



Widows' Rights International



WRI SPRING NEWSLETTER



WRI event at UN Commission on the Status of Women 68 with Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP moderating the panel, Rugya Muttawa, from Hope Libya, one of WRI's partners, and Henry Sweeney, WRI intern. Hosted at the Baha'i International Community Office 12 March 2024.

WRI & UN Commission on the Status of Women

WRI worked hard with other organisations advocating for widows to be included in the negotiated outcome document from the Commission: the Agreed Conclusions.

Last year there was a whole paragraph on widows but this year the word "widow" was mentioned once. WRI is happy that widows is at least mentioned but this shows that there is still much work to do. Here is the mention in the Agreed Conclusions:

(yy) Dismantle discriminatory financial practices that hinder the financial independence of women, including requirements mandating women to have a male cosigner to access financial services and ensure women's legal capacity and equal rights with men to conclude contracts, regardless of marital status; as well as protect the rights of widows within inheritance regimes and with regard to the allocation of marital property;

WRI events on widows at CSW68

WRI worked with sister organisations at CSW68. WRI held two events at CSW. One entitled "Strengthening institutions working for widows and their families" based on the Priority theme and the other "Social protection systems for widows globally" following the Review theme.

In addition to these two successful events, WRI also supported Global Fund for Widows, WPD and Rozaria Memorial Trust with their events. The reports of the two WRI events will be published on our website.

WRI Chair, Zarin Hainsworth OBE and Trustee Dr Wendi Momen MBE attended numerous events at CSW advocating for widows in all spaces. WRI invited young people to provide their perspectives at both events. Rt Hon Caroline Nokes MP chaired our first event.

Here are some photographs from the first event.



WRI interns at CSW68

WRI enabled a number of young people to participate in the CSW68. Here are some comments:

"Before joining the Widows Right International team, I will admit, I was ignorant to the situation of widowhood as a women rights issue. However, through working with exceptional widows and advocates I have come to understand the deep injustices happening to widowed women globally. Working with WRI has opened my eyes to these injustices and to the lack of representation widows receive in the UN. Joining a widows organization at CSW allowed me to play a crucial role in being sure the ignorance that I once had toward widowhood is not accepted in institutions intended to provide justice. I have come to understand that widows come in all ages, races, and regions thanks to my experience at CSW."

Charlotte Black

The Global Alliance Last Woman First

WRI is a founding member of the Global Alliance. The Secretariat is the Guild of Service India. A strategy meeting of the Global Alliance was held during CSW to investigate ways to promote the awareness of the situation of widows around the world, of all ages and in all circumstances.

Global Fund for Widows is continuing its advocacy work with Member States at the UN and is developing tools to assist widows to become paralegals for their communities and continues to grow its community banks for widows.

It was decided more needs to be done to raise awareness of the GA resolution passed in March 2022, through the tireless efforts of GFW. The infographic on the resolution can be found on our website.

It was decided that more awareness needs to be raised on the variety of widows in order for their situations to be acknowledged and to work with more young people on this. It was also decided to improve collaboration between all of the widow organisations.

Young women at our consultation offered to help with social media and promotional endeavours.



Eleanor Nwadinobi, Founder of WEDO, one of WRI partners and also a Founding member of the Everywoman Treaty, together with Jody-Ann Hemmings, a NAWO intern at CSW68. Eleanor was one of the speakers at the WRI event on 12 March. Fatima Martin Sanchez from Global Fund for Widows was also a panellist together with Imogen Harley from NAWO Young Women’s Alliance.



Further comments from WRI interns at CS68

"My time at CSW68 was incredibly valuable as I was made aware of many issues that had previously not been on my radar. I am incredibly grateful to have entered a community that shows so much support and willing to learn!"

Ella McLaughlin

"CSW was an amazing, eye opening experience. I really loved meeting people from all over the world working on such a variety of important subjects with so much passion. I felt very privileged to be able to represent WRI and have the opportunity to speak on their behalf."

Lalli Southall

Through interning with WRI, I gained more knowledge on specific topics within fields that I am keen on and continue to research and advocate for. During the Commission, I learned so much about the connection between women, including widows, and the lack of social and educational resources for children globally, as well as their impact on the global economy through jobs, agriculture, and overall impact. Being a part of other events and hearing the voices of women who shared their knowledge and experiences surrounding widowhood and women’s rights was such an empowering experience."

Tana Brown

WRI Partners

WRI partner Naserian will be participating in the East African widows symposium taking place in June in Zanzibar, hosted by the President of Zanzibar.

WRI partner Hope Organisation Libya continues to grow with an increasing number of centres across the country. They have set up a savings and investment bank run by widows

WRI Upcoming events

As part of the work of WRI to highlight the work for widows around the world we will be holding a symposium at the Human Rights Council in June and celebrating International Widows Day in Liverpool on 22 June.

As a follow up to CSW we will be holding a zoom event in April to capture some of the experiences shared at CSW68.

The Silent Sufferers: Child Widows in Today's World

Throughout the world, the plight of child widows remains a hidden tragedy, often overlooked and ignored. When the word "widow" is used, many hold the mental image of an older woman.

Child widows, those who lose their husbands whilst not yet 18, face unique challenges that stem from a combination of cultural traditions, social norms, and legal inadequacies. Despite efforts towards gender equality and child rights, the issue persists, preventing child widows to obtain education or training and casting a shadow over the lives of countless young girls.

The phenomenon of child widows is due to early and forced marriage and is therefore prevalent in those regions where this is more common. 12 million girls are married before they are 18 each year. This is 23 girls a minute according to Girls Not Brides <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/about-child-marriage/>

"Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and the belief that girls and women are inferior to boys and men. It is made worse by poverty, lack of education, harmful social norms and practices, and insecurity. Its drivers vary between communities and it looks different across the world." Girls Not Brides. Over 650 million women alive today were married as children. It is a global phenomenon. Currently the highest rate is in Niger with 76% of marriages taking place before the girl reaches 18.

Girls married before they reach adulthood, find themselves thrust into roles they are ill-prepared for. First they often have to leave education. They have to have sex and often become pregnant before their bodies are able to carry to term without medical consequences. When their husbands pass away due to illness, accidents, or conflicts, they are left to navigate the complexities of widowhood often in cultures where traditional practices can be brutal... For the full article please see WRI website.

