Widows are secluded, excluded and neglected from the society and by government who is meant to protect them.
- ▶ Across cultures women are subject to customary and religious laws and discrimination in inheritance rights.

WIDOWS & THEIR OFFSPRING CONT'D

Matters Arising:

- ▶ End cruel dehumanizing practices, strengthen laws and prosecute perpetrators.
- ▶ Abolish all discriminatory Customary laws and Enact inheritance and land ownership rights for women.
- ▶ Conduct an independent research on these violations against widows and their offspring in our hinterland.
- ▶ Conduct National, regional and international summits conferences and seminars regularly to ensure that the collective voices of widows are heard and addressed

WIDOWS & THE SOCIETY BY AMB. UNYIME-IVY KING

- ▶ From my research on widowhood I was appalled in some of the things I found out
- ▶ Death of a man becomes an economic activity for some people
- ▶ Widows faces a double trauma of death and exploitation
- ▶ Writing of a Will is key in alleviating exploitations and abuses
- ▶ Lack of respect for women in our society
- ▶ Education and empowerment of girls will enable her tackle better challenges arising from life uncertainty such as widowhood.
- ▶ Women to work the talk, continuous interaction and more actions on eliminating the practices.



Participants During Questions and Answers Session

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SESSION

- ▶ Questions include:
- ▶ The place of church in preaching remarriage
- ▶ Program and policies of government in safeguarding empowering the widows
- ▶ What are the credit facilities available to widows?
- ▶ Why are women the chief perpetrators of most of these abuses?
- ▶ What are the ways forward?
- ▶ Answers were provided on the questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ To end widowhood abuse government should take up their role as an administrator, using all parastatals including the ministry of women affairs, health, security, media, education etc.
- ▶ Review of probate law, that seems to have some loophole through which so many widows are being disenfranchised.
- ▶ Introduction of pension schemes and widow benefits and Educational loans for children by Government, NGOs, Churches, etc.

RECOMMENDATIONS II

- ▶ Creating department of prevention, prosecution and rehabilitation in ministry of women affairs for not just widows but other gender issues using local government headquarters and traditional rulers in implementation.
- ▶ Looking into the Legal department, with a reform of time limit to issues on widowhood and gender.
- ▶ Creating a vocational training institute for widows by churches, States and Local government areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS III

- ▶ Every micro society including NGOs can create loan facilities and micro finance banking for widows through the existing one for the locals.
- ▶ Churches to Create cooperative society for widows, Micro Financing banking package with zero and/or minimal interest rate and processes.
- ▶ International donors investing on creating cooperative/ Micro Financing SME through the locals.

RECOMMENDATIONS IV

- ▶ Organisational policy of employing the qualified widow in his death and payment of burial allowance.
- ▶ Introduction widowhood and gender issues on school curriculum from elementary level.
- ▶ As well as department of sociology and General study course in the tertiary school.
- ▶ Churches to start preaching about remarriage to assist wellbeing and reduce the population of widows.

RECOMMENDATIONS V

- ▶ Women organisations, men and age grades to start speaking and preaching against widows abuse for gradual reorientation and cultural change.
- ▶ Information dissemination through billboards at schools, religious places, community centres, local government headquarters, all women affairs office building, secretariats, healthcare centres in English and local languages on abolished violations with complaints centres.
- ▶ The greatest empowerment of widows is by prevention.