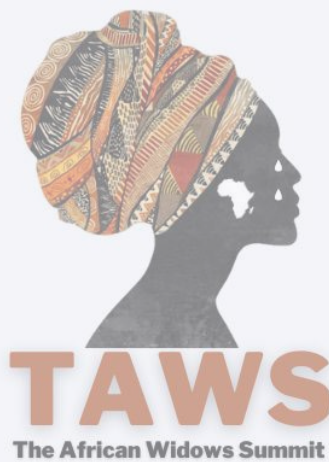


THE AFRICAN WIDOWS SUMMIT (TAWS)

Concept Note



THEME: 'WOMEN IN WIDOWHOOD: REFORMING THE AFRICAN SPACE'

EVENT DATE: FROM JUNE 21 - 23, 2024

PLACE/VENUE: ZANZIBAR, TANZANIA

19/08/2023

Introduction

Widowhood is a prevalent and complex issue across Africa, affecting millions of women who find themselves in vulnerable and marginalized situations after losing their spouses. The challenges widows face often include; harmful traditional practices, social discrimination, economic deprivation, a lack of access to justice, limited healthcare, and the denial of property rights, sexual abuse, and forced marriages among others, especially the poor and illiterate ones in rural areas. Research has shown that in different countries of Africa, widows are discriminated against through customary inheritance laws. African countries where widows are known to have no peace are Angola, Botswana, the Republic of Congo, DR Congo, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Swaziland, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. (Loomba Foundation).

Significantly, in most countries in Africa, widows do not inherit land, which is the major means of production. Progressive and comprehensive land rights help widows break the cycle of poverty and improve not only their own lives but those of their families and communities. The benefits of widows' land rights multiply in crucial ways both at home and in communities. When women, including widows, have secure rights to land, spending on children's education, land production, and household nutrition increases. Thus, widows' land rights are key to addressing deeply gendered issues such as climate change, food security, and global health. When a widow holds secure rights to her land, power dynamics shift. Her dignity, household decision-making, and economic freedom increase.

There are a number of valuable instruments (locally, regionally, and globally) that once implemented will ensure aspirations of the African Union "The Africa We Want" are achieved. Among them:

The African Union adopted the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) is vital to ensuring the rights of every woman and girl including widows in Africa are protected and promoted.

There are many initiatives across the continent such as the Kilimanjaro Initiative (2012). The Nigeria Widows Protection Bill, 2023 among others. The Kilimanjaro Initiative (2012) a pan-African, women-led campaign, seeks to complement the vision set forth in the AU's Agenda 2063 by creating space for rural women to participate in decision-making processes about their rights to land as women and smallholder farmers (including widows). In 2016, the initiative issued the Kilimanjaro Charter of Demands for actualizing rural widows' land rights. In a gathering of grassroots women leaders at the foot of Mt. Kilimanjaro, the charter of demands was formally delivered to a representative of the African Union Commission (AUC), witnessed by government representatives, Civil Society Organization (CSO) leaders, and the

500 rural women attended the assembly. And in 2020, Almanah Hope Foundation in Nigeria initiated the Nigerian Widows Protection Bill, a structured legal framework that is targeted at widows' protection; through the House of Representatives legislators the bill was passed in February 2023 by the 9th Assembly and sent to the Senate for concurrence; and synergistic interaction and relationship is needed to achieving the Africa we Want for the African women in widowhood, hence; The African Widows Summit (TAWs).

TAWs is a premier three-day conference scheduled to take place in Zanzibar, Tanzania, from June 21 to 23, 2024; with the theme 'Women in Widowhood: Reforming the African Space'. This three-day world-class conference aims to address the critical issue of widowhood across the African continent and to provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations on the widow's agenda in the African Union. TAWs intends to bring together a distinguished and diverse assembly of participants, including women in widowhood, women and men advocates from across the African Union, esteemed country leaders and representatives, officials from UN Women and UN Women Africa, women and gender department ministers, first ladies of nations, visionary founders and CEOs of NGOs dedicated to the welfare of widows, representatives from international and local bodies, legislators, esteemed members of the media, and respected figures from the judiciary sector.

Objectives of the summit

Its overall goal is to deepen understanding of widows' policy development, implementation, and monitoring with a specific focus on emerging issues and Africa Union commitments on widows, including through:

- i) Improved access to knowledge and information in support of evidence-based related to widows rights policymaking;
- ii) Showcasing promising practices on widows rights and in the field of land policy and governance on widows issues and;
- iii) Facilitating networking amongst widows rights actors in Africa.

The summit aims to achieve the following specific objectives:

- 1.To provide political leadership, guidance, and recommendations on the widow's agenda in the African Union.
- 2.To advance the inclusion and participation of widows and its agenda in the African Union Conferences
- 3.To enhance the integration of actions to address the challenges faced by widows across the African continent
- 4.To promote the sharing and implementation of best cultures and practices that enhance widows rights and protection within the continent.
- 5.To improve cooperation and coordination with stakeholders and gatekeepers across Africa

Background and Focus

Widows are women and should be identified first as a Woman before being an African. Africa today has become an identifier for her rather than a place, sadly with the least human rights expectations. The African Widows Summit is about widows with humanity at the focus. The focus is on the widows in Africa and not widows as Africans. Discussions will be coming from mainly an African widow's point of view with the principle of inclusion in resource allocation and as a resource mobilization.

Structure of the Summit/Components

The African Widows Summit (TAWs) will encompass the following key areas of focus:

- **High-Level Plenary Sessions:** Engage in strategic discussions and debates led by esteemed leaders, experts, and advocates to develop recommendations and strategies for integrating the widow's agenda within the African Union.
- **Thematic Workshops:** Organize specialized workshops addressing key aspects of women in widowhood's rights, protection, empowerment, and inclusion, with a focus on sharing best practices, case studies, and successful interventions.
- **Policy Formulation:** Collaborate with policymakers and stakeholders to develop actionable policy recommendations and guidelines aimed at addressing widowhood-related challenges and fostering a culture of support.
- **Networking and Collaboration:** Facilitate networking opportunities, partnerships, and alliances among widows' representatives, NGOs, policymakers, international bodies, first ladies, and gatekeepers to strengthen collective efforts.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Promote the exchange of cultural experiences, traditions, and practices that empower and uplift widows, while also celebrating the diverse heritage of women in widowhood across the African continent.

Expected Outcomes

The African Widows Summit (TAWs) will play a crucial role in addressing the pressing issues faced by widows in Africa and shaping a universal culture within the African Union that recognizes and supports their rights and well-being.

Following the successful conclusion of The African Widows Summit (TAWs), the expected outcomes include:

- **Comprehensive Recommendations:** A comprehensive set of recommendations addressing widows' rights, protection, and empowerment, which will be submitted to the African Union for consideration and integration into their agenda.
- **Policy Guidelines:** Policy guidelines and frameworks that offer practical approaches for AU member states to effectively address women in widowhood-related challenges within their jurisdictions.

- Collaborative Partnerships: Strengthened partnerships and collaborations among widows' representatives, NGOs, policymakers, international bodies, first ladies, and gatekeepers, fostering a united front for widows' welfare.
- Best Practices Handbook: A compendium of best cultures and practices that support and enhance widows' rights and protection, serving as a valuable resource for stakeholders and policymakers.

Summit Organization, Logistics, and Budget

The African Widows Summit (TAWs), is organized by dedicated committee members consisting of representatives from different regions across the continent. An allocated budget will be mobilized for the execution of The African Widows Summit (TAWs), covering expenses related to logistics, content development, participant engagement, communications, and evaluation.

Conclusion

The African Widows Summit (TAWs) is a pioneering initiative that seeks to address the critical challenges faced by African women in widowhood and promote their rights, protection, and empowerment within the African Union. Through strategic discussions, collaborative workshops, and high-level engagement, TAWs aims to produce actionable recommendations, policy guidelines, and partnerships that contribute to the overall upliftment of widows across the continent.

The African Widows Summit

