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Global Fund for Widows 14th Annual Gala raises record funds to support widows *Economically Empowering One of the Most Vulnerable Groups in the World Today* *– Widows and Single Mothers in the Developing World*

NEW YORK, New York (November 20, 2022) – Over 250 people gathered on Thursday, November 10 at the Loeb Boathouse in Central Park at the 14th annual Global Fund for Widows (GFW) Gala. This year's honorees were **Madam Ayoke Muhammed**, *Former First Lady of Nigeria*; **His Excellency Ambassador Tajjani Muhammad-Banda**, *Permanent Representative of the Mission of Nigeria to the United Nations*; **Mr. Lekan Akinyanmi**, *CEO, Lekoil Nigeria Limited and Chairman, Cambridge Growth Partners*; Ms. **Rhodah Nyondo**, *Beneficiary, survivor & widow* and Special Guest; and **Ms. Zain Asher**, *Anchor, CNN International, Master of Ceremonies*. Each of these distinguished honorees is an advocate for widow rights, working to improve gender equality and poverty.

Moved by the powerful testimonies of GFW's beneficiaries and the statements by the honorees, GFW raised record funds, resulting in over a million dollars made available to improve the lives of 6,250 widows and their 31,250 children through the construction of 250 proprietary widows and saving loans associations.

"While we have empowered almost 87,000 widows and their children, we have so much more work to do. With 1000 microbanks on the waitlist, representing over 25,000 additional widows, and over 125,000 of their children, the demand for Global Fund for Widows programming has never been higher." - **Zain Asher**, *Anchor, CNN International*

"In Nigeria alone, the official reported number of widows is about 3.5 million. However, our research estimates the true number to be closer to 20 million. We have to address this issue. For me, it goes beyond just making a donation, it's about a committed and sustained effort to empower widows all over the world and transform their lives. This is why I stand with GFW." - **Lekan Akinyanmi**, *CEO, Lekoil Nigeria Limited and Chairman, Cambridge Growth Partners*

GFW is the world's largest non-profit organization economically empowering one of the most vulnerable groups in the world today, widows and single mothers in the developing world. GFW has been an innovator by building "micro-banks" called Widows' Savings and Loan Associations or WISALAs. Owned and operated by the widows themselves, these WISALA "micro-banks" provide them with a permanent source of capital from which they can launch micro-businesses. With borrowings from their banks, widows are launching businesses, ranging from vegetable stands to small groceries, to poultry farms,

and even bakeries. They are also pooling capital and launching computer centers, schools, buying farms, and even buying apartments and becoming landlords.

GFW has empowered over 25,500 widows and helped over 57,000 of their children across Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Nigeria, Cameroon, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and India.

“The plight of widows is one of the most underestimated human rights violations being experienced by women globally,” said Heather Ibrahim-Leathers. “Systemic disinheritance, discrimination and harmful practices endured by widows not only result in the direct link between widowhood and poverty, but widowhood is also directly linked to hunger, poor health, poor education of widows’ children, human trafficking, extremist indoctrination/recruitment, child marriage, and the unconscionable phenomenon of the child widow.”

“Our innovative financial inclusion programming centers on the simple tenet of the Golden Rule: She who has the gold, makes the rules,” Heather Ibrahim-Leathers.

It is with great gratitude that we acknowledge all of the donors and sponsors who have generously supported the Global Fund for Widows. With a special thank you to our Media Partner, AllAfrica.com.

For more information about Global Fund For Widows <https://www.globalfundforwidows.org/>

About the Global Fund for Widows

[Global Fund for Widows](#) (GFW) is the world’s largest international non-profit organization dedicated to economically empowering widows. Founded in 2008 by [Heather Ibrahim-Leathers](#) upon the passing of her grandmother as a young widow in rural Egypt, GFW is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization based in New York City. We dedicate our work on both the public policy front as well as financial inclusion programs for widows on the ground. We have impacted 25,500 widows in Africa, the Middle East, and India, as well as 57,000 of their children through our financial inclusion programs. Additionally, GFW leverages its success in the field to mainstream widowhood as a human rights issue at the United Nations, US Congress, and the UK’s House of Lords.

Our microbanks, otherwise known as [WISALAs](#) (Widows’ Savings and Loan Associations), have been extremely well-received by both sovereign governments (Kenya, Egypt, Sierra Leone, Malawi, and Liberia), as well as the disenfranchised women and families whom we support.

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