

Lucknow Declaration on
Follow up of Issue & Policy Services & Deliverables for
Widows

26th November, 2013

Tagore Hall, Lucknow University

Guild for Service in Support with UN Women, under the project “Empowerment of widows and their Coalitions” organized a state level awareness workshop on 26th November, 2013, with the objective of spreading awareness at a state level with multiple stake holders- district officials, state officials, media, doctors, lawyers, psychologists, law enforcement agencies. The project’s focus is on ending Violence against women, especially excluded and marginalized women. It is a Rights Based Approach to provide the framework for empowerment of widows and bring about transition in existing welfare approach to rights based approach. The project shifts its focus from welfare or charity to empowerment of widows. This will enable widows to become ‘*agents of change*’ and access their entitlements with dignity..

The project aims at:

- Reducing the social ostracism of widows and create community level, rights based mechanisms that challenge the social norms that they are forced to abide by.
- To build solidarity, knowledge and leadership within the collective of Widows so that they can help each other and work together to solve their problems.
- To organize and educate widows and to bring them in mainstream of development, so that they can effectively advocate to get their priorities incorporated in relevant policies and programmes.

There is a constant increase in the number of widows of war, armed conflict and communal violence.

We do hereby agree to adopt the following declaration, to be known as the “**Lucknow Declaration on Follow up Action on Issue & Policy Services & Deliverables for widows.**”

With over 3 million widows in the country, more than 70% of them are living in U.P., absolute, devastating poverty, along with their children, some of them are not always elderly, who are cared by their adult children, they are a diverse and heterogenous group, that thus there is an urgent need for legislative and policy focus on creating an enabling environment for widows and their families. The numbers are rapidly increasing, due to, wars and armed conflicts, natural disasters, loss of livelihoods, the HIV/ AIDS pandemic and ethnic cleansing.

In spite of numerous landmark national and international instruments and national legislation towards the elimination of discrimination against widows, their lives are determined by patriarchy, discriminatory, however, interpretation of tradition, custom, religion and resultant practices, demonstrated through stereotyping, stigmatizing, humiliating, derogatory language and

attitude, taboos, exclusion, violence, deprivation and denial of inheritance rights, mobility, autonomy and agency and also by self denial.

Endorsing the recommendations and demands of widows of Uttar Pradesh, We Guild for Service in Support with UN Women, call upon the Uttar Pradesh state Government, Ministry of Women and Child Development Lucknow, to take the following action:-

We call upon the Government to:-

1. Make pension entitlements adequate easy, accessible and timely.
2. There should be universalization of Pension with an increased rate.
3. Strategies to improve awareness generation of schemes of Government of India.
4. Government should have a Human Rights approach instead of only welfare approach.
5. Photo identity cards that can be used as a proof for claiming their entitlements.
6. Identity and individuality of a woman as a human being must be recognized, free from her marital status, gender based discrimination, etc.
7. Correct identification of the beneficiaries is must so that the schemes and resources do not go unutilized or misused.
8. The UP Government should take the responsibility of providing jobs to educated and skilled widows towards self reliance.
9. The provision for proper jobs for widows undertaking vocational training at Ashrams should be made for their economic independence in order to live their lives with dignity and respect.
10. There should be a joint holding of property so that if one spouse dies the other gets the right and entitlement of the property without interference of the family.
11. Promotion of well functioning institutions is must which provide proper shelter, care and protection.
12. Women's issue is not a sectoral but an multi-sectoral matter and it cannot be countered individually and in a segregated manner, rather in an inter-departmental/ inter-sectoral manner.
13. Films and Media need to change the portrayal of woman as a helpless, weak and dependent figure and gave a positive portrayal.
14. State governments need to have special schemes and policies for empowering women and girls in their respective states, take provision of girls hostel in inter-colleges, etc especially in rural areas.

15. Government should formulate a National Policy for women.
16. Youth must be sensitized towards the gravity of the situation, in relation to discrimination against widows and violence against women.
17. We call upon schools and institutions of higher learning to ensure that youth are made aware of the discrimination and violence faced by women, including widows and work towards creating a safe and peaceful environment for all.

In conclusion, we believe that the movement for widows' rights is an important and intrinsic part of the overall women's movement in our country.

We believe that widows are the key to peace-making and peace-keeping. We believe that national sovereignty is not simply geographical – it comprises the well – being of the people within those geographical boundaries – of whom widows are an important part.

We end in the firm belief that our approach towards empowerment of widows should not be charity or welfare based but it should be based on empowerment perspective. Though we have various schemes and programmes available for widows empowerment, we need to change the mindset of people with patriarchal attitudes. Widowhood should not be the end of world for widows, who can and must live with respect, honour and dignity. They must be enabled to exercise their universal, inalienable human rights to happiness, joy, freedom, autonomy, empowerment, independence, identity and LIFE....