

Registered Charity Number: 1117334 36



WIDOWS FOR PEACE THROUGH DEMOCRACY

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PRESS RELEASE 15 March 2021

Topic: Launch on 17 March 2021 of ground-breaking new report on widows' rights from **WIDOWS FOR PEACE THROUGH DEMOCRACY (WPD)** at the UN's **Commission on the Status of Women** <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw65-2021>

In contravention of humanitarian law and human rights provisions, discrimination against and serious abuse of widows of all ages, including 'half-widows' or wives of the missing or forcibly 'disappeared', still occurs today in cultures, religions and ethnic groups worldwide. Even before Covid-19 killed disproportionately more men than women, widow numbers worldwide were increasing exponentially due to armed conflicts, violent extremism and natural disasters, with at least 38 million already living in extreme poverty.

WPD's comprehensive report '**WIDOWS SPEAK OUT: Abuse and Discrimination, Resilience and Agency: A dossier of evidence for the attention of CEDAW**', available from <https://www.widowsforpeace.org/widows-speak-out-cedaw-2020/>, presents extensively researched evidence of one of today's most neglected humanitarian issues, with the harrowing testimonies of individual widows presented within a context of current information from leading experts in the field.

Stigmatised widows and their families, suffering economic deprivation through being disinherited, socially shamed, subjected to horrific harmful traditional practices (HTPs) and denied access to justice, are forced into destitution and resort to begging, prostitution, child labour, withdrawal of children from education and early or enforced marriage of any children. This creates a cycle of disadvantage and poverty and jeopardises achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This WPD dossier, authored by Alice Lees in collaboration with WPD Director Margaret Owen OBE, arms UN agencies, governments and all working with widows with the evidence needed to justify urgent prioritization of widows' rights worldwide, together with recommendations for international, national and local intervention. Recent verified case examples are included from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, India, Iraq, Kenya, Kosovo, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria and Pakistan.

WPD is a UK based charity providing information, support and expert advocacy for organisations working for widows' rights worldwide, focusing upon fragile and conflict-affected countries. The dossier's launch at our **17 March CSW65 event** speakers will be introduced by Ms. Bandana Rana, Vice-Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). For full details of the topics covered and our list of distinguished speakers see our website:

<https://www.widowsforpeace.org/csw65/>

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