



## **EMERGENT AGENCY IN TIME OF COVID19**

---

### **DOCUMENTING THE EXPERIENCES OF RURAL WIDOW LEADERS IN SIAYA COUNTY.**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2020 Covid19 was globally declared a widow maker. More men are dying than women, yet widows remain adversely affected by the sin of omission. This pandemic has gone a long way to amplify the plight of widows<sup>1</sup>. But the lack of widow statistics in majority of developing countries, Kenya included, has exacerbated the inequalities widowed women undergo. They are still rarely mentioned on published reports<sup>2</sup> even as they occupy a significant percentage of the Kenya population. Before covid19, scanty data shows an estimated [8 million widows](#).

There has been growing [evidence](#) of their vulnerability in development and socio-economic spheres locally and globally. However, across a wide range of cultures in Kenya, widows continue to be subjected to retrogressive harmful traditional practices (HTPs) with normalized socio-economic inequalities visible at planting of crops, harvesting and/or social ceremonies like weddings etc. In Siaya, widows also face sexual cleansing and wife inheritance under the pretext of levirate marriage<sup>3</sup>. They undergo other forms of inequalities such as disinheritance, income insecurity, that leads to inadequate access and participation in political and leadership processes due to low education levels. They suffer poor access to credit and unspoken inhibitions by their widowhood status that remain ignored in gender and development programs in many spheres. Other gender issues include; intimate partner violence and exploitation, social stigma and neglect as result of the long standing cultural norms. The main objective of this research study funded by [Oxfam UK](#) was to identify emergent agencies among rural widows in Siaya County in the time of Covid19 and to document their experiences.

#### **1.1 Methodology.**

We employed the use of focused group discussion and in person cellphone interviews. We conducted key informant interviews (KII) with the widow leaders, male champions and community stakeholders in the community such as local area chief, and a married woman leader. This was aimed to document and analyze the emergent agency of rural widow leaders and views of the community stakeholders and duty bearers about their agency in the time of covid19.

### **1.1.1 Study design.**

This was an action oriented rapid assessment which was heavily qualitative in nature with nearly all questions being open-ended. This was mainly for the purpose of drawing out as many unique nuances from the respondents as possible. The primary data is therefore mainly presented in a qualitative manner with a few quantitative elements. Secondary data was useful in providing context for the study and providing quantitative elements of data.

### **1.1.2 Target population, sample size and sampling procedure.**

The research targeted rural widow leaders living in Siaya county. The research set out to reach 12 widow leaders with an eventual reach of 8 from 6 constituencies in Siaya County. The research also benefited from interviews with 4 key informants that included; a local area chief, a local pastor, a male champion and 2 community stakeholders one being a married woman.

### **1.1.3 Research instruments and data collection procedure**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed for all the categories of respondents. We developed a questionnaire to guide the interviews with the widow leaders and the key informants which were conducted through focused group discussions and cell phone interviews.

### **1.1.4 Study limitations.**

The assessment was conducted under arduous circumstances following directives by the government to contain movement in and out of select counties in Western Kenya in order to curb transmissions of the virus. Siaya was one of the counties in lockdown. Interviews had to be conducted physically and virtually. Virtual communication tools as a mode of data collection, became most feasible, however it limited the extent that some nuances may have been understood and recorded; especially those that would be picked through observation of the respondents and their environment.

Time was a major drawback to the research. One, some respondents were working on their farms or fishing during the period of the assessment. In this regard, some interviews were started off and completed late due to the pressing demands. The interviews would begin during the lunch break and would take 40-50mins due to language barrier since some were unable to speak in English or Swahili. It took long to translate what they were saying from their mother tongue to English. We also had to strike a balance between the interview and their daily household chores during the interview.

Second, the research had to be conducted fast and within a rapidly covid19 - changing environment. For instance, the statistics on covid19 deaths and reported cases of GBV would change rapidly every day from radio and media reports. One male champion respondent, died from Covid19 complications two weeks after the phone interview.

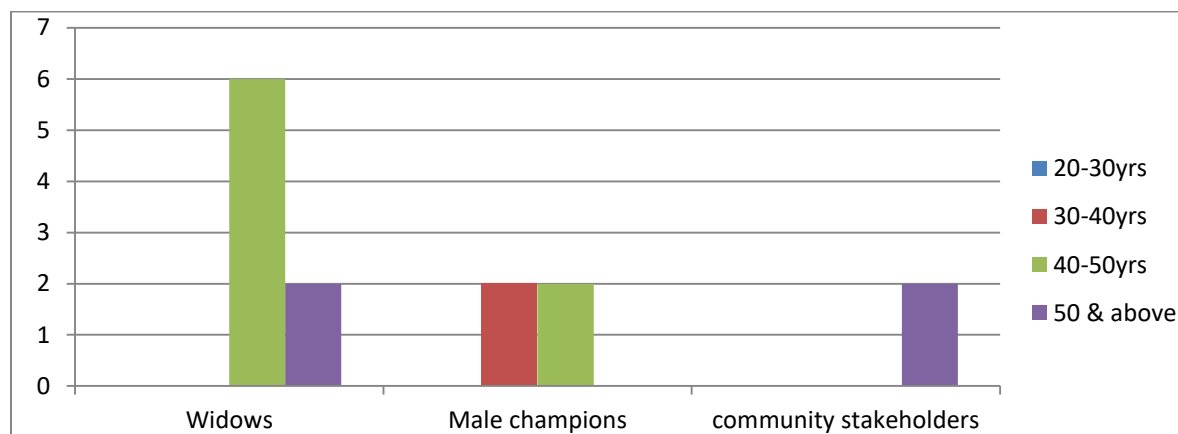
### 1.1.5 Data Analysis, Presentation and Interpretation

Phenomenology as a principle of science was adopted with the widows. The data collected during the study was recorded, presented and analyzed. The presentation of data was done in tabular and graphic presentations. Subsequently, an analysis and discussion of the findings was done immediately after the presentation.

Data for the study was collected using three instruments namely questionnaire, focus groups, and cell phone interviews. The instruments were administered to a population of 13 respondents drawn from the study area.

#### a) Ages of Respondents

This study sought to establish the ages of the respondents as a first step towards identifying their personal background. The findings in this regard are presented in **figure 1 below**:



**Table 2: Education Levels of the Respondents**

Academic level	widows	%age	Male champs	%age	Female leaders	%age	Total no. of respondents
Primary	5	38	1	8	0	0	6
Secondary	0	0	2	15	0	0	2
Tertiary	0	0	1	8	1	8	2
None	3	23	0	0	0	0	3
Total	8	61	4	31	1	8	13

Table 2 above shows the education levels of the respondents. According to the data, 38% of the respondents had acquired primary school level of education. In this category 5 widows and one male champion. Those with secondary education and above were only male champions (15%). None of the widow respondents had acquired tertiary education. Those who had no education were 3 widows constituting to 23% of the total sample.

**Table 2: Employment and Income of Widowed Persons**

Respondent	Formal Employment	Informal Employment
<b>Widows</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Male champions</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Community Stakeholders</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

**Figure 2: employment status of females**

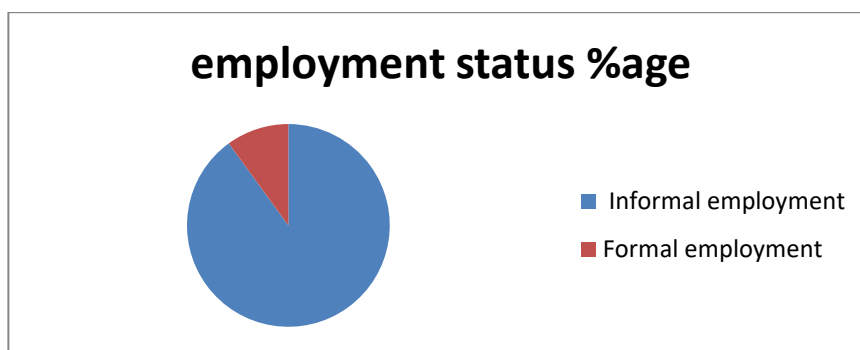


Figure 3 above shows that the majority of the widowed persons earn their livelihoods in the informal sector. 90% of the widows are self-employed and were found to characteristically lack any formal education or had only managed to reach primary school level of education.

## 1.2 Scope of the study.

[Siaya County](#) is one of the counties in the former Nyanza Province in the southwest part of Kenya. The total area of the county is approximately 2,496.1 km<sup>2</sup>. The county lies between latitude 0° 26' to 0° 18' north and longitude 33° 58' east and 34° 33' west. Siaya has been split up into six sub counties namely Rarieda, Alego, Gem, Ugenya , Bondo and Ugunja.

Siaya County is a leading region populated by locals adhering to [traditional Luo cultural practices](#) which include widow cleansing and wife inheritance. Among the Luo community in Kenya, according to tradition, after a woman's husband dies, she must

engage in sexual intercourse without a condom with a “cleanser,” often a non-relative of the deceased husband, to remove the impurity she is believed to have acquired from the death of her husband. With Covid19 being a widow maker, this and other forms of sexual gender based violence, which not only remain harmful but also deny widows, body autonomy, rights and dignity needed to be interrogated. This research boldly attempts to identify emergent agencies and document experiences of widow leaders in Siaya County in the time of Covid19.

## **2.FINDINGS.**

The interviews identified the emergent models that included survival tactics and the effect of Covid19 on rural widow’s leadership roles, livelihoods, access to health services and care to orphaned children. It also looked at the impact of Covid19 on widows’ mental health, change in social norms (if any), relationship with family members; needs of widows in the community; support from individuals, leaders and the state. It documented stories of individuals widows driving change and their allies. It has summarized plausible recommendations to state agencies, donors and non-governmental organizations in developing future interventions for widows and orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Siaya, as well as the uptake of the Corona virus vaccine. The findings have been clustered in 3 categories, namely:-

### **2.1 Grass Root Infrastructure**

### **2.2 Familiar Gender Inequalities**

### **2.3 Emergent Potential Zones**

#### **2.1 Grass Root Infrastructure**

Rural widows have seen life rapidly change in the last 2 decades, and have been largely treated as observers and not-active participants. In this category we document their emergent lived experiences and agency in Covid19 time.

##### **2.1.0 New Proximate Leadership**

Before Covid-19, majority of rural widows were living in poverty, and struggling with livelihoods (*mostly one dollar a week*). Some are changing this narrative even though, they continue to encounter many social and economic challenges which have been exacerbated by this pandemic. With lockdowns, the struggle to get by and provide for their children does not make their new role any easier. Even so the courageous [widow leaders](#) have become a new face of human rights defenders at the grass root level- who offer more than a shoulder to lean on.

One widow respondent interviewed, shared how she became the active citizen who responds and report gender violence. She narrated how she offers the psychosocial

support and counseling services to new widows and those struggling with socio-economic challenges. She is also a peer mentor and micro-credit educator who monitors widow groups - village banks and manages group dynamics and family conflicts as the only go-to person with lockdown and curfews to the widow network in Siaya. Her phone constantly rings and keeps interrupting the interview, a testament to how she is highly sought.

From the interviews, the widow leaders have made their widow groups safe spaces for moral support, but also a 'bank model' that offer them micro credit loans for income generating activities. This is the only economic resource for rural widows as the Covid19 - Delta variant ravages on with new lockdowns in the region, as depicted by the **testimony 1** below.

***“I applied for a loan to invest in my second-hand clothes trade business only for the state to sanction importation of second hand goods (mtumba). I used the loan to meet my household needs and take care of my seven children, leaving me with a debt and a dilemma. This year, I began to rear local chicken that I sell on Whatsapp. It’s not easy”*** – Mildred Oloo, Widow Leader.

Support roles have reversed - widow mothers now support their jobless children by sending farm produce to them in the city. In the past, employed – city dwellers sent monetary support to their widowed mothers in rural Siaya through the popular mobile money transfer M-pesa. They also got help from family members and well-wishers to meet their daily needs. As their working children became jobless due to Covid19 lockdowns, that financial assistance disappeared. And now they send their farm produce to their jobless children, some with family, as narrated in **testimony 2** below:-

***“My son had earlier travelled to Nairobi in search of employment where he luckily secured a job as a waiter in a restaurant., But after the outbreak of the pandemic he lost his job so I had to support him by sending him potatoes, bananas and maize”***, said Margaret, 54-year- old widow in Alego.

### 2.1.1 Stubborn Cultural Norms.

The 8 widow respondents pointed out, that burial procedures had been dismantled by the pandemic, but not the harmful traditional (widowhood) practices that still go unprosecuted. The culture prescribes that such intimate partner and gender violence cases be handled at the household level, ideally using *kangaroo* courts which are but a slap on the wrist to the perpetrators. However, few widows are speaking up and challenging the culturalization of widow cases. And this offers a ray of hope for the pursuit of justice at the remote grass root villages. **Testimony 3** hereunder:-

***“After the death of my “husband”, my son (a son to my brother- in- law) forced me to be his inherited wife. He threatened to sell my land and house to leave me homeless. This is a taboo in my culture, but the relatives forced me into submission because I’m a childless widow. He beats me. I have reported the case and it is now in court.”*** – Jane (37yrs) Widow.

This case is one of many, where a widow begins to search for elusive justice, as sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) is normalized to conform to cultural norms. The commonality of the lived experiences of the 8 widow respondents was recorded – more so on the unchanging cultural norms. From the testimonies, widows are also subjected to accusations and perceived as a lesser group of women, and Covid19 has made access to costly justice system, nearly impossible.

### 2.1.2 Discrimination to Male Champions

During this exercise we found men who step up to defend widow rights, regardless of patriarchy and inhibitive social norms. Two of the male champion - respondents were widowers and had been raised by widowed mothers. Strangely they experience discrimination, similar to widows, on the assumption that they are interfering with female-headed households. Seemingly, society prefers to see widows vulnerable and exposed to abuse. Our focused group discussion (FDG) revealed this social stigma came from their fellow men. But their resolve and dedication to fight and defend widows transcends these personal challenges, and spring from a history of their own past losses.

***“You are used to sitting with widows, what can you tell us?”*** – 52yr, Remarried widower, Male Champion narrated how his peers posed this question to him. Such stereotypes beget shame and silences, making widows more vulnerable in the Covid19 time.

### 2.1.3 Established New Allies

As a new category of social change makers at the grass roots level, empowered widow leaders are making it hard to be ignored, even when widow groups are largely not considered key players of the [civil society in Kenya](#). Even though that inhibits their resourcing and participation in many spheres, new allies are seeing their collective leadership in the Covid19 time. Widow leaders interviewed are challenging the vulnerability narrative as they come out to fight for their rights. Their bold actions have gained them new critics, as well as friends and new allies e.g. [the gender police](#), the church leadership(s) and some community stakeholders and elected leaders. Some of the established connections demand long-term partnership to be impactful with adequate resourcing, as one widow respondent lamented in the **testimony 4** below.

***“The police vehicle took me home from the outreach, but I slept hungry that day because I did not go to sell my cassava at the market. My children looked at me***

***funnily. We need a stipend as a widow leader for the work.***” – Mama Monica, widow leader, Alego.

The widow respondents lamented about the long church lockdown, being an important safe space for support and spiritual care. The church also provided humanitarian needs like food, clothes as well as becoming a mediator in gender abuse cases; an act of kindness that left many needy.

***“My church has been providing safe spaces for SGBV survivors to heal, however, unfortunately the church has been in lockdown. The widows are the most affected lot, especially by power imbalance between men and women, and worsened by interference from the extended family whose greed for property is shocking.”*** – Pastor Silas Orwa.

With more men dying of Covid19 complications than women, the new allies are beginning to see rural widows as the core fabric and valuable contributors to the society, and not merely as social burdens.

#### 2.1.4 New youth sub-culture

One male champion respondent, decried his fears for the youth with the long school closures. He narrated how teenage daughters of widows have become victims of sexual abuse in their search for food security and other essential needs i.e sanitary towels. With Child labor also on the rise; with some poor widows encourage their children to venture into work such as fishing, hawking, and manual labor in people’s farms. Some daughters from such deprived households join the sex trade in an attempt to contribute to their families. Involvement of young people in such social ills and economic activities hamper gains made in child protection and present the risk of being preyed on by pedophiles leading to increased school dropout rates. Teenage children are free, restless and lack control as widow mothers get consumed with livelihoods challenges; and with no distressing social activities in rural areas, they turn to early sex, alcohol and substance abuse. See **Testimony 5** below:-

***“There is a new trend where rural youth engage in early sex, alcohol and substance abuse. This sub – culture had long died. In my village a 16-year- old girl has 3 children. We have reverted to old days where girls were married off at the age of 12 or 14yrs. I’m very worried”.*** – Aluga, (75yrs) Male champion, Village Elder.

Covid19 is also creating a huge population of teenage - orphaned parents with little to no education. These children are likely to be more vulnerable than them in a recovering economy.



## 2.2 Familiar Gender Inequalities

Under this category we document well known external and internal factors that affect rural widows' personal and collective growth in the covid19 time.

### 2.2.0 Knowledge Poverty

The FDG ascertained that education plays a pivotal role in equipping both the widows and duty bearers alike with knowledge and linkages that aid in protecting human rights. Unfortunately, due to low literacy levels (*see Figure 1*), a high percentage of rural widows are not aware of their rights. They tolerate gender violence and unsure how to prevent and/or report them. 1 out of 8 widow respondents had reported a gender violence case in their lifetime, and all the 8 had been forced to sexual (widowhood) cleansing within 2yrs of widowhood.

There is a fear of knowledge poverty for the next future generation. One respondent narrated how she was the only support system to 3 orphans from a deceased son. And their hope for education would die if Covid19 killed her. She spoke of illiteracy challenges – like easily consuming and using any information received through their social groups or village grape vines without verification and interrogation.

***“I wish my father took me to school. I was left to herd goats when my teacher brother went to school. It’s easy to become a village gossip and uninformed fool, its even more sad when widowed. People stay away from you”.*** Margaret 54yrs, widow.

The desire that Covid19 information be translated to the local Luo language was expressed by the 8 widow respondents. They narrated how the villages were awash with [conspiracy theories](#) about the Corona virus that painted health services negatively. 3 out of the 8 respondents asserted that they would prefer not to visit hospitals as they may be wrongly diagnosed and quarantined, even for other health challenges. Another 2 suggested that the virus is fake and the government stood to gain from Covid19 funds through doctoring the infection data.

### 2.2.1 Cost of Justice.

5 widow respondents shared stories of unreported intimate partner violence perpetrated when they were younger widows, and their children had not reached 18yrs. In 3 of those instances the perpetrators were close relatives, guardians and or brothers-in-law. This revealed that rural widows are often abused by relatives or people known to them. The area chief stated most of these cases were mediated at family level with pressure from working relatives. The widow leaders said – the cases were difficult to report as movement was not easy due to Covid19 fears and lockdowns. ***“As a widow leader,***

***lack of transport money to chief's offices and police stations has made reporting the many cases I receive difficult*** ". Mildred, widow leader.

The known perpetrators roam freely and continue to threaten the victims, as the area chief confirmed during the FDG. It was clear justice was inaccessible to rural widows.

### 2.2.2 The Increased Cost of living

The pandemic has added a new set of basic needs to the already struggling widow headed households – from masks, improvised hand wash areas to soap. The washable cloths masks helped but families still share them. The covid19 essentials has added to that list of basic needs, and with ongoing inflation, compressed school calendar – the cost of living has become unbearable. 2 out of 8 widow respondents have 2 a meals day, 6 only have one a meal a day – at supper time.

They pointed out that there is little to no support existing in the villages. Only 1 of the 8 widow respondents was enrolled in the government [cash transfer program](#) for orphan support, the rest had not reached the mandatory age of 70yrs required to join program.

***"I feel tormented both mentally and physically. Life has turned upside down. Markets, churches are closed, no family or friends visiting. I earn less than a dollar a day working in people's farms. I get exhausted. When I get back home, my children need my full attention. I keep praying for the pandemic to go away". – Janet 35yrs*** widow leader.

One male champion narrated that he has many times witnessed individual widows having solo conversations as they walk away from his home when he has no food or fees support to them. He shared that, even his own mental health was in doubt, as the burden of polygamy of 2 wives and 8 children was unbearable.

## **2.3. Emergent Potential Zones**

This category highlights areas of great potential that with resourcing and empowerment, would greatly impact the lives of rural widows in Siaya.

### 2.3.1 Network and WIFI Provision Investments

From our interviews and interactions, we learnt that burials are less attended by crowds of mourners – as they used to in the past, and the community no longer demands for elaborate and expensive funerals in Siaya. Reduced number of mourners at burials has changed the [death care industry](#) – killing some businesses and jobs. It has also created online jobs and demand for it– like digital talent, e-commerce, rural digital schools etc. Even the existing cyber cafes are being forced to upgrade and include

social media management classes as the world turns digital in all areas, including government services.

***"My catering business went down after the ban on social gatherings - with burials taking place in less than 72 hours. Lavish seven-day - funeral ceremonies are gone, people no longer attend or eat at funerals. The new rules have killed my catering business."*** - Ruth, 45yr, widow leader, Sikalame.

Many such widows will need to find new businesses for themselves and the youth who work for them. Upon attending 2 widows' burials, we noticed a new culture – [Virtual burials](#) that allows mourners to participate remotely in the actual burial ceremony. Funeral webcasting is new and getting popular, away from the recorded videos of the past. Maybe this will lead rural electrification, network and WIFI provision investments in rural Siaya.

***"Somewhat it brings closure to distant family and relatives who do not get to attend burials of their kin due to Covid19 restrictions and travel challenges at this time. If this disease kills me, my daughter in America can participate in burying me in this internet way. I welcome the idea"***, Mama Awino, 62yr old widow.

### 2.3.2 Widow's Economic Empowerment

We asked widow respondents if any support or intervention had reached them during this pandemic. All the 8 widow respondents interviewed were finding new ways of surviving i.e working in people's farms, foraging wild vegetables etc. The rural widows present a huge untapped space for innovation and research, as no other category of women have similar experience to rural widows – being survivors of 2 pandemics – HIV and now Covid19. Two outcomes can be achieved with targeted economic empowerment programs to them - reduce poverty and acquire gender equality.

The globally claimed covid19 response funds had not reached them or impacted them in any way. The 3<sup>rd</sup> lockdown was even more strenuous and the struggle for livelihoods was a real concern when we conducted the follow up interviews. None of the 8 was aware of any government intervention or nonprofit targeting them for any support or intervention. This revealed that 'leave no one behind' is merely a slogan in rural Siaya.

***"Without a spousal support, with children to provide and care for in this pandemic, it is not easy for them. The government should find ways to support widows of all ages as a special group of women"***. – Pstr. Silas Orwa.

## 3.0 OBSERVATIONS

After the 6 months, we made the following observations:-

- The need to involve community stakeholders in Covid19 sensitization and awareness campaigns as a strategy to dispel Covid19 myths.
- The need for basic digital classes targeting rural widows, to improve widow's capability and to narrow the knowledge gap, even as the most of Government's services get digitized. This will narrow the digital inequalities.
- The need to outlaw and criminalize harmful traditional (widowhood) practices to and review some of the existing laws, like succession act, marriage laws whose offices are urban-centred – yet disinheritance, like land is local.
- Rural widows lack social capital and the financial means to claim their rights, and there is no system or intervention in place to provide knowledge or financial support, these are insufficient and often ineffective.

#### **4.0 UNINTENDED OUTCOMES**

Through this study, Rona partnered with the Gender desk police – Siaya, through their [Policare program](#) that's aimed to prevent and respond to gender based violence in Siaya County. The law enforcement officers that largely gained from this collaboration - in understanding the cultural norms as a major root cause of gender violence. The widows and the community have gained traction by the improved response and direct linkages to the relevant duty bearers in the police department in Siaya.

#### **5.0 CONCLUSION.**

The sting of Covid-19 is felt acutely by rural widows in Siaya County with many poor households becoming economically stretched with increased deaths and inability to take care of their families. There is a looming orphan crisis, with children already orphaned by HIV losing their elderly care givers who are dying from Covid19.

The study established that rural widows are faced with financial, psychological and social problems mainly emanating from the status of widowhood but also exacerbated by the spread of Covid-19. All the respondents indicated that since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, they have been faced with loss of income, unchanging cultural norms, and lack of support for themselves and their children.

While HIV slightly transformed the levirate marriages where a widow is inherited by male relatives of the deceased husband, Covid-19 bears difficulties similar to widowhood. Mental stress, anxiety, and loneliness are some of the psychological effects caused by Covid19, so alike to widowhood. Living in poverty as well as the socio-cultural dynamics in a deprived and patriarchal community has made rural widows more vulnerable, in the same way HIV impacted them.

The Covid19 restrictions coupled by the burdens of single parenthood has increased the sense of frustration with a dual effect. On one hand, it propels the affected individuals to become innovative in finding means of survival. The study shows some respondents engaging in new businesses to raise money to feed their families. One is now selling chickens through WhatsApp. On the other hand, it has brought new challenges requiring new resilience from them.

Lastly, Covid19 has revealed the need to recognize widows as a social group needing researching, resourcing and reporting to create a new body of evidence away from victimhood. The need for sustainable interventions, improved opportunities and new networks for this category of grass roots women holding their communities together through 2 pandemics – HIV and Covid19 is huge. There is also need to empower rural widows with mechanisms and tools to access justice and gain new skills that will improve their livelihoods. Given a chance, rural widows desire to participate in decision making processes, and in all the socio economic spheres.

## **5. REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup>UN Women, “Explainer: What you should know about widowhood”, International Widow’s day, 2021, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2021/6/explainer-what-you-should-know-about-widowhood>

<sup>2</sup>Risto Harma, The World Widows Report (2015) “a critical issue for the sustainable development goals”, produced by **The Loomba Foundation**, <https://www.theloombafoundation.org/sites/default/files/2019-06/WWR.pdf>

<sup>3</sup>Yuya Kudo, (2017) “Why Is the Practice of Levirate Marriage Disappearing in Africa? HIV/AIDS as an Agent of Institutional Change”, Interim Report for Female Empowerment and Social Institution, IDE-JETRO, FY 2016, [https://www.ide.go.jp/library/Japanese/Publish/Reports/InterimReport/2016/pdf/B16\\_ch01.pdf](https://www.ide.go.jp/library/Japanese/Publish/Reports/InterimReport/2016/pdf/B16_ch01.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>Adetunji, et al. (1999) “Rising Proportions of Young Widows and the AIDS Epidemic in Africa.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association”, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25780961>

<sup>5</sup>World Health Organization. New who estimates: up to 190 000 people could die of COVID-19 in Africa if not controlled. WHO Africa, 2020. Available: <https://www.afro.who.int/news/new-who-estimates-190-000-people-could-die-covid-19-africa-if-not-controlled>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

COVID19 – Corona Virus Disease (2019)

HTPs – Harmful Traditional Practices

GBV – Gender Based Violence

POLICARE - has been coined from two English words: “POLICE” and “CARES”.

**APPENDIX.**

**Questionnaire - Annex1**

FORM NUMBER   
PLACE OF RESIDENCE

**Introduction**

Thank you all for taking the time to be with us today. My name is..... and I work

With ..... My role is to facilitate/moderate this interview/Focus group discussion. I will be supported by.....and she will be in charge of taking notes and recording the conversations for purposes of report writing only. The purpose of this research is to document and share the story and experience of rural widow leaders with a goal of understanding the important and potentially the impact of COVID-19 and the intervention measures adopted by widows in your community, also for RONA to understand and know howto support you in the future.

**Privacy and Confidentiality**

Everything that shall be discussed here shall be kept private and confidential and hence we encourage you to be open. No names shall be mentioned or referred to in the report.

**Consent**

For this reason, therefore, we would like your consent to undertake this interview/FGD that you have completely understood the purpose of the Interview/FGD and you have chosen to participate feely without being forced or coerced.

**Section A: Personal Information**

1. a) Age of the respondent. [Please tick in the box ]  
[20-30]  [30-40]  [40-50]  50 and above   
b) Age when widowed?
2. Education [Please tick in the box ]  
Formal  Informal
3. WORK. [Please tick in the box ]

Employed  Self-employed

- a) What is your Area of work?
- b) How has your income changed since covid?

### **Section B**

4. What other areas of your life have been affected by covid-19?
  - a) Work
  - b) health /mental
  - c) Care of Orphans and Vulnerable children [OVC]

### **SECTION C: Relationship.**

5. [a] Are you in a relationship?  
Yes  No   
[b] If yes, how has covid-19 impacted your relationship?  
c) If no, how has this affected your mental health?
6. a) Have you know gender based violence (sexual)  
Yes  No   
b) If yes. Explain.  
c) Have you reported any gender based violence?
7. What life changes have you made during the pandemic?
8. [a]Are you receiving any support during covid ?  
Yes  No   
[b]If yes, mention them and what stands out about their support?
9. What are your needs during/after covid?
10. How can those needs be met?
- 11. Have you received covid-19 vaccine?**