



AAC-CETA

ALL AFRICA CONFERENCE OF CHURCHES (AACC)

ADVOCACY TOOL KIT FOR JUSTICE FOR WIDOWS



**SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE
ADVOCACY
FOR WIDOWS' RIGHTS**

**ADVOCACY TOOL KIT FOR JUSTICE
FOR WIDOWS**

*Skills for Effective Advocacy for
Widows' Rights*

Produced by All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)
Conférence Des églises De Toute L'Afrique (CETA)

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Acknowledgement

We are grateful to the Church of Sweden and Global Ministries for financial support which made this documentation possible. We thank our lead consultant Gloria Baraka Mafole (advocate) and the taskforce team led by Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki who is the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) Director of Gender and Women for providing their guidance and support that helped us to deepen our understanding of widows' issues. The team of experts represent each of the regions in the AACC constituency as follows: Ms Sina Sandali - Sudan Council of Churches (North Africa Region); Advocate Gloria Mafole - Christian Council of Tanzania - Consultant; Ms Nyambura Mundia: Presbyterian Church of East Africa - Kenya (East Africa Region); Ms Mathy Cynthia Lontungulu Botunda - Disciples of Christ Church DRC (Central Africa Region); Tendai Rebecca - United Methodist Church of Zimbabwe (Southern Africa Region). Joyce Larko Steiner from the Council of Churches in Ghana was the representative for West Africa region but was absent with apology. Ms. Ann Kioi, the AACC Program Development and Fund Raising Officer was in attendance and offered much support for which we are truly grateful.

We thank members of the validation team from all over the continent who gave their input virtually. Special thanks go to Rev. Dr. Peggy Kabonde for providing the biblical perspective of widows and shaping the tool kit.

We thank the AACC Secretariat led by the AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki with unwavering support from the Director of Programs, Rev. Dr. Lesmore Ezekiel, for their diligence and commitment in monitoring the writing process, maintaining quality control to the highest standards and ensuring successful completion of the task.

It is our hope and prayer that you will find this tool kit relevant and useful for your advocacy work on widows' rights.

Rev. Dr. Lydia Mwaniki (PhD)
Director, Gender and Women
All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)



Foreword

We are approaching 20 years since the adoption of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s rights on the rights of women in Africa. The protocol commonly known as Maputo Protocol was adopted in 2003 with the aim of promoting women’s rights in the African context. Article 20 of the Maputo Protocol provides for the rights of widows. It recognizes widows as a marginal group, which needs to be protected to ensure their right to own property and their right to have their dignity protected.

AACC has been addressing widows’ rights by creating awareness about the plight of widows, giving an incentive to churches to support widows’ programs, sharing widows’ stories and commemorating International Widows’ Day. With this work, AACC has learned a lot about widows and violations of their rights in different countries.

To amplify the work of AACC on widows and celebrate 20 years of the Maputo Protocol, AACC has developed a tool kit to advocate for the rights of widows with the aim of engaging everyone to ensure widows rights are protected in the communities.

This tool kit for justice for widows provides guidelines to member churches of AACC to address and advocate for widows’ rights. The tool kit provides religious guidance on the role of the church to advocate and use its public space to raise the voice of the voiceless, as well as technical information on advocating for widows and widows’ issues in Africa.

Chapter one is on advocacy and the church, chapter two is on widows and advocacy, chapter three is on key issues facing widows in Africa, chapter four is on the legal frameworks for the protection of widows’ rights, chapter five is on the existing interventions done by different stakeholders in addressing widows rights/support mechanism and chapter six is on advocacy methods and strategies.



This tool kit is valuable to those who want to expand their understanding of the gender justice approach to advocacy and how this approach is applied to the *Justice for Widows Campaign*. Guidelines for respecting widows lie in the Bible, where we have the foundation of the faith to serve the needy.

It is my hope that as we head into the third decade of implementation of the Maputo Protocol, you will find this tool kit a useful tool to address the plight of widows in Africa and that everyone will use it as a guide to raise the voice of widows in the community.

Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki

General Secretary

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)



Abbreviations\Acronyms

AACC	All Africa Conference of Churches
AU	African Union
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EAC	East Africa Community
FBOs	Faith Based Organizations
SADC	South African Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN	United Nations
VICOBA	Village Community Banks
WCC	World Council of Churches



INTRODUCTION

Background to the Advocacy for Justice for Widows by AACC

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is a continental ecumenical body that accounts for 204 members in Africa. It is the largest association of Protestants, Anglicans, Orthodox and African Instituted churches in 43 African countries. AACC has a strategic positioning in the continent. One of the reasons of her existence is to accompany churches in difficult situations, both in church and society. This accompaniment includes capacity building and developing materials to equip and empower churches to address contextual challenges in the continent and beyond.

Justice for widows is an advocacy campaign initiated by the AACC in an effort to safeguard humanity, dignity and wholeness of the afflicted widows. As a result of some cultural norms and beliefs, many widows especially in some African communities are subjected to dehumanizing practices which rob them of their rights and dignity, such as denial of inheritance and land rights, eviction from the late husband's homes, humiliating cultural rites and stigma, among others. Their children may also lack basic needs including school fees and be vulnerable to abuse.

During the 11th AACC General Assembly that was held in Kigali, Rwanda in 2018, whose theme was, "Respecting the Dignity and God's Image in Every Human Being", delegates expressed their deep concern about the plight of widows on the continent and called the AACC General Secretariat to address the issue with urgency.

The plight of widows is a global concern which has drawn the attention of UN. In 2010, the UN set apart 23rd June as the International Widows' Day to create awareness of the violation of human rights that widows suffer in many countries. The day also highlights the need for more research and statistics into violence, discrimination and poverty suffered by widows and to develop policies and programmes to address the problem. UN observes that widows are invisible to policymakers when they draw out national policies to address the problems of citizens.



Highlighting the plight of widows on the continent has therefore become one of the Programmatic Goals in the AACC Strategy (2019-2023) and in the AACC Gender Strategy (2019-2023). AACC launched her Justice for Widows Campaign on 23rd June 2019 in Zambia during International Widows' Day. Following the launch, several activities were actualized. These activities include: development of videos on widows' experiences¹; a brochure²; commemoration of International Widows' Day and providing small grants to churches to support widows' projects within the AACC constituency. The campaign calls churches, governments and other stakeholders to respond to the plight of widows by developing and adopting policies and legislation that provide them protection, as well as respond to their social and economic needs. Through this campaign, AACC has further embarked on developing this Advocacy tool kit for justice for widows as a guide to influencing decisions that improve the lives of widows.

AACC Justice for Widows Campaign is inspired by the Biblical truth that males and females are created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). Therefore, all human beings are of equal value and dignity before God. Besides, the Bible contains over 80 verses about the proper treatment of widows.

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- 1 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1evdnmoJ53vkqbw1279vsvX-j-UPPX8Aw/view?usp=drivesdk> ; https://drive.google.com/file/d/1-qY5FEmreUEchS2s-IKNmHE9-G_jr4Bk/view?usp=sharing and French version-https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Y9bTugo_i9Neo2UbHQT-oP9AP_dIDCex/view?usp=sharing
 - 2 <http://aacc-ceta.org/en/resources?download=57;justice-for-widows-campaign> and French version-<http://aacc-ceta.org/en/resources?download=58;campagne-justice-pour-les-veuves>



CHAPTER ONE:

ADVOCACY AND CHURCHES

Chapter Objectives

- a) To examine bible verses on advocacy.
- b) To understand the role of the church in advocating for widows' rights.
- c) To understand the role played by AACC in advocating for Justice for widows.

I. Introduction

Biblical understanding of Advocacy is driven from **Mathew 15:13-16** which says,

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glory your Father which is in heaven.

This calls for all churches to advocate and ensure the light is shining and the deeds of the church are positively impacting the lives of others.

Why should the church be involved in advocacy?

The church is involved in advocacy because it is a biblical mandate for Christian mission that our Lord Jesus taught us. The following are some of the Bible texts that show why churches should be involved in advocacy:

In sum, the Church is involved in advocacy because:

- It is the Prophetic Voice.
- It is already doing development work at different levels.
- It is a community that reaches down to the marginalized.
- It has a regular opportunity and contact with right holders and duty bearers.
- It has existing relationships and linkages necessary for advocacy work.

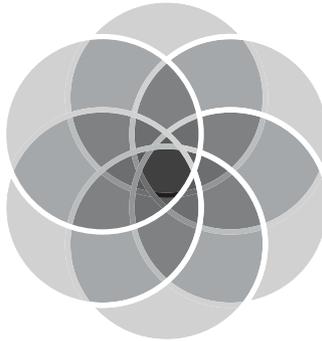


John 3:16
BEING MOTIVATED BY THE
COMPASSION OF CHRIST

Isaiah 10:1:2 -
LEVERAGING GREATER
CHANGE

Luke 4:18-19- FULFILLING
THE MISSION OF THE
CHURCH TO BRING GOOD
NEWS

Jeremiah 17:7-8- SHARING
GOOD DEVELOPMENT
PRACTICE



Proverb 31:8-9-
VIEWING THE POOR AS
AGENTS OF CHANGE

Matthew 25:31-46-
ADDRESSING ROOT CAUSES
OF POVERTY AND INJUSTICE
AND PROVIDING LONG-
TERM SOLUTIONS



II. Jesus the Advocate: Passages to study

1. Jesus and the woman who is caught in adultery (John 8:1–11). The teachers of the law brought a woman to Jesus who had been caught committing adultery. The accusers wanted to humiliate the woman and to trap Jesus.

In this passage, we learn that Jesus:

- 1) Did not act hastily, but remained calm and in control of himself.
- 2) Did not approve of sin.
- 3) Did not defend the woman's action and was willing to stand up to the powerful.
- 4) Did teach us to prefer forgiveness rather than condemnation and to be motivated by love and desire for reconciliation.

2. Jesus clears the temple (Matthew 21:12–17). Just after Jesus entered Jerusalem, he went to the temple area and started to turn over the tables of the money changers and those selling doves. He also healed the blind and lame, and the children shouted praises to him. However, he rebuked the crowd, including the chief priests and teachers of the law, for their lack of faith and for allowing the Temple to be corrupted.

In this passage we see that:

- 1) Jesus attacked exploitation of the poor and tackled the causes of poverty and suffering through healing people and challenging the oppressors.
- 2) He was ready to challenge customs when they were against God's will.
- 3) He had no formal authority in the temple but people listened to him because of what he did and he explained his action to those around him.
- 4) He knew the time to act.

III. Why Advocacy for Widows from a Biblical Perspective?

1) Widows need love and support

Widows have been mentioned in the Bible as a group that needs love and support. It is the role of all Christians to support and ensure the wellbeing of widows. The church has been doing a lot of humanitarian/diaconal services to widows to ensure they are protected and are taken care of.



Isaiah 1:17 says, “Learn to do right; seek justice; defend the oppressed. Take up the course of the fatherless; plead the course of the widow.” This text lays the foundation of churches to advocate for justice for widows. Taking care of the widows is the foundation of the faith as a clean faith is measured in the way we take care of the widows and the needy around us.

2) **God loves widows**

God has always taken care of widows. The Old Testament laws made special provision for widows, protected them and their land and gave serious warning to anyone who took advantage of them.

The New Testament does the same. The very role of deacon came about because the church needed godly men of integrity who would make sure daily provision was made for the widow. Timothy gave detailed instructions to the early church on how to care for widows: “Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need,” (1Timothy 5:3).

But even more important, God’s very character is described as the defender of widows and father to the fatherless. The word for “defender” means advocate — one who pleads the cause, renders justice and rescues from wrongdoing.

3) **Caring for the widow and the fatherless is not just what God does; it’s who God is**

Caring for the widow is God’s character and it will never change. God has always cared for the widow and fatherless and he always will. We cannot only count on his promises for the widow, but also his character. Luke 7: 11-15 exemplifies this by showing us that those who load it over the widows shall be punished. These words are from Jesus.

IV. More Examples of Biblical Verses on Widowhood

Old Testament

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. Psalm 68:5

Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. Exodus 22:22-23 (NLT)



Cursed is he who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. And let all the people say, 'Amen!' Deuteronomy 27:19

For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and accepting no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and widow, and He loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing. Deuteronomy 10:17-18

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. . . The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow. . . Psalm 146:5, 9

Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

True justice must be given to foreigners living among you and to orphans, and you must never accept a widow's garment as security for her debt. Deuteronomy 24:17 (NLT)

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Psalm 82:3

For in You the fatherless find compassion. Hosea 14:3

New Testament

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. 1 Timothy 5:5 (NLT)

Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you. James 1:27

Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.' Mark 12:41-44.



V. Summary of Roles of advocates in the Bible

In summary, the Bible texts and the example of Jesus as an advocate reveal the following roles of an advocate:

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Representing | 2. Accompanying | 3. Empowering | 4. Modeling |
| 5. Networking | 6. Mobilizing | 7. Mediation | 8. Negotiating |
| 9. Lobbying | 10 Bargaining | | |

Questions for reflections

1. *What can we learn from Jesus as an advocate?*
2. *Can you mention other prophets in the Bible who were advocates?*
3. *How can we express the love of God for the people especially widows through advocacy?*
4. *What strategies can churches use to assist people in the community, specifically widows, who are affected by laws and customary practices?*
5. *How can we create awareness for churches to play their advocacy role?*



CHAPTER TWO:

WIDOWS AND ADVOCACY

Chapter objectives

This chapter introduces the users of the tool kit to an overview of advocacy with the aim to:

- a) understand the meaning of advocacy.
- b) understand different concepts in advocacy.
- c) understand different advocacy approaches.

I. What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is defined differently by different organization and individuals. Some of the definitions include:

Advocacy is an activity by an individual or group that aims to influence decisions within political, economic, and social institutions.

Advocacy is defined as any action that speaks in favour of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others.

Advocacy means giving a person support to have their voice heard. It is a service aimed at helping people understand their rights and express their views.

“Advocacy” can mean many things, but in general, it refers to taking action. Advocacy simply involves speaking and acting on behalf of yourself or others for a just cause. Advocacy is a way of influencing people in power, for example, traditional leaders, political leaders or influencing institutions such as the African Union, the East Africa community, ECOWAS, AACC and WCC to achieve change that will benefit particular groups of people such as widows, and indeed all people.



There are several types of advocacy that a person can undertake:

Self-advocacy: representing and advancing your own interests. The foundation of effective self-advocacy is communication: how you connect, interact, and transmit your thoughts and feelings to another.

Peer/group advocacy: representing the rights and interests of someone other than yourself. The foundation of effective group advocacy is networking and using information generated from research work.

Systems advocacy: influencing legal frameworks, social, political, and economic systems to bring about change for groups of people. Effective system advocacy is developing evidence research with data and engaging different stakeholders and conducting effective lobbying.

Legal advocacy: using attorneys and the legal or administrative systems to establish or protect legal rights. For it to be effective, you need committed lawyers (advocates) and people who are ready to take legal action.

(Advocacy Training Manual. Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy (1996), p. 1.)

Advocacy done well, can achieve the following:

- **Policy change.** To ensure that the policies are able to address issues of widows including property ownership, land ownership and that inheritance laws recognise widows as heirs/beneficiaries.
- **Change in practice.** Local customs and practices ensure protection of widows including right to be treated well, right to inherit and right to live in the matrimonial home and right to remarry.
- **Change in social, behavioural, or political attitudes** that will benefit particular widows. For example, widows should not be condemned for the death of their husbands and should not be treated in dignity and humanity.

It should be noted that advocacy is more than protesting even though protesting can be used as a tool and is not about awareness creations even though awareness can be used as a tool.



There is no one universal way to do advocacy. It very much depends on what you are advocating for and the context in which you are doing it. The choice of approach will depend on a number of factors including:

- **The issue you are advocating for and how well is it understood.** For example, when advocating for change of land policy or inheritance laws for widows, you need to ask yourself, “Do the community leaders, religious leaders, relevant government officials, relevant policy officials and the general public understand why it is important to change the land and inheritance laws to protect widows’ rights?”
- **The context in which you are planning to do advocacy.** For example, some governments and institutions are quite open to advocacy and welcome and invite input by individuals, CSOs including Faith based organization. However, some governments can be unwelcoming and hostile. Furthermore, some traditional leaders or faith leaders can be welcoming for discussions but others can be unwelcoming and hostile. Before you start your advocacy planning, it is a good idea to check if your country has any repressive laws towards advocacy and lobbying activities.
- **The capacity and constraints of your organisation.** Organisations differ on how they support and resource advocacy. Some organisations have staff working only on advocacy, while other organisations combine it with other roles such as programme and advocacy.

II. Advocacy concepts

A campaign is a project or organized course of action designed to achieve a specific response from a particular audience. It involves engaging the public and different stakeholders

Public campaigning is a type of campaigning or advocacy that involves generating and mobilizing support from the public or segments of the public such as widows, religious leaders, among others.

Lobbying involves direct engagement with decision makers or other individuals of high influence usually through face-to-face meetings or online meetings.



Policy work is a general term for engaging in policy dialogues, including official government policy consultation processes and parliamentarians. It can include research and analysis to identify policy gaps and recommendations.

Public Awareness / Awareness Raising is increasing the knowledge of the public (or sections of the public) concerning the existence of a particular problem or issue. This can be done through the media and capacity building sessions of different groups.

Public Education is increasing the understanding of the public (or sections of the public) concerning the nature and/or causes of a particular problem or issue.

Alliance Building is generating, mobilizing, and coordinating support from other groups and organizations for a particular solution to a problem or issue.

Activism is mobilizing activity of supporters or affected communities in order to generate publicity and/or lobby and pressurize decision makers.

III. Advocacy approaches

Advocacy of widows according to AACC is a set of **actions directed at changing attitudes, policies, positions and actual practices in society**. This system of actions is grouped into six areas:

1. **Awareness creation on the plight and rights of widows** which include training of widows and other stakeholders, economic empowerment, and diaconal activities.
2. **Capacity building** of different stakeholders to understand issues surrounding widows' rights.
3. **Networking, linkages and partnership** with relevant government and non-governmental partners on widows' issues.
4. **Lobbying key decision makers** to ensure development of policies and programmes that are pro widows' rights.
5. **Conducting evidenced research** to make informed advocacy based on data and information.
6. **Strategic Litigation** which can be done in a manner to get court decisions for the change of policy and practice.



In most cases advocacy approaches are used as a combination of engagement, consultation, collaboration and changing of the public opinion and attitude towards widows and their rights. Within each of these six broad approaches, there are many variations and strategic choices to be made. Not every approach is legal or appropriate in every country and so a full risk assessment should be undertaken as part of your planning before using the approach.

In most cases, it involves a combination of **direct persuasion, collaboration with policy makers and building support**. Under these approaches, AACC members and other users of the tool kit can engage in several different activities:

- **Consultations:** Responding to open calls for consultation by making submissions is an important way of making your case and influencing the outcome. This can be done at different national, regional and international forums.
- **Policy networks:** Engaging in policy discussions with other NGOs, FBOs, traditional leaders and agencies can help to refine positions on complex issues and result in more robust and authoritative arguments for change.
- **Lobbying:** face-to-face meetings with individuals such as government officials, community members, traditional leaders, religious leaders, members of parliament to persuade them on the merits of a particular course of action are opportunities to present your case and to hear the position of the person you are lobbying.
- **Changes in public opinion:** this can be done through media programs, campaigning, trainings, and public discussions to influence the actions of governments



PRINCIPLES OF ADVOCACY

Independent advocacy is done with three major principles

Principle 1: Independent advocacy is loyal to the people. It supports and stands by their views and wishes. That is, it follows the agenda of the people supported regardless of the views, interests, and agendas of others. It must be able to evidence and demonstrate its structural, financial, and psychological independence from others and provides no other services, has no other interests, ties or links other than the delivery, promotion, support and defence of independent advocacy.

Principle 2: Independent advocacy ensures people's voices are listened to and their views considered. It recognises and safeguards everyone's right to be heard. It reduces the barriers people face in having their voice heard because of communication, or capacity, or the political, social, economic, and personal interests of others.

Principle 3: Independent advocacy stands up to injustice, discrimination, and disempowerment. It recognises power imbalances or barriers people face and takes steps to address these, enables people to have more agency, greater control and influence. It challenges discrimination and promotes equality and human rights.

IV. How to advocate

Advocacy by AACC is done at international level, regional levels and at country level in the countries where AACC operates.

- **International:** AACC has been organising some activities in commemoration of the International Widows' days including organising conferences and issuing communique on the widows' rights, and participating in different international events and dialogues.
- **Regional:** AACC will use different regional bodies to advance widows' agenda especially at the African Union level. Further, AACC will use sub regional levels like EAC, SADC, ECOWAS in addressing and influencing of the widows' rights.



- **National:** AACC members should use the national settings to address and influence change in attitude, policy and practices towards widows' rights. Members should ensure that property rights and inheritance laws protect widows' rights.

Question for Reflections

1. *What role have we been playing in advocating for widows in our country?*
2. *What approaches have we been using in advocating for widows?*
3. *Can we share experiences on our challenges and success in advocacy at any level?*



CHAPTER THREE:

KEY ISSUES FACING WIDOWS IN AFRICA

Chapter objectives

- a) To examine how widows are being treated in different African countries.
- b) To discuss the customary practices/challenges faced by widows.
- c) To discuss how widows' livelihoods have been affected by widowhood.
- d) To understand the laws that affect widows' rights.

I. Introduction

By age 65, there are as many widows as there are married women, and by age 80, more than 80 percent of women live in widowhood according to World Bank report. About 72 percent of these women are much more likely to head their own households. There is a thinking amongst community members that widows are elderly. In Africa, however, a fair share of widows are quite young. Across the region, 3 percent of all women aged 15-49 become widowed at any point in time. Most African customary practices dehumanise and degrade widows. The following are some of the issues facing widows in different African cultures.

II. Use of repressive customary and discriminatory laws

In Most of the African counties, land and property ownership, and inheritance laws are subject to customary laws and religious laws, especially the Islamic laws. These practices consider men and the male child as heirs and either exclude widows completely or place them under the male child or brothers to the husband.

In Tanzania, for instance, customary laws are allowed in the inheritance laws. These laws divide heirs into three categories. The first category is the male child who gets the larger share of the inheritance. The second category comprises of women and



children who get a lesser share and are not allowed to inherit land since they are expected to remarry. The third category is the widow who receives inheritance through her male children and subsequently remains at their mercy.

In countries where Islamic laws are practiced like Sudan and Tanzania, widows get little share of the property compared to the male children. In Sudan, there are two parallel legal systems – Secular and Islamic law. However, the dominant one is the Islamic law which discriminates against non-Muslims and widows.

III. Customary Belief/ Culture/ Religion

There are different customary practices that are dehumanising and discriminating against widows in Africa. Such customs include:

a) *Widow inheritance and forced marriage by male relatives for family continuity*

In the African context continuity of the family name and wealth is linked to a man. Therefore, when a man dies the relatives have to force the widow to marry a brother of the deceased. This is against human rights and women rights. Widows have rights to choose the man they want to marry after the death of their husbands.

b) *Dowry collection after the husband's death*

In some cultures, the widows' family is supposed to return the bride-price to the deceased family. It does not matter how many years she was married and how many children she had. This practice serves to stop the widow from remarrying irrespective of her age.

c) *Patriarchy and male privilege in the family institution and aggressive male heirs*

Most of the customary practices give male heirs privilege and make male children very aggressive to their mothers. Some of them have tried to chase away the widows or attempted to kill the widows so that they can be the sole heirs, while others have even tried to rape the widows to prove their masculinity. Given this situation, many widows live in conditions that seriously violate their human rights and others have abandoned their land and become homeless and land less.



d) Torture and dehumanisation of widows

In most cases, widows are linked to the death of their husbands. To cleanse them from this, they are forced to undergo widow cleansing rituals such as drinking water used to clean the body of the deceased husband (corpse water), sexual intercourse with men who sometimes have intellectual disabilities, shaving all their hair, and many other exorcism practices.

e) Eviction from the land and seizure of matrimonial homes

Whereas men are allowed to remarry after the death of their wives, widows have been evicted from their matrimonial homes and their land seized as soon as they express interests to remarry. Although this is a common practice, it is in contravention of the law since matrimonial property are owned by both husband and wife.

f) Children are taken away since they are considered to be 'owned' through the patrilineal lineage

In some cultures, children belonging to widows are taken by the husbands' family and subsequently deny widows any rights to the children. This is because people thought that widows had no capacity to take care of children. However, this was sometimes used as a way to evict the widows from her land so as to possess it illegally.

g) The disallowance of young widows to remarry, while male peers are encouraged to marry

In most cases the community members will discourage the widow from remarrying while encouraging the widower to do so. Many widows remain unmarried because of societal attitudes and the consequences of doing so.

IV. Legal frameworks/ Instruments

In many countries there are laws that protect widows' property rights and land rights. Most of the existing laws provide equal rights to own and use land by both man and woman. However, many widows lack awareness of available legal frameworks and fails to enjoy their rights.



Furthermore, many widows are poor and access to justice, which includes hiring a lawyer or advocate to support their case, remains a challenge. Others, due to cumbersome judicial processes, give up fighting to get their rights. It is important to advocate for the judicial services, which are cheap and accessible for widows to access justice.

V. Stigma

There is so much stigma around widowhood. Widowhood is viewed as ill luck and something bad in the society. Unfortunately, widows are stigmatized even in churches and are viewed as prostitutes and husband snatchers.

For example, if a widow attends church well dressed, with nicely made hair and makeup, she is viewed as having immoral intentions. In one of the congregations, a member asked a widow, “Why did you makeup yourself while you do not have a husband? What is your plan? Do you want to steal our husbands?” Such judgemental attitudes are some of the highest levels of stigma in widowhood. It is important that the same energy dedicated to dealing with HIV stigma, be used to tackle discrimination against widows.

VI. Prostitution

In some cases, widows resort to prostitution as a means of livelihood after their land and properties have been taken away by their children or husbands’ family. As a result, many widows have ended up being HIV positive and sometimes contracted other sexually transmitted diseases.

Question for reflections

- 1) *What are the issues facing widows in your context?*
- 2) *How does the community/religious community treat widows?*
- 3) *How are the widows responding to different challenges they face?*



CHAPTER FOUR:

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR PROTECTION OF WIDOWS' RIGHTS

Chapter objectives

- 1) To examine the legal frameworks that protect widows' rights at international and regional levels.
- 2) To explore different areas that affect widows and how the legal framework protects them.

I. Introduction

Widows' rights have attracted international, regional and national legal frameworks for protection. United Nations has identified 23rd June each year to be the International Widows' Day. This shows that widows are a concern across the global. There are many different global conventions and regional conventions that address the plight of widows. However, the existing frameworks need to be implemented at the national levels to benefit widows. It is important for the widows to familiarize themselves with the legal frameworks as the basis for the advocacy of their rights in their respective countries.

The existing legal frameworks have given a widow the right to remain with her children, right to remain in the matrimonial home, right to remarry a person of her choice, right to inherit and be protected from harmful traditional practices. These frameworks give widows the mandate and a place to begin her advocacy work for change.

The following are the international legal frameworks that address widows' rights.



II. United Nation Framework

United Nations has recognized the plight of widows and has designated a specific day for commemorating widows' day on 23rd June each year. Widows' rights at the level of the United Nations (Globally) are protected by the following conventions.

1. *The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right of 1966*

Article 10(2) of the convention states that marriage must be entered into with the free consent of the intending spouses. Widows are not supposed to be inherited by the husband's brothers. They have right to choose who they want to marry.

2. *International Convention on Civil and Political Rights of 1966*

Article 26 states that all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall prohibit any discrimination and guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection against discrimination on any ground such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.

3. *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW)*

States are required:

Article 2(f)

To take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices which constitute discrimination against women.

Article 5 (a)

To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women.



Article 16

To take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations and in particular shall ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women: (a) The same right to enter into marriage; (b) The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent.

III. African Legal Frameworks

At the regional level widows' rights are protected at the African Union level through the Charter and Protocols, and also at the sub-regional levels through entities such as SADC, ECOWAS and EAC. Widows' rights are protected under different legal frameworks. The following are some of the frameworks in African context.

1. African Charter on Human and People's Rights

Article 2 states that every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or any status.

Article 28 states that every individual shall have the duty to respect and consider his fellow beings without discrimination, and to maintain relations aimed at promoting, safeguarding, and reinforcing mutual respect and tolerance.

2. Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

Article 20 asserts that state parties shall take appropriate legal measures to ensure that widows enjoy all human rights through the implementation of the following provisions: a) that widows are not subjected to inhuman, humiliating or degrading treatment; b) that a widow shall automatically become the guardian and custodian of her children, after the death of her husband, unless this is contrary to the interests and the welfare of the children; that a widow shall have the right to remarry, and in that event, to marry the person of her choice.



Article 21 (1) of the African Charter on human and people's Rights states that a widow shall have the right to an equitable share in the inheritance of the property of the husband. A widow shall have the right to continue to live in the matrimonial house. Women and men shall have the right to inherit, in equitable shares, their parents' properties.

3. SADC Protocol on Gender and Development

Article 10 of the Protocol

1. State parties shall enact and enforce legislation to ensure that:
 - a) Widows are not subjected to inhuman, humiliating, or degrading treatment.
 - b) A widow automatically becomes the guardian and custodian of her children when her husband dies unless otherwise determined by competent court of law.
 - c) A widow shall have the right to continue to live in the matrimonial house after the husband's death.
 - d) A widow shall have access to employment and other opportunities to enable her to make a meaningful contribution to society.
 - e) A widow shall have the rights to equitable share inheritance of the property of her husband.
 - f) A widow shall have the right to remarry any person of her choice.
 - g) A widow shall have protection against all forms of violence and discrimination based on her status.
2. State parties shall put in place legislative measures to ensure that widowers enjoy the same rights as widows under Article 1.



IV. National level

Each country must enact legislations that will protect widows to ensure they enjoy the rights as explained and ratified in different international and regional instruments. It's important in each country to:

1. Conduct an analysis of the Land laws or property ownership laws, Inheritance laws, law of marriage and child laws to understand the widow's legal rights.
2. Develop an advocacy strategy to advocate for the change of laws if there is a need to do that.
3. Look at the advocacy methodology in chapter one to see which approaches suit the country you are in.

Questions for reflection

1. *Are your countries members of any of the international or regional initiatives in the discussion?*
2. *What are the other regional frameworks that support widows?*
3. *What are the national laws, guidelines and regulations that address widows' rights?*



CHAPTER FIVE:

EXISTING INTERVENTIONS DONE BY DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN ADDRESSING WIDOWS' RIGHTS/ SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Chapter objectives

- a) To explore different existing mechanisms that address widows' rights.
- a) To evaluate how effective the interventions in addressing widows' rights are.
- b) To assess the impact of the intervention in finding the long solutions to widows' rights.

I. A case study

The Plight of a Young Widow

R.A. Lateju

Death is inevitable. When it comes to lay its sullen hands on a loved one, especially a young spouse, it creates a long-term sorrow, bitterness and loneliness in the heart of the partner. A cousin of mine lost her husband at a very tender age. He left her with a daughter of about 1 and ½ years. My cousin sent the information about the death of her husband to her in-laws. She sent money to them to prepare a befitting grave for her husband. She also informed her immediate family to share in her grief and to come and witness the burial of her husband.

When she got to her husband's town with the corpse a day prior to the burial, her in-laws told her that the money she sent for the preparation of the grave was not enough. She was surprised because she knew she had sent more than enough to them. She later went to inspect the grave that had been prepared and found it to be



totally below her expectations. She had to give the work to another set of workers to quickly repair the grave to be ready for burial the following day.

After the church service, at the grave side, my cousin was so grieved that she could not withstand losing her husband, she collapsed as the coffin was being lowered into the grave. Her colleagues quickly resuscitated her and took her to the car. To our amazement, some of her in-laws came to her in the car to ask her for the money to give to the officiating Reverend Fathers who conducted the service. Her friends were infuriated as a result of how she was being treated and they drove away with her immediately after the burial.

Sometime later, my cousin sent for the in-laws to come and pack their son's property from their official residence since they had to vacate the place. When they came, they asked her for money to transport the properties to their various abodes. They also asked her about how to claim for their brother's entitlement. She told them to go to his office to make the claim as she was not interested in claiming any entitlement because she had her own job to live on with her child. Since then, the in-laws never asked after her and her daughter. She chose not to remarry but to take care of her daughter with whatever she is earning.

Questions for discussion

1. How would you help the widow in this situation?
2. How will you help the community to understand this situation?

II. Approaches towards addressing the plight of widows

There are so many approaches that have been used by different stakeholders to address the widow's rights in different issues. The aim is to ensure that their values and dignity are upheld. The following are some of the approaches:

1. *Humanitarian support/Diaconal support*

Religious institutions and other community organization have always supported widows through humanitarian activities such as providing them with basic needs like food, clothing, housing, and medical support. Many churches set aside days when congregants perform charitable acts for widows as well as seminars to support them in their faith and also to provide psychosocial support.



2. Access to justice through Legal Aid Services

In some countries, widows are supported to access justice through legal aid provision. Legal aid can be provided free of charge by paralegals working in the community or through using of the civil society and lawyers who offer free legal services. Using these schemes, widows have been able to get their land back, get their rights in the matrimonial homes and even continue to maintain their children. In cases where human rights abuses have been committed, widows have been supported to get remedies to the abuse. Even though the judicial system may take long, it always solves widows' issues once and for all.

3. Economic empowerment Initiatives

Widows lack collateral (land, cars and houses) to guarantee access to loans in financial institutions. To ensure that widows can sustain their lives and reduce dependency on humanitarian support, economic empowerment becomes a necessary strategy. The economic empowerment initiatives include training of widows in entrepreneurship programs like soap making, poultry keeping, and making handmade crafts. Widows are then given materials to start the business such as seed grants. Some have established self-help (Microfinance) groups where they get resources to start small business and exposure to financial services at different levels to get capital for their small entrepreneurship activities. Others have consolidated specific funds to support widows to have economic independence.

4. Networking and Linkage

Linking widows with different stakeholders is an important strategy that has been used to address issues of widows. Some of the widows have been linked to financial institutions for financial support, some have been linked to markets to sell their different products, and some have been linked to different legal aid providers to access justice while others have been linked to different civil society, government officials and policy makers to further discuss and uphold widows' rights at different situations.

Churches have also been preparing different seminars and capacity building sessions for widows and link them to different meetings and visits to expose them to different knowledge and support systems.



5. Commemoration of the International Widows' Day

23rd June each year is set as an International Widow' Day. This day keeps reminding us of the plight of widows and the need to protect widows' rights. It has been celebrated differently by different countries and stakeholders. In some cases, it has been through seminars, campaigns, dialogues and engagement with policy makers and media programs. AACC has been part of popularizing the day by doing different activities including training and discussions on widows' rights. On this day, the plight of widows becomes a global discussion.

6. Traditional mechanism for the support of widows

There are some existing customary structures that have been very supportive to widows in Africa. Some of the customs include ensuring the widow's family has food, has a guiding father and other basic needs for the children. Upholding of positive culture and practices towards widowhood is very important as it gives strength to widows and support widows and their children.

7. Policy Dialogue and Legal Reforms

Engagements in the policy dialogue for legal reforms have been an intervention from global, regional and national levels. The engagement aimed at ensuring that policies and laws are pro-poor to addressing widows' issues and ensure that implementation of the laws and frameworks are in favour of widows. The dialogue includes analysis of the policy, policy briefs and engaging policy makers in addressing issues of widows.

Questions for reflections

- 1. What are the interventions you know or have experienced in addressing widowhood in your community?*
- 2. Are there any traditional practices that are positive in supporting widows in the community you live in?*
- 3. What role can religious leaders play in addressing the plight of widows?*



CHAPTER SIX:

ADVOCACY METHODS /STRATEGIES

Chapter objectives

1. To explore different strategies that can be used to advocate for widows' rights.
2. To be able to plan and use a proper strategy in each local environment to find a permanent solution to widows' issues.

I. INTRODUCTION

II. Campaign for Will Writing

A Will is a legal document that declares or distributes assets after the death of an individuals. It sets even the guardianship of the children and the conduct of his burial. When there is a will, many times the widows and the children are safer. It is very important for the community including the churches to build capacity and develop a campaigning strategy to ensure will-writing becomes a normative lifestyle to many of its members. Churches can do this through different seminars, use of the media and having simple material that demonstrate how to write a will.

The following is a sample will

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF.....

I, [Testator], a resident of, declare this to be my Last Will and Testament, and revoke all previous wills and codicils made by me, either jointly or severally.



DECLARATIONS

- A. I am of sound mind and of legal age to make this Last Will.
- B. This Last Will expresses my wishes without undue influence or duress.
- C. At the time of executing this Last Will: (Check one)
- I am married to _____.
- I am NOT married.
- D. At the time of executing this Last Will: (Check one)
- I have the following children:
1. _____.
2. _____.
- I do NOT have any children.



ARTICLE I

APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTOR

A. I, appoint _____ [Executor] to be the executor of this Last Will (the "Executor").

(Optional) If _____ [Executor] predeceases me or is otherwise unable to serve as the Executor, then I appoint _____ [Successor Executor] as the successor Executor.

(Optional) If neither _____ [Executor] nor _____ [Successor Executor] survives me or is able to serve as the Executor, then I appoint _____ [Backup successor Executor] to serve as the backup successor Executor.

I further intend that the term the Executor in this Last Will is synonymous with the terms "personal representative," "executrix," and "fiduciary."

B. Compensation (Check one)

- The Executor shall be entitled to receive compensation in the amount of _____ for the services performed under this Last Will.
- The Executor shall be entitled to receive reasonable compensation for the services performed under this Last Will.
- The Executor is NOT entitled to receive any compensation for the services performed under this Last Will.

C. Bond (Check one)

- The Executor shall be required to furnish a bond or other security for the faithful performance of his or her duties as the Executor in any jurisdiction.
- I direct that any Executor serving hereunder shall **NOT** be required to furnish any bond or other security for the faithful performance of his or her duties as the Executor in any jurisdiction whatsoever, or if a bond is required, he or she shall not be required to furnish any sureties.



ARTICLE II

EXECUTOR'S POWERS

A. The Executor shall pay my enforceable unsecured debts, expenses of last illness, funeral expenses, costs of administration, and claims allowed in administration of my estate: (Check one)

- From the principal of my residuary estate according to all applicable laws.
- As the Executor deems appropriate, in the Executor's sole discretion, according to all applicable laws.
- By the following method: _____

B. I grant to the Executor the fullest power to deal with any property held by my estate without the prior or subsequent approval of any court, including the period after termination of any trust until finally distributed. No person dealing with the Executor shall be required to inquire into the propriety of any of his or her actions or make inquiry into the application of any funds or other property. The Executor shall, however, exercise all powers in a fiduciary capacity for the best interest of the beneficiaries of the estate. I grant to the Executor all specific powers as conferred by law.

C. In addition to the powers granted by law or as necessary to carry out my intentions in this Last Will, the Executor shall have the following powers: _____



ARTICLE III

EXPENSES

A. All expenses incurred by the Executor during the settlement of my estate in storing, packing, shipping, delivering, or ensuring an article of tangible personal property passing under this Last Will shall be charged and treated as expenses of administering my estate.

B. If the value of my estate is insufficient to fulfil this Last Will, I give the Executor full authority to decrease my bequests by a proportionate amount.

ARTICLE IV

DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PROPERTY

A. After payment of my debts, expenses and claims, I give my personal property and effects described below to:

To _____ [Name], I leave

_____.

To _____ [Name], I leave

_____.

To _____ [Name], I leave

_____.

B. After payment of my debts, expenses and claims, I leave the sum(s) specified below to the following people:

To _____ [Name], I leave [amount] _____.



To _____ [Name], I leave [amount] _____.

To _____ [Name], I leave [amount] _____.

C. Unless otherwise specifically bequeathed, the remainder of my property, real and personal, and wheresoever situated, I give to the individuals listed in the apportioned percentages:

To _____ [Name], I leave _____% of my remaining estate.

To _____ [Name], I leave _____% of my remaining estate.

To _____ [Name], I leave _____% of my remaining estate.

D. To the _____ [Non-profit name], located at _____

_____ [Address], I leave the sum of

[amount] _____ in honour of _____ [Honouree

name].



ARTICLE V

BENEFICIARIES

A. If I give my personal property and effects to two or more beneficiaries to be shared by them, and any one of them does not survive me, his or her share shall be given to the others in equal amounts, unless otherwise provided in this Last Will.

B. If one of my heirs or another individual is not left property or is otherwise omitted from this Last Will, such omission is intentional.

ARTICLE VI

GUARDIAN OF MINOR CHILDREN

(Check one)

- Not applicable.

- I will name a guardian for my minor children.

A. If my spouse does not survive me and we leave minor children surviving me, I appoint as guardian of the person and property of my minor children _____ [Guardian].

[Guardian] will have custody of my minor children, and will serve without bond. If _____ [Guardian] does not qualify as guardian or for any reason cannot serve as guardian, I appoint as successor guardian _____ [Successor guardian].

B. The guardian shall hold, manage, and maintain such property for the benefit of my minor children with full power, as in such to invest and/or reinvest such property for the benefit of my minor children and to distribute so much of the income of such property periodically as may be necessary for the health, education, and or welfare of my minor children as deemed appropriate in the guardian's sole discretion until



such time as my minor children attain the age of eighteen (18) years at which time all remaining income and the principal of such property shall be turned over to my minor children in full.

ARTICLE VII

TAXES

The Executor shall pay all estate, inheritance, transfer, legacy, succession, and other similar taxes imposed by any jurisdiction whatsoever by reason of my death, together with interest and penalties, whether such taxes are imposed upon or with respect to any property that passes under the provisions of this Last Will or passes or has passed otherwise, or imposed upon or with respect to any recipient.

ARTICLE VIII

DUE DILIGENCE

The Executor shall be responsible only for due diligence in the administration and disbursement of my estate and shall not be responsible for any loss or subject to any liability except by reason of the Executor's own negligence or wilful default proved by affirmative evidence. Any discretion granted to Executor, expressly or by implication under this Last Will or by law, shall fully protect Executor for every determination made in good faith. Executor's determinations shall be conclusive and binding upon all persons interested in this Last Will.



ARTICLE IX

SIMULTANEOUS DEATH

(Check one)

- Not applicable.

- If my spouse and I die under circumstances that the order of our deaths cannot be readily ascertained, I shall be deemed to have predeceased my spouse, notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, and that the provisions of this Last Will be construed according to such presumption.

ARTICLE XI

PREDECEASED BENEFICIARIES

(Check one)

- Not applicable.

- If any other beneficiary under this Last Will dies within _____ days after my death or prior to the distribution of my estate, he or she shall be deemed to have predeceased me, and all provisions of this Last Will shall be construed upon that assumption.



ARTICLE XIII

CONSTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE

Throughout this Last Will, except where the context otherwise requires, the masculine gender shall be deemed to include the feminine and the neuter, and the singular number shall be deemed to include the plural, and vice versa.

ARTICLE XIV

SEVERABILITY

The remaining provisions of this Last Will continue to be in full force and effect if any provisions of this Last Will are deemed unenforceable.

ARTICLE XV

GOVERNING LAW

The dispositions made by this Last Will shall be construed in accordance with the laws of the State of _____.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I, _____ [Testator], have signed my initials on each of the preceding _____ pages, and have signed my name below, all this _____ day of _____, 20____.

Testator Signature		
--------------------	--	--



SIGNED AND DECLARED by _____ [Testator], in our joint presence to be _____ >s [Testator] Last Will, and remaining in their presence, and in the presence of each other, and at their request, we signed as attesting witnesses, this clause having first been read aloud.

First Witness

First Witness Signature	Date
First Witness Name	
First Witness Address	

Second Witness

Second Witness Signature	Date
Second Witness Name	
Second Witness Address	

Third Witness

Third Witness Signature	Date
Third Witness Name	
Third Witness Address	



SELF-PROVING AFFIDAVIT

We, _____
____ [Witnesses], and _____ [Testator], the witnesses and
Testator, respectively, whose names are signed to the attached or foregoing
instrument, being first duly sworn, do hereby declare to the undersigned officer
that the Testator, in the presence of witnesses, signed the instrument as their
Last Will and that they signed voluntarily and that each of the witnesses in the
presence of the Testator and in the presence of each other signed the Will as
a witness and that to the best of the knowledge of each witness, the Testator
was, at the time, eighteen (18) or more years of age, of sound mind and under no
constraint or undue influence.

Testator Signature

First Witness Signature

Second Witness Signature

Third Witness Signature



NOTARY ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

SWORN TO and SUBSCRIBED before me on this ____ day of _____, 20____, by _____, the Testator and by _____ the Witnesses, who are personally known to me or produced a National Id/ Passport/ Driver's license/ as identification and who did take an oath.

Signature

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: _____

III. Litigation as an advocacy Strategy

Access to justice is a reliable mechanism to ensure widows' rights are upheld. Judiciary/Courts exist to ensure that human rights are observed. Given the specific country and laws, widows can be supported through legal aid providers such as lawyers and Paralegals to ensure their property rights, children's rights and dignity are protected. This can be done by using litigation or public litigation as a means to enforce the law and change the narrative. **Litigation** is an action or application brought in court to enforce a right or to determine a legal question or matter. **Public interest litigation** is where court action is used to achieve a public interest goal in changing of laws and practices.

Litigation has the following advantages; protection of rights, it enforces corrective action, compensation to the aggrieved party, sets precedent that creates certainty and guidance for future cases with similar facts. It brings out the desired impact of an advocacy strategy or intervention with often clear and tangible results.

Widows should be linked to legal aid services mechanism and lawyers to be able to defend their rights from individual levels.



IV. Advocating for policy and legal framework change

It is important to advocate for legal frameworks that will protect and guarantee widows' rights. Advocacy for policy reforms can be done at the global level. Implementation of existing laws and practice in judicial and legal processes can be done at national level. Convening and establishing policy dialogues around women's rights can be done at different levels of regional bodies, such as ECOWAS, AU and EAC.

In order to successfully conduct advocacy towards policy change different steps should be observed:

1. Policy monitoring and public accountability

Almost all effective policy-related advocacy efforts commence with observation and monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of policies already in place. It is important that each country makes a follow-up on implementation of laws and policies towards widows' rights. Policy monitoring and public accountability are made easier where government departments and other public bodies, including regulatory organisations, maintain and publish data and reports in a timely fashion and undertake research and consultation to facilitate decision-making in the public interest. Where this is not the case, where the information is poor or unreliable, or where independent data is needed, civil society organisations and coalitions may organise their own research and data gathering, or they may rely on third party sources such as commercial and academic research. So, it is important to gather information on widows in each country.

2. Policy dialogue

Policy monitoring alone may prompt corrections to policy failure or lead to improved policy implementation of the widows' rights. However, it is important in gaining influence earlier in the policy-making process through engagement in policy dialogue with bureaucrats and politicians. These engagements will be backed up with data and research during monitoring of the implementation of the policies and witnesses from widowhood.



3. Campaigns for policy change

Campaigns for policy change rarely achieve rapid results. They require patience, tenacity, courage, and conviction, knowing that widows' issues are linked to traditions, customs and religious beliefs. It needs a lot of patience to see the change happening and keep the resilience to push for changes. There is no blueprint for success, but there are some common denominators to almost all successful advocacy campaigns. It is essential, for instance, to maintain clarity in communication. Goals should be clear and achievable, messages should be compelling for those to whom they are intended, and calls to action should be specific and concise. Good planning and organisation must combine with the ability to mobilise broad coalitions of public and political support towards a common goal.

4. Building capacity of stakeholders to advocate

As noted in the introduction to this toolkit, widows face systemic barriers in their access to their rights and in their means to exercise their right to freedom of expression in what is going on. Not so many people are aware of the issues affecting widows' in their daily life. It is important to build the capacity of all important stakeholders so that they can support advocacy towards policy reforms.

V. Capacity building of widows and stakeholders

Information is power and an important tool towards advocating for widows' rights. It is important for Churches and community to organize different training and workshop to widows and community groups like traditional leaders, community-based organizations, and religious leaders. The trainings should cover human rights, widow's rights, access to justice and preparing wills. It is important for the church also to be able to produce liturgy for widows to be used by pastors for empowering the congregation on rights of widows. When everybody understands the rights of widows then widows, then their rights will be protected.

Building capacity of champions including male champions to advocate for widows' rights.



It is important to have champions for widows' rights who can also mobilize the community on these rights.

Use and leveraging on social media and digital platforms and technologies to build the capacity of communities on the plight of widows is important. Further, the use of art, music and theatre to amplify the plight of the widows should be embraced.

VI. Diaconal services

Humanitarian support to the widows should continue. The church should ensure that widows in different environments are supplied with basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Further, the church can also support widows in health matters through supporting them with health insurance and medical support. Sometimes the support of children is necessary, including support with school fees and other school needs. It is important for members of the church to conduct home visit to the widows' homes to assess their lifestyles and their needs. Home visits are important for praying together and creating a sense of belonging to the community and the feeling that someone in the community cares about them. This will also give the church a true picture on how to establish relevant programs for widows in the church, including psychosocial support. It is important to raise awareness of the need for integrating psychosocial and mental health with other programs of widows. Further, establishment of psychosocial referral pathways is necessary.

VII. Economic empowerment Initiatives

Establishment of economic schemes and funds to support widows to have income-generation activities.

This will solve the issues of widow dependency or begging and being helped. Economic empowerment initiatives include seed grants which can be mobilized resources from the church members and donors, training in hands-on skill and entrepreneurship skills, and establishment of table banking and self-help groups (VICOBA) and Microfinance schemes that can offer capital for the widow's project. With these funds, widows can be economically independent as many widows lack collateral to guarantee credit collective resource capital. Members of the church should be mobilised to be a market of the goods produced by widows in their small businesses.



Support widows to access employment placement from private and public sectors. Sometimes, widows are not able access information and some are so disappointed even to take steps to find themselves employment while they have different job skills. The church can create a committee that can connect widows with employment opportunities.

VIII. Networking and Linkage

Widows need to be linked and networked with other widows' initiatives on economic empowerments as well as to be linked to the markets at national, regional and global markets of the different goods they produce. This can be done through establishment of exchange visit at the national levels including different congregations, at regional level and in the global levels. Further linkages can be done in policy advocacy including commemoration of International Widows' Day and other days in order to have a joint voice. It is important to use such linkages to share the documented lessons, success stories and challenges facing widows. Further, the use of art, music and theatre can amplify the plight of widows and share lessons.



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