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PRE-INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY 2026 CELEBRATION HELD IN NAIROBI COUNTY AT KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTER AMPHITHEATRE ON 20TH JUNE 2026

THEME: JUSTICE, DIGNITY, AND ECONOMIC POWER FOR WIDOWS-THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE



FOUNDER MESSAGE:

On this important occasion of International Widows Day, I speak to you not only as the Founder and Executive Director of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO), but also as a widow who deeply understands the journey of loss, resilience, and rebuilding life after widowhood. Today is not just a commemoration; it is a reminder of the lived realities of widows and widowers across our communities, and a recognition of the silent struggles, injustices, and resilience that often go unseen. Widowhood is not only about



Dr. Dianah Kamande-Founder & Executive Director Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization reading her Speech at KICC in Nairobi County

loss, but also about what follows the responsibility of rebuilding, the weight of exclusion, and the strength required to survive and thrive despite it all. For this reason, I continue to stand firmly on one guiding principle: "Nothing About Widows Without Widows." This is not just a statement, but a call to action for inclusion, participation, and recognition of widowed persons in all decisions, policies, and programs that affect their lives. Since the founding of CTWOO in 2013, we have walked alongside widows and widowers across Kenya, growing from a small space for voices into a national movement advocating for dignity, justice, and empowerment. This year marks a defining moment as Kenya advances the Widowed Persons Protection Bill, 2026, sponsored by Hon. Dr. Otiende Amollo, CBS, MP, which seeks to restore dignity, protect rights, safeguard homes and inheritance, and strengthen social protection systems so that widowhood is no longer a pathway to vulnerability.

We sincerely appreciate our partners, including the Government of Kenya, FIDA Kenya, UWEZO Fund, and all stakeholders who continue to walk this journey with us. To policymakers, I urge you to remember the widow in a rural village fighting to keep her home, the mother raising children alone after loss, and the woman seeking justice that is often delayed or denied. Widowed persons must no longer be an afterthought in policy, but a priority. To development partners, civil society, and the media, I call for deeper collaboration rooted in justice and dignity, and for storytelling that reflects resilience and strength, not only pain. To my dear widows and widowers, you are not invisible, not forgotten, and not alone. You are strong, resilient, and capable of rebuilding life with dignity and purpose.

As we mark this International Widows Day, let us commit to a future where widowhood will never mean loss of dignity, home, voice, or opportunity, and where widowed persons are fully included, fully heard, and fully empowered. A nation that protects its widows and widowers protects its own moral strength. Nothing About Widows Without Widows.

INTRODUCTION

Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization hosted the 11th Pre-International Widows Day Celebration on 20th June 2026 at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), Nairobi



County. The event brought together widows from different counties in Kenya, government representatives, Member of Parliament, legal experts, religious leaders, civil society organizations, and development partners. The celebration aimed to create awareness on the challenges faced by widowed persons, advocate for their rights, promote economic empowerment, and strengthen partnerships towards achieving justice, dignity, and inclusion for widows in society under the Theme of the year “**JUSTICE, DIGNITY AND ECONOMIC POWER FOR WIDOWS-THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE**”

DETAILS OF THE EVENT

i) OPENING CEREMONY



Registration and welcoming of participants from different Counties across Kenya

The event began with the registration and welcoming of participants from different counties across Kenya, providing an opportunity for widowed persons to interact, share their lived experiences, build networks, and strengthen their collective voice in advocating for their rights and dignity.

The ceremony officially commenced with opening prayers and a spiritual empowerment session led by



Bishop Dolphina Onjula preaching on spiritual empowerment on Healing, Restoration and Hope Beyond Widowhood during the Pre-International Widows Day Celebration at KICC

Bishop Dolphina Onjula, who delivered messages of healing, restoration, forgiveness, and hope, encouraging widows to embrace life beyond loss and remain resilient despite the social, emotional, and economic challenges as associated with widowhood. She further addressed the injustices faced by many widowed persons, including discrimination, property grabbing, harmful cultural practices, abandonment, and lack of support from families and society, while calling upon religious institutions, leaders, and communities to protect and uphold the rights and dignity of widows.



ii) PRESENTATION OF CULTURAL DANCE BY THE WIDOWS



Osiligi Lenkolia Widows Group Entertaining the Participant through the Maasai Cultural Dance at KICC Nairobi-County

The celebration was further enriched through vibrant cultural performances and entertainment presented by the **Widows of Excellence Group** and Maasai cultural dance by Hope for Widows (**Osiligi Lenkolia**) group under the leadership of Elizabeth Seney. The performances showcased Kenya's rich cultural heritage and served as a powerful expression of resilience, unity, and joy among widowed persons. Through traditional songs, dances, and artistic expressions, the widows celebrated their strength, identity, and shared plight and voices of widowed persons. The entertainment presentations created a lively and inclusive atmosphere,

demonstrating that widowhood does not mark the end of one's aspirations but can be a journey of renewed hope, solidarity, and transformation. The performances also strengthened unity among widowed persons from diverse communities while promoting the preservation of cultural values and advancing the advocacy for the rights, dignity, and socio-economic empowerment of widows across Kenya.

iii) INSPIRATIONAL SESSIONS



MS. Ann Mathu conducting an inspirational session on how she overcame and managed substance abuse challenges, while promoting drug abuse prevention and family well-being.

Madam Ann Mathu led an important session on understanding family well-being in relation to drug and substance abuse prevention, during which she shared her personal experiences on how she adapted to and managed challenges associated with drug abuse. She encouraged widows to maintain healthy lifestyles, adopt positive coping mechanisms, avoid drug and substance abuse, and promote strong and supportive family relationships. In her speech, she also motivated widows not to insult or reject their sons and daughters who may become addicted to drugs, but instead to guide, counsel, and support them with patience and understanding, helping them gradually cope and recover from addiction until

they are fully rehabilitated and restored.



iv) VOICES OF WIDOWED PERSONS

A powerful session was dedicated to the voices of widowed persons, where participants openly shared their lived experiences, challenges, and key demands for inclusion and justice. Widows highlighted persistent issues such as economic hardship, denial of inheritance and land rights, social stigma, lack of access to justice, and limited inclusion in government empowerment programs. They called for strengthened implementation of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026, expanded legal aid services, psychosocial support, and targeted economic empowerment initiatives that address their real needs at the grassroots level.



Mzee Kimani, a widower from Nairobi County, sharing his lived experiences and challenges as a widower

In a notable contribution during the session, **Mzee Julius Kimani**, a widower, shared his lived experiences, highlighting the often-overlooked challenges faced by widowed men, including emotional trauma, parenting responsibilities, economic instability, and social isolation. He expressed concern that while significant focus is placed on widows' empowerment, widowers are often excluded from government programs and social protection frameworks. He therefore sought clarification on this imbalance and called for the inclusion of all widowed persons **both men and women** in social, economic, and justice programs, as well as the establishment of targeted widower empowerment initiatives. He further emphasized that empowerment of widowed persons should be

firmly centered in development policies, with priority given to inclusive support programs. In response.

Madam Elizabeth Seney, a widow from Kajiado County also underscored the importance of inclusive programming that recognizes both widows and widowers as part of the broader widowed community. She emphasized that widowed persons' empowerment should remain a central focus in development policies and programs, and strongly advocated for the creation of safe spaces where widowed persons can freely share, heal, and access support services without stigma or discrimination. She further called on the government to allocate a specific percentage of bursaries to widowed persons and to establish a dedicated budget line to support widowed persons' welfare and empowerment initiatives.



Madam Elizabeth outlining the key action plan on the inclusion of widowed persons in development policies and programs.



CAPACITY BUILDING SESSIONS

Recognizing the importance of financial independence and sustainable livelihoods, Come Together Widows SACCO, provided an update on its progress and ongoing initiatives. Ms. Phideliah Kitolo, Secretary of Come Together Widows SACCO, emphasized the need to integrate widows into SACCO movements and to strengthen a culture of savings, financial literacy, and sustainable economic empowerment. She encouraged widowed persons to actively participate in financial inclusion programs, register with SACCOs, and engage in income-generating activities as a pathway toward self-reliance and improved livelihoods. The session further equipped participants with practical knowledge on financial planning, savings discipline, and access to affordable financial services, reinforcing the importance of economic empowerment as a key pillar in restoring dignity and improving the welfare of widowed persons and their families.



Ms. Phideliah Kitolo, Secretary, highlighting the progress of Come Together Widows SACCO and emphasizes the need to integrate more widows into the SACCO

She also acknowledged the valuable support of **Equity Bank partners**, who have contributed significantly through training and financial literacy programs that have empowered Come Together Widows SACCO members to build strong saving habits, develop financial discipline, and move toward self-reliance. Through this partnership, widowed persons have gained practical skills and knowledge that enable them to better manage resources, access financial services, and improve their economic stability, thereby strengthening their overall empowerment journey.

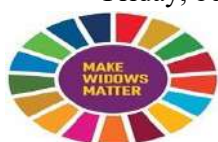
MENTAL HEALTH SESSIONS AND WELL-BEING



Alice Chomba, Psycho-social Support Officer, conducting a Psycho-social support session to encourage widowed persons to seek counselling services during the Pre-International Widows Day Celebration at KICC

Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization is committed to ensuring the well-being of widowed persons through the Psychosocial Support Department, led by Ms. Alice Chomba. With a strong focus on mental health and emotional healing, Ms. Alice Chomba encouraged widowed persons to speak out, share their stories, seek counselling, support one another, and prioritize their well-being. She further emphasized the importance of mental health and the creation of safe spaces where widowed persons and their Children can openly express their challenges and build strong support networks that promote healing, resilience, and overall mental wellness. She also encouraged them to feel free to reach out to the CTWOO office from Monday to

Friday, between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., for support and assistance.



PRESENTATION ON THE WIDOWED PROTECTION BILL 2026

Wakili Nyawira Wachira, an advocate and Chairperson of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill Development Committee, delivered a comprehensive focus on the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026, outlining its vision, objectives, and expected impact as a landmark framework for strengthening social protection and promoting the overall well-being of widowed persons across the country. She emphasized that the Bill seeks to enhance economic empowerment through structured support systems, expanded access to livelihood opportunities, and the formal inclusion of widowed persons in financial and development programs, while also safeguarding them from abuse and guaranteeing access to justice, inheritance, and property rights.



Advocate Lindah Nyawira, Chairperson of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill Development Committee, presenting the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026; its vision, key provisions, and expected impact.

Furthermore, she highlighted that the Bill promotes the inclusion of widowed persons in centered development policies and programs to ensure they are not left behind in national planning and resource allocation, with a focus on targeted interventions that address their specific vulnerabilities while advancing dignity, equality, and sustainable empowerment. She urged all stakeholders to support the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026 as a critical legislative milestone for the protection, empowerment, and social inclusion of widowed persons, and as a key step toward upholding their human rights and improving their socio-economic well-being.



SPEECHES

Hon. Dr. Otiende Amollo, CBS, Member of Parliament for Rarieda Constituency



Senior Counsel Hon. Otiende Amollo, CBS, MP for Rarieda Constituency and Sponsor of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026, delivering remarks on the legislative process of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill and the inclusion of widowed persons in development programs.

Hon. Dr. Otiende Amollo, Senior Counsel and sponsor of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026, delivered remarks on the legislative journey of the Bill and reaffirmed his commitment to ensuring its successful passage. He emphasized that widowed persons should no longer remain invisible in national conversations and called for stronger collaboration between Parliament, government agencies, civil society organizations, and communities to advance widows' rights and empowerment. He further highlighted that the Bill provides for access to health services, prohibits harmful cultural practices, and strengthens the inclusion and protection of

widowed persons. In addition, he noted that the Bill addresses critical issues affecting widowed persons, including the establishment of emergency shelters and safe spaces for widows, while appreciating the support of stakeholders such as the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), who have played a key role in advancing the process.

Hon. Dr. Otiende Amollo outlined the legislative process of the Widowed Persons Protection Bill 2026 as follows:

1. **23/03/2026** – The Bill underwent preliminary review.
2. **15/04/2026** – Discussions on the Bill were concluded.
3. **12/05/2026** – The Bill was submitted to the Speaker of the National Assembly and approved, then forwarded to the Clerk of the National Assembly.
4. **13/05/2026** – The Bill was subjected to legal review and referred for budgetary implications as a money Bill, particularly to support provisions such as emergency shelters for widowed persons, before being forwarded to the Budget Committee for consideration and approval.
5. Subsequent Stage – The Bill will be formally published and referred to the relevant departmental committee, either Social Protection or Justice and Legal Affairs, for further consideration.
6. Final Stage – The Bill will be presented to the President of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. Dr. William Samoei Ruto, by Dr. Dianah Kamande together with the Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Hon. Hannah Wendot Cheptumo, for assent and enactment into law.



SPEECH BY DR. JOSEPHINE OBONYO, SECRETARY GENDER- STATE DEPARTMENT FOR GENDER, CULTURE, THE ARTS AND CHILDREN SERVICES

Dr. Josephine Obonyo-Secretary for Gender, representing Hon. Hannah Wendot, Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage, conveyed the Government's commitment to protecting and empowering widowed persons. She highlighted the importance of creating awareness, providing safe spaces for widows, expanding psychosocial support services, and promoting a society where widows are treated with respect, dignity, and equality. She further appreciated widows for their resilience in overcoming the challenges they face and reaffirmed the Ministry's commitment to advancing widows' empowerment through initiatives such as the **Women Enterprise Fund and the Uwezo Fund**, ensuring equal access to opportunities and promoting economic inclusion without discrimination. She also emphasized the creation of safe spaces for widowed persons and encouraged them to utilize the national toll-free helpline 1195 for reporting and seeking assistance in cases of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).



Dr. Josephine Obonyo, Secretary Gender conveying a message from Hon. Hannah Wendot, Cabinet Secretary for Gender, Culture, the Arts and Heritage, on the government's commitment to the protection and empowerment of widows.

Message of Solidarity from Hon. Esther M. Passaris, OGW

Although she was unable to attend the celebration physically, Hon. Esther M. Passaris, OGW, sent a heartfelt message of support and goodwill to all widowed persons. In her message, she acknowledged the courage and resilience of widows and reaffirmed her continued commitment to championing their welfare. She has consistently been a strong supporter of widowed persons, ensuring that their needs and concerns are considered in development programs and social support initiatives. She was further recognized as a leader, a mother, a sister, and a true friend to widowed persons, whose continued advocacy and support have significantly contributed to advancing their dignity and inclusion in society.

CONCLUSION

The celebration concluded with appreciation extended to all widowed persons, guest speakers, government representatives, civil society organizations, and partners who contributed to the success of the event. The participants renewed their commitment to continue speaking with one voice in advocating for justice, dignity, equality, and the economic empowerment of widowed persons. The Pre-International Widows Day Celebration which marked the 11th International Widows Day Celebration by Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization served as a powerful reminder that widows deserve recognition, protection, opportunities, and inclusion in decision-making processes, marking another significant milestone in the journey toward a society where every widowed person lives with dignity, security, and hope.

Prepared by: Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization



PICTURES OF THE EVENT









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