



Widows' Rights International

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Newsletter

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Message from the Chair

In our last newsletter, we reported on a worldwide survey of attitudes to widows, which confirm that the plight of widows is slowly gaining the attention it deserves. It is true that many organisations, websites and reports now highlight the cultural practices which blight their lives, but this does not mean that the work of organisations such as WRI should be curtailed in any way. However, the current financial situation in Britain has led to a serious reduction in the funds being made available to charities and WRI is among those whose funding base had been severely eroded.

However, WRI will continue to fundraise in the hope that it will be able to resume project support for partners especially in Africa but in the light of these financial constraints, the Trustees have decided that our newsletter should become a type of clearing house for projects which could bring together potential funders and organisations in developing countries seeking financial support. Many organisations have been established during the past decade since WRI has been active and we hope to support them by publishing information about them in our newsletter which we hope, will encourage alliances between those who might wish to deal directly with charities working at the grass-roots level.

Patsy Robertson

**We are urgently seeking funds to support our partners in
Africa – please support our work!**

Go to www.widowsrights.org and press the Paypal button to help us help these disadvantaged women in their struggle for their basic human rights.

Cultural Practices Spread AIDS



(Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is presented with the Report of the Commission on HIV & AIDS & Governance in Africa)

WRI has campaigned for years against the harmful cultural practices which surround the mourning rites in many countries in Africa. We have warned that these rights, humiliating and degrading as they are for the widow, are also responsible for the spread of diseases including HIV/AIDS.

A United Nations report published last year has now called for discussion and action on these cultural issues which also include gender inequalities, wife inheritance and sexual practices - all contributing to the spread of HIV and "undermine the effectiveness of national responses to the epidemic".

For the full report, click here

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26945&Cr=aids&Cr1>

The seriousness of the situation was also underlined in a report of the sad case of a widow in Mozambique. Tradition required that she should be purified of the stain of losing her husband by having sex with a male relative. In her case it was her dead husband's brother. She argued against this practice, as her brother-in-law was much younger than she was, but the family found an older man from outside the family to carry out the ritual. Two months later, she was both pregnant and HIV-positive.

This story comes from Mozambique where it is reported that widows who submit to the ritual are obliged to have unprotected sex three times daily over the period of a week. Failure to carry out the purification rites is thought to bring bad luck to the family, such as unemployment, illness or even death. The pressure on widows is enormous.

There is some hope however. Governmental and non-governmental organisations in many countries in Africa are now emphasizing the need for change in attitude to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS. Strategies have been developed to raise awareness of the risks of unprotected sex in a traditional ceremony and there was a noticeable decrease in the practices in many areas.



(Widow in Mozambique – 'Failure to carry out purification rites is thought to bring bad luck')

Visit the IRIN Plus news for this report
<http://www.plusnews.org/report.aspx?ReportID=81496>

Cash Incentive to Marry Widows



(Widows in Nepal lose their status within the home and society)

The BBC has reported that a plan by the Government of Nepal to pay a cash incentive to men for marrying widows has been described as an opportunity “to bring further misery”.

Lily Thapa, the founder of Women for Human Rights, which represents Nepali widows, has officially lodged a protest with the Government asking it to rethink its policy. Nepal has a large number of widows because of recent conflicts and high rates of HIV.



Lily Thapa

The full BBC report is at
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/8153193.stm

Help Needed

The number of charities working with widows in Africa and East Asia has grown and WRI receives regular applications for assistance. Because of WRI's current inability to fund projects directly, we list below some selected charities for the attention of possible donors, who can exercise an option of either asking us to carry out necessary checks on these charities or corresponding directly with these groups. Importantly, all donors should understand that a listing here does not mean that WRI has investigated their activities.

GWAKO -Kenya

Groups of Women in Water and Agriculture-Kochieng, or GWAKO as they are known is a community church based charity situated in the Nyanza district of Kenya. Founded and established in 1998 as a mothers union, GWAKO supports widows and their children to promote sustainable benefits through power changes in relationships within the community and help change policies and legislation which restrict women from participating and benefitting from economic development.

In the application submitted to WRI, GWAKO reported that through funding from the Global Fund for Women (2002) they brought together a team of mobilisers to go to various villages and identify cases of widows whose right to inherit property and access to services such as water and sanitation had been violated.

For more information on this charity please visit www.gwakoministries.org.ke
or
e-mail:gwakoministries@yahoo.com

CWCA -Uganda

Based in Kampala, Uganda, the Centre for Widows & Children's Assistance (CWCA) is a non-profit, non-partisan and non-religious charitable organisation primarily formed to help improve the life of widows and children in both rural and urban Uganda. Aimed at children and widows, CWCA is fully committed to helping these vulnerable widows and children educationally, socially and emotionally and help them realize their personal rights and to succeed independently.

The scourge of AIDS in Uganda has left thousands of women widowed. They are not just old women, in fact an average widows is in the 20-40 years age group and care for at least 4 children and normally additional orphans.

For direct contact please e-mail: cwcauganda@yahoo.com

Sri K.Pitchi Reddy Educational & Welfare Society -India

The Sri K.Pitchi Reddy Educational & Welfare Society is a non profit and non-governmental organisation. Based in the Andhra Pradesh region of India, the project aims to help and stabilize the lives of widows, due to the fact that in Indian customs, a widow is often frowned upon and believed to be inauspicious. The project aims to help these widows back into work and eventually to become self sufficient and provide for themselves and for their families.

This Society is seeking support to establish cooperatives where widows from slum areas are trained to gain such skills as handicrafts and how to become self-sufficient.

Information on the project can be obtained by e-mailing :
pitchreddyorg@yahoo.co.in

Jesus' Wives Fellowship INT -Nigeria

Founded in 2002, the Jesus Wives Fellowship is a church-based charity which started with providing care for 6 elderly women in a village in rural Nigeria. A year later the Fellowship membership had grown to 230 and with these numbers, the organisation was able to establish a cooperative project for widows, providing an income for them. The Jesus Wives Fellowship has instilled new life into these widows, who are often isolated and dispossessed because of traditional cultural practices.

Contact can be made by e-mail at: jesuswivesfellowship@yahoo.com

ABOUT WRI

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

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

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

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

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK!

Go to www.widowsrights.org and press the Paypal button to help us help these disadvantaged women in their struggle for their basic human rights.



Widows' Rights International

Registered charity number:1069142

Yes, I want to support WIDOWS RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL's struggle for social justice for widows in South and West Asia and Africa.

Name

.....

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

.....

Telephone e-mail:

.....

I would like to give (please tick): £5 S £25 S £50 S £100 S
Other £.....

Please debit my account SSSSSSSS

Bank sort code SSSSSS

Once S Monthly S Quarterly S Half year S Annually S

Starting on (date):/...../..... Signature

.....

YOUR bank name and address

Name Address

.....

..... Postcode

.....

Gift Aid Declaration

Using Gift Aid means that, if you are a UK taxpayer, for every pound you give, we get an extra 28 pence from the Inland Revenue, helping your donation to go further. To qualify for Gift Aid, what you pay in income tax must be at least equal to the amount we will claim in the year.

Tick the box if you are a tax payer and would like us to reclaim tax on this:

Date of Declaration :/...../.....

Please return this form to:

WIDOWS RIGHTS INTERNATIONAL, Room 405, Davina House, 137-149

Goswell Road, London EC1V 7ET. Tel: 020.7253.5504

E-mail address: administrator@widowsrights.org

Thank you for supporting Widows Rights International.