COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION (CTWOO)
BLESSED HOUSE, off Thika Super Highway, 1st Floor, Rm. 110
P.O. BOX 34664 – 00100, Nairobi
Tel: +254 789 577 476, +254 702 577 477
EMAIL: info@cometogewoo.org Website: www.cometogewoo.org

REPORT ON PRE-VALENTINES DINNER2024, NAIROBI COUNTY AT SAFARI PARK HOTEL

FEBRUARY, 2024

FEBRUARY 29, 2024

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MESSAGE FROM DR. DIANAH KAMANDE, HSC (FOUNDER COME TOGETHER WIDOWS AND ORPHANS ORGANIZATION)

I am incredibly proud and grateful to witness the success of the 7th Pre-Valentine's Dinner, which brought on board a total of 300 widows/ers and friends of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization. This collaborative effort with amazing organizations and advocates who share our passion for the rights of widows has taken a significant step forward in our mission to achieve Economic Empowerment for Widows through financial inclusion. The event was not merely a celebration; it was a symbol of hope and unity. We came together as a community to address the unique challenges faced by widows, empowering them to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. Through the support of organizations like the Kenya Human Rights Commission, Groots Kenya, Women Federation for World Peace, Jobana Foundation, and Anti-FGM Board, we facilitated widows and widowers from all over the country, giving them an opportunity to experience social support and love.

The success of this event would not have been possible without the collaborative efforts of all the like-minded organizations and individuals who shared our vision. Together, we made a powerful statement about the importance of supporting widows and ensuring they are not left behind. This collective commitment underscores the strength of our community and the positive impact we can achieve when we join forces.

As the founder of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed, volunteered, and participated in making this celebration a meaningful and impactful one. Your support is a testament to our shared values and determination to make a real difference in the lives of widows in Kenya. Let us continue to stand together, united in our pursuit of empowering widows. By providing them with the support they need, we are creating a brighter future, not only for widows but for the entire community. Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication. Together, we can achieve prosperity for widows and build a more inclusive and compassionate society.

Additionally, we are thrilled to announce the successful launch of the Widows Sacco, a long-term goal aimed at enhancing financial inclusion for our widows. The Sacco will provide a platform for widows to access financial services, including savings, credit, and insurance, thus enabling them to build financial resilience and improve their economic well-being. This milestone marks a significant achievement in our efforts to empower widows economically and ensure their financial security.

We are grateful to all our partners and supporters who have made this initiative possible, and we look forward to the positive impact it will have on the lives of widows in our community.

With heartfelt gratitude, Dianah Kamande HSC.

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REPORT ON THE WIDOWS 7TH PRE VALENTINES CELEBRATION AND LAUNCH OF COME TOGETHER WIDOWS SACCO

INTRODUCTION

The Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO) is a national non-governmental organization dedicated to advocating for the rights of widows across the country. As part of its ongoing commitment to supporting and empowering widows, CTWOO hosts an annual Valentine's Meet and Greet Dinner. This event serves as a platform for widows and widowers from all over the country to come together, share a meal, and engage in meaningful interactions. Additionally, the dinner provides an opportunity for CTWOO to collaborate with partners and sponsors to address the needs of widows and ensure their voices are heard and represented in government policies. This report will provide an overview of the 2024 Valentine's Meet and Greet Dinner, highlighting its significance and impact on widows' empowerment and support.

On February 9, 2024, Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO) celebrated a significant event that took place at Safari Park Hotel's Jambo Meeting Room. The Widows 7th Pre-Valentine Celebration, marked a pivotal moment in the journey of widows' empowerment and financial inclusion. The event brought together widows from various counties, representatives from Partner Organizations, and Government Dignitaries to commemorate the occasion and launch the Come Together Widows Sacco. The event marked the highest number of participants since we started our valentine's celebrations back in 2018. More than 300 participants graced the event.

HIGHLIGHTS

Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization organized the event in different segments designed to engage, empower, and enlighten attendees;

Inspiration Session: Widow leaders shared their stories of resilience and empowerment, inspiring others with their journeys.

Empowerment Talks: Edycate Enterprises delivered talks on bakery skills, contributing to skill development among widows. Kenya Human Rights Commission and Groots Kenya provided insights into legal empowerment and grassroots initiatives, respectively, aimed at supporting widows.

Entertainment and Documentary Screening: The entertainment and a documentary showcasing the impactful work of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, underscoring our dedication to widows' welfare.

Speeches: Representatives from various organizations addressed the audience:

- Women Federation for World Peace Africa emphasized widows' inclusion in global peace initiatives.
- Anti-FGM Board highlighted the connection between Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and widowhood, advocating for the eradication of this harmful practice.
- Akothee Foundation shared its commitment to enhancing women's resilience, aligning with the broader goals of empowering widows.
- The founder and executive director of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization delivered a poignant speech, reflecting on the organization's journey and the significance of the Sacco launch.

Government Dignitaries' Speeches: The event concluded with speeches from Government dignitaries, reaffirming the Government's commitment to supporting widows and recognizing their contributions to society.

INSPIRATION SESSION

Widow Representative- Veronicah Nyawira



Veronicah Ngechu a widow representative sharing her widowhood experience

Veronicah, representing the widows, began her speech by sharing her 20-year widowhood journey, highlighting the transformative impact of Dr. Dianah Kamande and the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization. She described how their support enabled her to form a widows group, granting access to economic and legal empowerment opportunities. This partnership, she emphasized, has been instrumental in their journey, providing training in various areas, including financial stability and legal rights. Notably, the Women Enterprise Fund has significantly boosted their table banking initiatives, enabling them to access loans for business growth. Veronicah stressed the importance of financial stability in their self-sufficiency journey, with legal empowerment enabling them to understand their rights and access legal support when needed. She concluded by expressing gratitude to Hon. Esther Passaris for her donation of Jiko Kokos to the widows, symbolizing recognition and respect for their resilience and contributions to their communities.

Widow Chapter Leaders Representative-Prudence Kai (Kilifi County)



Prudence Kai giving her speech on behalf of widows

Prudence Kai, representing the Widow Chapter Leaders in Kenya, delivered an inspiring speech. She began by introducing herself as the founder of the Hope and Dreams community-based organization under the Come Together Widows and Orphans organization. She expressed gratitude to God, who has supported her for the past 15 years as a widow, and shared her widowhood journey, emphasizing the challenges of financial instability, social violations, and being excluded from decision-making processes. Prudence stressed the need to recognize widows as a vulnerable group in society and called for government reforms to protect them from violations. She highlighted the strength and resilience of widows and urged collective responsibility to protect and empower them. Prudence also emphasized the significant role of widows in the blue economy, particularly in the coastal region, and concluded by calling for collective responsibility, legislative reforms, and policies that favor widows and widowers in Kenya.

EMPOWERMENT TALKS

Groots Kenya- Grassroots Women Empowerment



Ms. Jane Wangari Mwangi giving her address during the Pre Valentines Dinner

Ms. Jane Wangari Mwangi, the Programs Officer representing Groots Kenya, commenced her speech with a brief introduction of the organization. She highlighted Groots Kenya as a national movement of grassroots, women-led, community-based organizations and self-help groups in Kenya, founded in 1995.She explained, their role in promoting women's voices and their personal and collective agency, challenging institutions and structures that disempower grassroots communities as agents of change. Jane mentioned that Groots Kenya provides technical and nontechnical support to the grassroots movement widows included, resulting in the recognition of many grassroots women as change agents at the local, national, regional, and international levels. She further noted their partnership with the Come Together Widows and Orphans organization in implementing the widows program in Baringo County, with widows from the area present at the event. She concluded by recognizing the Groots Kenya Representatives, who were widows from Tiati, Baringo County.

Office of the 1ST Lady- Economic Empowerment



Ms. Stella Chepng`eno giving her address during the Pre-Valentines Dinner

Ms. Stella Chepngeno, Director of Women Economic Empowerment in the Office of the First Lady, delivered a compelling address during the dinner. She started by acknowledging our organization's impactful work and also shed light on the MaMa Doing Good Program. She quoted that their current Program that is encompassing over 20,000 women, constitutes widows who are more than 30% of its participants, therefore standing a testament to the First Lady's commitment to women's empowerment. Ms. Chepngeno highlighted the remarkable resilience of women, particularly widows, emphasizing the importance of financial inclusion as a catalyst for economic empowerment. She stressed the significance of financial savings and investments in securing a sustainable future for widows. Moreover, she unveiled an upcoming financial inclusion program tailored for women, underlining the necessity of collaborative efforts for its success and promising continued support from the Office of the First Lady in achieving women's empowerment at large.

Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC)



Mr. Cornelius Oduor addressing the participants during the Pre-Valentines Dinner

During the Pre-Valentines dinner, Mr. Cornelius Oduor, the representative from the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) delivered a comprehensive address, expressing gratitude for the partnership with the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization. Mr.Cornelius highlighted the significant number of widows in Kenya facing gender-based violence due to economic instability, with KHRC receiving numerous cases of widows experiencing property disinheritance. Stressing the need for a robust framework to improve widows' economic well-being, the KHRC officer emphasized the importance of legal reforms, public awareness campaigns, and equal access to justice. The KHRC representative concluded by reaffirming the organization's commitment to working alongside the government and other stakeholders to create a more supportive environment for widows in Kenya.

SPEECHES

Women Federation for World Peace Africa- Dr.Susan W.Kone



Dr. Susan Chairperson, Women Federation for World peace presenting ambassadorial award to Dr. Dianah Kamande

During the Pre-valentines dinner event, Dr. Susan W. Kone, the esteemed Chairperson of the Women's Federation for World Peace Africa, delivered a speech that left impression on all attendees. Dr. Kone commenced the evening by presenting Dr. Dianah Kamande with the prestigious Ambassadorial Award (***Women Global Peace Ambassador***), as an acknowledgment of her remarkable efforts in supporting widows in Kenya. Dr. Kone's warm congratulations to Dr. Kamande highlighted the significant milestones achieved in empowering widows and fostering positive change within communities. Additionally, she took a moment to recognize a widow member of the Federation, symbolizing their collective commitment to advocating for widows worldwide. Through her inspiring address, Dr. Kone exemplified the Federation's dedication to promoting peace, empowerment, and inclusivity, setting the tone for an evening filled with camaraderie and shared purpose.

Anti-FGM Board Kenya- Ms. Ipato Surum



Ms. Ipato Surum giving her address during the Pre-Valentines dinner

During the dinner, Ms. Ipato Surum, Chairperson of the Anti-FGM Board, commenced her speech by acknowledging all attendees, starting with the high dignitaries present. She then proceeded to encourage the widows present, quoting from the Bible to underscore the idea that God is the husband of widows and father to the fatherless, emphasizing the divine support available to them. Ms. Surum stressed the importance of widows fulfilling their responsibilities within their families, as they have been entrusted with this role by God. Concluding her speech, she congratulated Dr. Dianah Kamande for her milestones achieved at the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization, as well as her contributions as an Independent Board member at the Anti-FGM Board. Lastly, she recognized the senior management team at the Anti-FGM Board in Kenya.

Founder Akothee Foundation- Ms. Esther Akoth



Madam Boss- Esther Akoth giving her speech during the Pre-valentines Dinner at Safari park Hotel

During her speech at the dinner, Ms. Esther Akoth, representing the Akothee Foundation, highlighted the theme of women's resilience irrespective of their social status. She began by introducing her daughters, emphasizing her own experience of single-handedly raising her children and illustrating the potential within women who believe in themselves. Ms. Akoth delved into the identity struggles widows face, questioning their self-perception in light of their accomplishments and advising on how to navigate relationships with those who have achieved more. She emphasized the importance of social capital over mere friendships that offer no real support. Ms. Akoth's speech underscored the significance of self-belief and strategic relationships in fostering resilience among women.

Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization- Dr. Dianah Kamande



Dr. Dianah Kamande addressing the participants during the Pre-Valentines dinner

Dr. Dianah Kamande, Founder and Executive Director of Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO), delivered a heartfelt speech during the dinner. She commenced by echoing a quote from the Former UN General Secretary Ban Ki-moon, **"*No woman should loose her Rights, States, Dignity or Property just because she lost her husband and vice-versa*"**, emphasizing the importance of preserving the rights, dignity, and property of widows/ers. She reflected on the universal experience of loss, stressing that widowhood is not a chosen path but one that anyone can find themselves on. Recounting her own journey of widowhood and loss, Dr. Dianah Kamande shared the inception story of the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO), born from personal tragedy and a desire to end the cycle of widow abuse. Over the past decade, CTWOO has evolved into a multifaceted organization offering ***Advocacy;** where she emphasised that the organization has successfully drafted position paper for widows that contains informed legislations to protect the rights of the widowed persons. ***Economic Empowerment**, skills training, and education programs for widows across Kenya. She mentioned that the organization has a table banking project that has more than 1.94 million revolving fund. Dr. Dianah Kamande highlighted the organization's partnerships with both local including Unclaimed Financial Assets, and International entities, including Global Fund for Widows, in empowering widows through the Economic Empowerment Program. She emphasized the need for legislative protections for widows and called for greater inclusion of widows and their families in Government Programs and benefits. Dr. Dianah Kamande concluded by inviting attendees to join in the upcoming celebration of the 9th International Widows Day in Vihiga County, encapsulating the spirit of resilience and solidarity that defines CTWOO's mission.

The President`s Advisor office of the Women Rights and Gender - Hon. Harriet Chiggai



Ms. Harriet Chiggai addressing the participants during the Pre-Valentines dinner

The President`s Advisor office of the Women Rights and Gender, Honorable Harriet Chiggai, commenced her speech by expressing gratitude for the invitation to the dinner. She shared her perspective on widows, seeing them not as symbols of grief and despair but as embodiments of happiness and joy. She emphasized the importance of widows gathering together to spread love and care among themselves. She highlighted her role in providing hope, emphasizing the strength and resilience of women standing together for common goals. She congratulated Dr. Dianah for her impactful work, born from her personal story, and acknowledged the courage it takes to share experiences and open hearts to one another. She commended CTWOO for their efforts in protecting widowed persons' rights and finding solutions to their challenges. She assured the audience that her office has specific plans to protect people's rights, including those of widows. She urged the government to advocate for widows' rights, especially in the

implementation of the Widows Charter as part of the bottom-up economic transformative agenda. She highlighted the importance of integrating the UN resolution on widowhood into the national framework and promised steadfast advocacy for widowed persons' protection policies. She emphasized on the collective determination to stand with widowed persons, amplify their voices, and ensure they receive the dignity, respect, and support they deserve. She praised the collaboration between CTWOO and WEF for providing widows with access to loans for economic empowerment. She concluded by expressing her interest in the launch of the Come Together Widows Sacco, which aims to enhance the economic sustainability of widows.

Nairobi County Woman Representative- Hon. Esther Passaris



Hon Muthoni Passaris addressing participants during the Pre-valentines dinner

Representing the office of Nairobi Woman Representative, Honourable Passaris, began her speech by congratulating Dr. Dianah, acknowledging her journey of pain and suffering which has served a purpose, and expressing her commitment to ensure that no woman goes through the same. She highlighted the government's strategies to improve the well-being of widows, emphasizing the need for more women in leadership positions in Nairobi. She pointed out the significant gender imbalance in elected leadership, with only 2 women among all elected leaders in the 17 constituencies and 3 women in the 85 wards of Nairobi. She stressed the importance of women's participation in government and highlighted her office's efforts in providing bursaries and grants to women's groups. She also mentioned her recent initiative to empower women in Nairobi by distributing Koko Jikos, including widows in the county. Honorable Passaris expressed her concern about healthcare accessibility, calling for collaborative action between elected leaders and individuals to ensure proper governance. She concluded by emphasizing the need for collective responsibility to promote growth and sustainability.

Registrar of Political Parties- Ms. Ann Nderitu, MBS



Ms. Ann Nderitu making her address at the 7th Pre-valentines dinner

The speech by Ann Nderitu MBS, Registrar of Political Parties, began with an acknowledgment of the guests present, followed by gratitude to CTWOO for the opportunity to attend the meeting. She clarified that her presence was due to her personal relationship with Dr. Dianah Kamande, who inspires her through her work with widows, a vulnerable community in the country. She emphasized her role as a fighter for human rights, including political rights, which aligns with her duties as the Registrar of Political Parties. She highlighted the interlinkage between her office and widows, particularly their participation in politics for policy-making on gender issues and the need to

participate in different political parties. She noted that many issues facing widows can only be solved by the government, which is elected through elections. She concluded with a Bible verse, emphasizing God's faithfulness to those who call upon Him.

State Department of Gender and Affirmative Action-Ps. Anna Wang`ombe



PS. Anna Wang`ombe giving her address during the Pre-Valentines Dinner

Ms. Anna Wang`ombe, the Ps state department of Gender and Affirmative Action, commenced her speech by acknowledging the presence of the audience. She emphasized the collective role of the Government in women's empowerment, highlighting various programs such as the Women Enterprise Fund and NGAAF, which provide economic support to women's groups. She mentioned the additional funding allocated last year to NGAAF for women's projects. The Government has also reserved 30% of procurement for women, youths, and Persons with Disabilities, demonstrating its commitment to affirmative action. Ms. Wang`ombe also noted the Anti-FGM Board's role in addressing human rights violations. She concluded by emphasizing the power of an empowered woman.

Ministry of Public Service, Performance and Delivery Management- Hon. Moses Kuria



Hon. Moses Kuria giving his address during the Pre-valentines Dinner

Moses Kuria, the Cabinet Secretary of the Ministry of Public Service, delivered a speech that began with acknowledging the presence of distinguished government dignitaries and highlighting the strength of widows as women who carry more strength than men. In his role, he expressed his closeness to women's issues, particularly those related to widows, and his support for the State Department of Gender and Affirmative Action. He outlined the major challenges facing widows in Kenya, particularly disinheritance, which he described as the most immoral form of violation. He emphasized the need for legal assistance for widows and announced plans for a national campaign for child protection in May 2024, which would also help protect widows' children from violence. He highlighted the significant voice that widows have in Kenya, with close to 8% of the population being widows, and concluded by mentioning the Affirmative Action Fund and the Hustler Funds, which have benefited 22,000,000 Kenyans. He stressed the importance of group dynamics among widows to access these funds more easily.

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CONCLUSION

The 7th Pre-Valentine Celebration and the launch of the Come Together Widows Sacco, held at Safari Park Hotel in Nairobi County, was a resounding success, symbolizing a pivotal moment in the journey of widows' empowerment and financial inclusion. The event, organized by the Come Together Widows and Orphans Organization (CTWOO), brought together over 300 participants, including widows from various counties, representatives from partner organizations, and government dignitaries. The celebration was marked by inspirational sessions, empowerment talks, entertainment, and speeches from esteemed guests, including representatives from Groots Kenya, the Office of the First Lady, the Kenya Human Rights Commission, and the Anti-FGM Board, among others. The event underscored the importance of recognizing and addressing the challenges faced by widows, advocating for their rights, and promoting action toward achieving equality and justice. The speeches and presentations highlighted the resilience and strength of widows, the need for comprehensive legal reforms, and the importance of financial inclusion and economic empowerment. The event concluded with a call for collective responsibility to support and empower widows, promising continued collaboration and advocacy from all stakeholders involved. The success of the event was a testament to the dedication and commitment of CTWOO and its partners in creating a more supportive environment for widows in Kenya.

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