



WIDOWS FOR PEACE THROUGH DEMOCRACY

2020 statement of **Widows for Peace through Democracy (WPD)** for **International Widows Day**

Widows, estimated at some 258 million in 2015, now many more due to conflicts and Covid 19 with its related effects on health around the world, have been largely unseen, unsupported, discriminated against and unmeasured in our societies.

WPD and its partners across the world is therefore delighted that UN Women is acknowledging International Widows Day 2020 with the words: **‘we recognise widows in all their diversity, and acknowledge the need to integrate them fully and visibly into our work on gender equality so that we break cycles of poverty and disadvantage and ensure that all widows can enjoy their full human rights.’**

WPD is also especially pleased to announce the imminent publication of its groundbreaking report on widows worldwide. Our report contains detailed case studies from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan, provided by WPD contacts with over 100 organisations.

These cases demonstrate the urgent need for action from international, national and regional lawmakers and support WPD’s call for an Independent Expert on Widows and a CEDAW General Recommendation on Widows.

Intended as a resource for CEDAW, United Nations agencies, Member States, NGOs, state actors and local organisations concerned to learn about discrimination experienced by widows and how to protect their rights, WPD’s detailed findings present a disturbing picture of the stigma, discrimination and abuse of widows of all ages that occurs across a wide spectrum of cultures, religions, ethnic groups and regions worldwide. Widows suffering deprivation of assets and abuse are forced into extreme poverty and destitution; excluded from social protection and access to essential services and housing. Begging, prostitution, child labour, withdrawal of children from education and early or enforced marriage of any children are consequences of extreme poverty, in turn responsible for further generations of disadvantage and poverty.

WPD calls for immediate action on these issues to progress the SDGs and realise the rights of women. This is more urgent than ever due to an unprecedented increase in widow numbers due to armed conflicts, migration, natural disasters, child marriage to older men and Covid 19. Work on the dossier is ongoing. WPD partners continue their essential work of raising awareness, challenging discrimination and breaking down the walls of silence and invisibility about widowhood. We invite all to support our effort. In the words of WPD President, Margaret Owen OBE, ‘We welcome all examples of widowhood discrimination so that, with the strength of CEDAW to support them, widows everywhere may look forward to a life without fear, enjoying empowerment and equality, justice, and peace.’

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