



Widows' Rights International

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Newsletter

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EDITORIAL

"Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places--close to home--so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Such are the places where every man, woman and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, and equal dignity, without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere."

**Eleanor Roosevelt, Chair
United Nations Commission on Human Rights**

The astonishing and heartrending testimonies from widows in countries where we have close partnerships with locally-based organizations continue to reach us on a regular basis. We share some of these testimonies by printing them on our website and in this newsletter but there are many documenting the truly dreadful practices which demean widows and their children and deny them their basic human rights.

These heartrending pleas for help strengthen our resolve to continue our work with partners in countries such as India, Nigeria and Uganda. To do this we need to make WRI a viable organization, well-funded and well administered. This autumn we intend to make every effort to garner support from a range of funders so that we can deliver a well managed programme combining strategic interventions and national and international levels as well as the fullest possible support for local initiatives.

WRI is now in the process of looking into all the aspects of our work which will enable us to grow, to reach out for support from the international women's community and to build public support. If we are successful, we will be in a position to build up our administrative, fundraising and advocacy capabilities. We will also be able to give more support to our partners and especially to those widows and their children who have turned to us for help.

The Trustees of WRI are confident that we will succeed in these endeavors and that we are taking the necessary steps now that will secure our future.

Patsy Robertson, Chair

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A B O U T W R I

Widows' Rights International supports organisations in South and West Asia and Africa working for social justice and human rights for widows including:

- Right to keep their home and property
- Right to inheritance and land ownership and possession
- Right to keep their children
- Right not to be forcibly married to the dead husband's kin
- Right to work outside the home

Traditional customs in many developing countries, especially in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa – which can deprive a widow of home and livelihood or subject her to social ostracism - lead to dire poverty for widows and their children.

Even when modern laws exist to prevent these abuses, ignorance of the law, or cultural habits, impede access.

Widows are young as well as old, because of:

- *Child marriage
- *HIV/Aids
- *Civil strife

WRI works:

- * to promote the recognition of widows' special vulnerability
- * to combat negative social attitudes which lead to their isolation, exploitation and poverty
- * to bring these practices to an end:

WRI mobilises action by:

- *International organisations
- *National governments
- *Legal and other civil society organisations

WRI offers resources for:

- Capacity building and networking
- Advice and information for national groups, especially through our website
- Research into the status and condition of widows and their children
- Legal action for widows' rights
- Assistance to raise international awareness of degrading practices
- Advocating creation of international instruments protecting widows' rights
- Supporting regional meetings to promote social justice for widows

Financial assistance may be available for:

- *pioneering activities by and for widows which provide examples of best practice
- *activities designed to establish legal precedents; heighten public awareness; repeal of laws inimical to widows
- *action to influence international agencies to condemn practices which deny widows their rights
- *action to train widows and legal personnel in rights awareness

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NEWS FROM AFRICA

Two of our partners made presentations on their work at a conference organised by the Loomba Trust on June 23rd in London. This date was chosen as International Widows Day in remembrance of Mr Loomba's mother, Shrimati Pushpa Wati Loomba who, left as a young widow at the age of 37, had the daunting task of bringing up 7 children. The conference was followed by a Bollywood concert in Central London. International Widows Day has been marked by different events throughout the world. At the Commonwealth Secretariat in London the Rt Hon Don Mc Kinnon made a strong speech on the conditions of widows. You can find this speech or listen to it on the following website www.thecommonwealth.org/document/151488/widows_conference.htm

Excerpt from

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES AND CHANGING WIDOWS' LIVES IN UGANDA By Jane Opolot

Although human rights guarantees are enshrined in Uganda's constitution, widows still suffer gross human rights abuse because of the existing social-economic circumstances. First of all, widows in rural areas like Pallisa are often unable to take advantage of these constitutional guarantees due to illiteracy and ignorance. There is still a wide gap between the formal written law and customary law which has continued to dominate rural areas like Pallisa, and as such, customary norms and rituals continue to affect the lives of many widows. (Details of these discriminatory customs are enunciated in the baseline survey report of our Hope For Widows project.)

Although we are advocating for legal reform in order to have laws that protect widows' rights, we realized that the current constitutional regime in Uganda is still unable to protect widows' rights. We realized that what was urgently needed was to assist the communities grasp these basic human rights norms and principles in order to develop a mindset that rejects the different forms of abuse meted out against widows. A legal framework without favourable social-economic conditions renders human rights guarantees illusory. Indeed, merely passing laws is not sufficient because experience has shown that laws may not be effective in combating vices that are embedded in socio-cultural norms. Thus the need for sensitization to enable people change their negative perceptions and mindsets, which is often not very easy.

Through this program, we have trained Community Resource Assistants within the different communities, who assist in not only training the communities about widows' rights but are also providing Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR)- through negotiation and mediation- between widows and their in-laws, especially in situations where a widow's rights are threatened. Through these ADR initiatives, we have been able to defend the rights of widows and we have many testimonies of widows who have been able to have their rights defended through these programmes. For example, many widows have been able to reclaim land that had been previously grabbed from them by their in-laws. We have also been able to assist widows resist forced marriages in the form of widow inheritance. Many people in the community, especially the clan leaders, who are one of our target groups have been enlightened about widows' rights. Above all, we consider this program a success because through ADR, many widows are able to negotiate their rights in a patriarchal society, without going through the burdens of formal litigation, which is often expensive and way too complex, beyond the reach of most of these rural widows.

**The complete text of the presentation is on the Widows Rights International website:
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Excerpt from**Presentation by Eleanor Nwadinobi**

Today is special for me in many ways .Not only is it the first time a day has been officially set aside and dedicated to widows, but also the fact that I have been invited to be a part of it and to speak on behalf of widows.

I will be sharing two typical case studies from Nigeria in West Africa, however it will be necessary to first give an overview of the context in which my organization has been working.

Due to the erroneous belief that the woman is responsible for the death of the husband, there are cultural practices put in place to dissuade women from killing their husbands Just over ten years ago when I started research and activism on behalf of widows, the subject of death in our corner of the globe was a taboo subject. I was dissuaded from talking about widows as the very name was thought to bring bad luck. My Organisation however went ahead to give the name of our Organisation WIDOWS DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION, with the acronym WiDO in order to destigmatise the word. Soon after our inception, my husband survived a ghastly car crash I was told it was a warning. However, I am still able to continue with my work on widows largely with his help and support. Today is of great significance for me as today is his birthday

There are differences between urban and rural perceptions in the SE of Nigeria (a predominately Igbo cultural area) and there are the custodians of tradition and culture who want to maintain the status quo. Let me add that Nigeria is a diverse and complex country with varying practices between various ethnic groups. In Enugu State where most of our work has been done, a State law was passed on widows rights in June 2001. However, laws are slow to be implemented and enforced and cases which go to court are very costly and take a long time in some cases years to be resolved. WiDO has been able to use this law in intervening on behalf of widows whose rights have been violated.

Allow me to speak on behalf two of our beneficiaries who sent a message to the organizers, saying, "Thank you for remembering us".

. . .

The results of a State wide survey carried out by Womens Rights Coalition with support from Security, Justice and Growth programme (DfID Nigeria) showed that the most prevalent of the widowhood practices is hair shaving followed by disinheritance.

Is it worth noting the challenges still being faced and these include:-

Social as well as economic exclusion of widows

The future impact HIV / AIDS could have on the lives of numerous families and the socio-economic impact traditional practices will have on increasing numbers of poor and marginalized people

Limited human and financial resources for monitoring and enforcement of the laws at national, local and community levels,

Inadequate evidence-based data collection

The Role of ADR is essential for the poor to be able to gain some redress to their plight, since the present formal court system is alien and not accessible to the majority!!

Finally, we have taken a bold step by instituting and setting aside a day to remember the plight of Widows like Nasa and Edith and others like them around the world; we are grateful that you have remembered.

I would like to strongly recommend that in addition to publicizing the Conference communiqué that we consider appointing a Reporter for Widows and advocating for getting Widows Rights on the U.N Agenda through a resolution by the General Assembly.At local level, official hiring policies should be instituted for preferentially hiring widows. This would enable the widows to house feed and educate herself and her children, take them off the streets into decent homes and safety.

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Introducing Widows in Resistance and Against Threats and Harassment in Africa (WRATH_Africa)

This is an excerpt from a letter to Laura Slap-Shelton, of Grief and Renewal, from WRATH Africa's founder and Chairperson, Coleta Khamete Aduod. WRATH Africa, a nondenominational faith based organization of widows originating in Kenya, seeks to support and help other widows throughout Africa. WRATH stands for Widows in Resistance & Against Threats and Harassment in Africa.

-I was widowed almost 3 decades ago. My properties were taken away by clan members in what was referred to as property inheritance not minding that I had 4 sons and 4 daughters to be taken care of. I had dropped my job with the police force to take care of our children but after the death of my husband I was forced to look for another job. Though I did not manage to get back to the forces but lucky enough having been in medical field I got a job with a local missionary hospital as an a nurse.

At the local mission hospital I learned that beside severe poverty there are other major problems facing widows in our rural communities which include domestic violence, sexual abuse, indecent funeral procedures and rites, eviction and homeless, violence of human rights and freedom, ignorance to mention but just a few.

While still at the hospital I met quite a number of widows some who were my workmates and we formed a widows' self-support group to support ourselves in time of emergencies. To be a member, one had to contribute certain amount of money either monthly or on a fortnight basis. Well, it was a fantastic idea and it actually supported us when time of need arose. But, we exempted another group of widows who actually needed more support than some of us and who were unable to contribute sum of amount required. That is why I personally came up with an idea of forming a registered faith based non-governmental organization which will cater for all sort of widows within African communities regardless of their social or economical status, unless if a widow is not in need of our support or not willing to be part of the group. As an organization we are focusing towards:

- Providing forums for exchange programs.
- Availing more training opportunities for widows to make them productive within the society.
- Creating opportunities for local grouping and innovations.
- Strengthening, scaling-up and replicating existing projects.
- Exploring links between and amongst existing bodies within the society.
- Addressing reproductive health issues.
- Improvement of education standards and equal access to legal systems.
- ...among others

You can read more about WRATH Africa on *GriefandRenewal.com*

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The treatment given to Widows in Nigeria

This account was emailed to us by a young woman now living in London.

I am writing this note on behalf of my mother who does not have access to a computer, nor know how to operate one; however she wishes for justice and awareness to be taken of what she has just experienced. She does not know about such organization as yours, but because I do know, I am willing to help her with it. As I write, she is with her relatives in Owerri, Imo State Nigeria, taking refuge with my younger brothers and sisters. But our family lives in Festac Town, Lagos, Nigeria.

My daddy died on the 8th of August 2006. He died while on duty at work (he was a security guard at the Apapa Branch of Intercontinental Bank PLC). As he was seated, he was thought to be asleep on duty but he was in fact dead. The autopsy stated he had suffered a sudden attack of hypertension because he did not know that his blood pressure had been rising.

My mother, with my siblings and my daddy's elder brother, Mr.Christian, along with other people accompanied the corpse to our village on the 23rd August 2006. My daddy was to be buried on the 24th but on that his brothers and sister, Mr.Christian, Mr.Leo, and Mrs Rosaline arranged with other members of the Azubuikes of Duruigbo clan of Oka Village in Imo State to stop the burial. My uncle Christian said to my first brother and my mother that they should bring out all the money my father has, because his daughter (me) lives abroad. He said that my daddy has gotten a lot of money from me and that my mum and younger siblings have killed my daddy so that only they will benefit from whatever comes from me.

In the full view of the public, including people of other tribes who came from Lagos to our village to witness the burial, my uncle pulled off the clothes my younger brother had dressed up my daddy's corpse in, desecrated the body, rummaging my daddy's stomach, saying that he was searching for some parts of his body, in case they had been used for money making. Eventually he stopped because, as all present could see, everything was intact and the way the mortuary workers and hospital had left the corpse.

My uncle Leo went to hire mobs and touts who carried sticks and weapons to clobber my mother and siblings with. My uncle Christian gathered all the women of the Duruigbo clan who carried firewood and canes to beat my mum with. My younger brother, Chukwuma, who is the first son of my daddy, insisted that he wanted to bury my daddy on that same day, but my uncle refused. Three men from my village intervened and asked for the burial to take place and all the trouble to stop at once but my uncle Christian refused. My brother asked when they wanted him buried but my uncle said he wasn't thinking about any burial anymore and told him to go away. My uncle with others then seized the corpse, put it back in the coffin and asked the ambulance that brought it from Lagos to take it back to a mortuary situated near our village.

They chased my mother and her family away; for safety they ran into the bus that brought them from Lagos. My mother's family, who came for the burial as well, took my mum and siblings back with them to their house so that they could take refuge and at least be safe.

My mum and Chukwuma reported the case to different police commission zones in Imo State. They got information that my dad was to be buried on Friday, though none of them was formally informed, so they went to the village, but the date was then again shifted, in the hope that they would perform the burial in the absence of my family. However, this did not deter anyone. My mum, younger ones and all the rest of the people that accompanied them all stayed over till Saturday morning ... there was lots of friction, initiated by my father's people, but then they saw that even my mum and younger ones were really out for them that day. They all attended the mass, and later on went to our compound where my dad was finally laid to rest.

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African Countries Discuss Protecting Women's Property Rights

By Efam Dovi

Accra

03 September 2006

Government and civil society leaders from Ghana, Kenya and Uganda have resolved to work together to protect women's right to property in Africa.

The Center on Housing Rights and Evictions says women in Africa are systematically denied ownership and inheritance rights because of deep-set traditions. Speaking at a seminar the group is holding in Ghana, the Center's women and housing rights coordinator, Birte Scholz, says civil society in Africa needs to work to change policies that deny women the right to adequate housing.

"The most important thing is to find out what strategies are being employed to combat some of the violations that are going on, from disinheritance to domestic violence - domestic violence is a denial of the right to adequate housing, you are living in insecurity - to lack of housing, or lack of ability to obtain proper housing due to HIV/AIDS increasing," he said.

Scholz says in the majority of African societies women's access to land is determined by their relationships to men - as wife, daughter, mother, sister or daughter in-law. She called for the elimination of traditions that violate women's rights to own property.

Flavia Kyomukama, who is representing the National Forum for People Living with HIV Networks and Associations in Uganda, says women living with AIDS are most often the victims of forced evictions. "Because what has come up in Africa is that when women are found to be HIV positive, husbands evict them from their homes," she said. "When husbands die, the wives and the children are thrown out by the paternal relatives, and they grab all the property. So, we feel we need to find a strategy to protect people living with HIV, their housing rights, their shelter rights, their property rights."

She says though policies exist to protect women against property grabbing in some African countries, they are not fully enforced.

Mayor Prisca Auma, of Kisumu, Kenya's third largest city, says it is important to give women economic independence. "When your husband dies, and they [husband family] allow you to stay within the family, you will plow that land, you will harvest from the land, but you cannot put it into your own name, that is customary," said Auma. "But, I think those are the laws that we want changed. We want the government to help us change [them]."

The Center on Housing Rights and Evictions says one third of the world's women are homeless or live in inadequate housing. Seminar participants say a majority of them are found in Africa.

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NEWS FROM ASIA

ACT TOGETHER: WOMEN'S ACTION FOR IRAQ

Act Together: Women's Action for Iraq together with several other Iraqi and British women's organisations, artists and activists organized a vigil to draw attention to the plight of Iraqi widows. On the occasion of International Widows Day, over 60 women and men representing 13 organizations held a 2 hour long silent vigil on the steps of St. Martin's in the Field. We handed out over 1000 leaflets and several of us gave interviews to the media, particularly Arabic Radio and Television stations.

Leaflets, banners and placards drew attention to the fact that, according to official and NGO sources, more than 90 Iraqi women become widows each day due to continuing violence across the country. In other words, far over 90 Iraqi men die daily from the violence caused by the occupation forces, sectarian tensions and insurgents. Although few reliable statistics are available on the total number of widows in Iraq, the Ministry of Women's Affairs says that there are at least 300,000 in Baghdad alone, with hundreds of thousands more throughout the country (UN Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, April 2006) and estimates put the number of Iraqi widows currently registered with the Ministry at over 1 million.

Saddam Hussein was responsible for the killings of thousands of men during his repressive dictatorship: political repression and a series of wars caused a demographic imbalance with the female population making up about 55-65% of the overall population of about 24 million Iraqis. The situation has become much more critical since the US-led invasion in 2003, as the daily violence and killings of innocent civilians goes side by side with an ineffective government that fails to provide the necessary financial and social support for the growing numbers of widows. Left with virtually no government support, no salaries due to the economic crisis and high unemployment rates, collapsed family networks due to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and lack of security, many widows are left no choice but to beg on the streets or even to engage in prostitution.

These were our demands:

- *End the occupation - Stop the violence by US and UK forces
- *End the killing of innocent civilians by insurgents, militias and death squads
- *Financial assistance and wide-scale income generating projects for widows
- *Legal rights and representation especially in terms of the atrocities committed by the previous regime and the occupation forces

Act Together: Women's Action for Iraq together with several other Iraqi and British women's organisations, artists and activists organized a vigil to draw attention to the plight of Iraqi widows. Website: <http://www.acttogether.org/widows.htm>

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Widows - India – Vrindavan: Wedded to enterprise

Ms. Usha Rai
The Tribune
 Sunday, May 14, 2006

"Culturally ostracised, socially marginalised, traumatised by personal loss, economically deprived, the widow is discriminated twice—as a woman and as a widow."

The bleak picture of the widows of Vrindavan is changing slowly. Usha Rai reports on the economic independence and the life of dignity which is slowly replacing the old attitude of helplessness and living off charity.

APRIL and May are blistering hot months in Vrindavan but the tide of pilgrims to this birthplace of Lord Krishna has not abated. Nor has the population of widows. It ranges from 12,000 to 15,000 and despite all the efforts of the Department of Women at the Centre and the West Bengal government, their numbers continue to grow. While many of them have been abandoned by their families in this city of Gods, others come on their own seeking *moksha* (eternal bliss) after death.

Efforts to move the simians, all worthy descendants of Hanuman, have failed and those who have to brave the heat for visiting the temples or for other work, hide their spectacles and packets of food, particularly the *prasad*, as they negotiate the open gutters, the endless flow of garbage and the potted and pitted streets.

As frail widows, many of them walking with the support of sticks, scurry to and from the *Bhajan ashrams*, the monkeys can be seen scampering down temple spires, lurking at the sharp turns of the narrow bylanes or swinging from tree tops waiting to grab a tasty morsel from unsuspecting victims. Spectacles and dark glasses grabbed are not returned till their grubby hands are greased with a fruit or some food. Despite the congestion and squalor of Vrindavan, more and more temples as well as guest houses and apartment blocks are coming up.

Vrindavan, despite all the charity pouring into the city and the endless rhythm of chanting, conch shells and temple bells, seems to be caught in a time warp. Only the discerning will get a whiff of the slow change taking place in the lives of widows and the destitute in the city. Many widows are not wearing the stark white clothes of widowhood—in fact they have opted for pastel and printed saris— but those living in the Guild of Service's Amar Bari have stopped going to the *bhajan ashrams* to chant and accept in charity small sums of money and uncooked rice and *dal*.

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Continued ...

At the forefront of the movement to give vocational training and economic dignity to widows and other destitute women is Guild of Service which runs Aamar Bari for 103 widows. Unfortunately, a majority of the residents of Aamar Bari are too old to work. Pramoda is 90 to 95 years and Satyavati is said to be 112. Many of those bent double with age cannot obviously go out and work but within the confines of the home they wash their own clothes, plates, glasses and other utensils after having the meal prepared by the younger inmates.

But the younger ones in their 40s, 50s and even early 60s are eager to supplement their income. From 10.30 a.m. till about 5 pm, with a break for lunch, is work time. Shefali Chakravarty, a skilled craftsperson for leather goods and for tailoring the *poshak* of Lord Krishna and his companion, Radha, arrives with a few women trained by her, bundles of leather, bolts of brightly coloured cloth for the deities' dresses and the gold piping and ribbons. All those interested in improving their economic status learn to cut and stitch the leather pieces into functional leather pouches, bags to carry loose coins, credit cards etc. While the bags to keep the mobile are Rs 80 a piece, the smaller money bags etc cost Rs 60 to 40 a piece. In a day, a trained woman can make three to five pouches. The older women make cotton wicks for the lamps and the younger ones learn to stitch pretty clothes for the gods and goddesses of Vrindavan. Shefali markets the goods herself to traders in Agra, Jaipur, Mathura and Nainital.

A lot of the bags and *namkeens* come to the Guild of Service office and are marketed by the staff. The wicks for the lamps, the *poshak* of Radha and Krishna, the beads for chanting and the neatly stitched cotton bags to hold the beads are marketed to traders in the vicinity. Some women even make petticoats and blouses. Drying in the sun at Aamar Bari are the *wadis*. When it is not *wadis* the women are busy rolling out *papads*.

The women, sitting in the comfort of the home and working at their own pace, earn anything from Rs 300 to Rs 800 a month. Some excellent *namkeens* are also made by the women but only in season, says Bhagwati, the culinary expert of the home. A Marwari from Calcutta, 60-year-old Bhagwati came to Vrindavan two years ago after the death of her husband and father-in-law. While her father-in-law was a manager of a mill, her husband looked after a petrol pump. "I left my son to look after my mother-in-law and came to Vrindavan for peace and solace," she says. Bhagwati is the official *chappati*-maker of the home. The dough is kneaded by someone else but *chappati*-making is her responsibility and she takes pride in the softness of her *chappatis*. Every day a mountain of *chappatis* are made. Bhagwati earns Rs 500 a month for making *chappatis* and for the *namkeens* of the season another couple of hundred rupees. Her son had just sent her four saris and she twirled and proudly showed the one she was wearing. Bhagwati's only weakness is tobacco and she makes frequent visits to the shop around the corner for the *pudiya*. In Kolkata her children would indulge her with a whole box of *paan bahar*, she recalls. But Bhagwati has no complaints. She is happy to be in Aamar Bari.

To see the whole article go to WUNRN website: <http://www.wunrn.com>

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Suicide Only Option for Majority of Afghan Widows

India News
Monday, August 21st, 2006

Islamabad - Poverty, hardship and unemployment are driving women in Afghanistan to prostitution, with suicide the only option to escape their miseries, says a UN study. Frustrated by the hardships they are facing over the years, 65 percent of the 50,000 widows in Kabul see suicide the only option to escape their miseries and desolation, a survey conducted by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) says. It revealed that majority of Afghan women are victims of mental and sexual violence, The News said.

Calling it "a bitter fact", UNIFEM's Director Meryem Aslan said that average life span of Afghan women was 20 years less than women living in other parts of the world. She said child and mother mortality rate was still very high as 1,600 to 1,900 women among each 100,000 die during childbirth

The latest research by the underground women's rights organisation, the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), reveals that as many as 25,000 Afghan women worked as prostitutes in 2001 - 5,000 of those were in Kabul alone - with stark predictions that the number will rise as women and girls resort to selling themselves to escape poverty. According to RAWA, Aslan described the condition of widows, especially those living in Kabul, as terrible. She said widows living in Kabul have to look after their families in face of little opportunities of earning livelihood and high rate of inflation. Without elaborating on the topic, she said 16 of the 65 percent women had already ended their lives. Highlighting the social structure, she said family and gender discrimination and violence against women was common in most parts of Afghanistan.

She said men being the decision-makers in the family structure are to blame for gender discrimination and violence. She said besides violence by their male partners, women were also facing physical and mental torture by their fellow women. But such cases were not as much to be reckoned with, she added.

The report was prepared by UNIFEM in collaboration with other governmental and non-governmental rights agencies, she said adding the survey was launched in 2004 and ended in May this year.

WUNRN
<http://www.wunrn.com>

Widows Rights International (WRI), Registered Charity no 1069142

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I N B R I E F

1. Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures Scholars

EWIC is an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, transhistorical encyclopedia, focusing on women and Islamic cultures. Led by a distinguished team of editors (Suad Joseph, General Editor; Afsaneh Najmabadi, Julie Peteet, Seteney Shami, Jacqueline Siapno, and Jane Smith Associate Editors; and Alice Horner, Assistant Editor) EWIC is the first such encyclopedia. Six volumes (4,000,000 words) of EWIC are scheduled to be published (Leiden: Brill). Volume I (Methodologies, Paradigms and Sources) was published in 2003 and Volume II (Family, Law and Politics) was published in 2005. Volume III (Family, Body, Sexuality and Health) will appear at the beginning of 2006. Volumes IV (Economics, Education, Mobility, and Space) will appear in 2006 and, V (Practices, Interpretations, and Representations) and VI (Supplement and Index) will appear in 2007.

We have received a grant from the International Development Research Center to build upon our existing database and create the Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures (EWIC) Scholars Database for publication as an online resource for free public access. The EWIC Scholars Database is an invaluable listing (we believe the largest) of over 3,000 scholars from all over the world and from all disciplines whose work focuses on women, gender, and Islamic cultures from a broad culturally-based rather than theologically-based perspective. The EWIC Scholars Database includes scholars who work on issues of economy, politics, popular culture, health, family systems, law, demography, arts, literature – the full span of issues relevant to women in cultures in which Islam is significantly represented. The EWIC Scholars Database welcomes the participation of scholars and graduate students from all disciplines, and from all regions of the world, and all areas of research relevant to women in Muslim majority societies and to Muslim women in Muslim minority societies.

As a free publication, this searchable database will connect scholars, students, planners, and activists with each other and with NGO's, governmental agencies, and potential employers seeking researchers whose work specifically covers issues on women and gender related to Islamic cultures. The online database will be published online by June 2006, at <http://sjoseph.ucdavis.edu/ewic>.

2. Widows Without rights: challenging marginalisation and dispossession by Kate Young ex-Chair of Widows Rights International

This article describes some of the abusive practices to which widows are subject, and discusses some of the possible reasons for these practices. It describes steps being undertaken at the local level in many countries to challenge abuse of widows, and change cultural perceptions of widowhood. The aim is that widowhood may have as little social or economic impact on widows as it does on widowers. The article also briefly discusses the lack of specific concern and recognition of the abuse of widows in the international human rights instruments, and recommends support for campaigns to remedy this.

Gender and Development, Vol.14:2 July 2006

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