

GFA World Cites Growing Tragedy of COVID 'Widow-Maker'

GFA - Gospel for Asia Tuesday, June 29th, 2021

TOOWOOMBA, QLD — COVID-19 is making a heart-wrenching situation even worse for abused and outcast widows around the world, says a new report for International Widows Day, June 23, an annual awareness event.

The pandemic is a widow-maker for thousands of the world's most vulnerable women, causing them an "unbearable level" of sorrow and suffering, says the report — [Coronavirus Intensifies Hardships for Widows](#) — by Australian-based humanitarian agency GFA World (www.gfaau.org).

'Our Hearts Go Out'

"The pandemic is crushing widows around the globe, and our hearts go out to each and every one of them, wherever they live," said Metropolitan K.P. Yohannan, founder of GFA World, an organisation that helps thousands of widows in desperate circumstances — providing food, sewing machines to help them generate income, vocational training, and other aid.

"Our goal is to bring them comfort, encouragement, and God's love," said Bishop Daniel Punnose. "We want them to know that God is always with them and loves them."

The report — which also highlights the heartache and grieving of young "COVID widows" in America — describes the tragic ordeal widows are facing in different parts of the world where they're viewed as objects of shame and treated with contempt. The pandemic, the report says, is "multiplying" their pain.

Shocking examples include:

- In Nigeria, widows were locked in a room with their husbands' corpses and forced to shave their own heads — a ritual of shame.
- In Afghanistan, outcast widows established their own "colony" on a hillside above a cemetery just outside the capital, Kabul, where they live in mud homes they've built themselves, disowned by their families and excluded from mainstream life.
- In Kenya, during COVID quarantine, there were reports of widows being driven out of their homes by their in-laws who considered them to be "excess burden."

Globally, the United Nations warns, the pandemic "is likely leaving tens of thousands of women newly widowed" and exposed to rejection and mistreatment by their families and neighbours. Rampant hunger fueled by lockdowns and soaring unemployment makes life even harder for widows totally dependent on menial work or begging to survive.

In some countries in Asia and Africa, new widows have barely buried or cremated their husband before someone tries to take their home, land or possessions, citing loss of property rights after the husband dies.

For the latest information on GFA World's COVID-19 relief efforts,

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PHOTO CUTLINE: TRAGEDY OF COVID 'WIDOW-MAKER' ON INTERNATIONAL WIDOWS DAY: COVID-19 is making a heart wrenching situation even worse for abused and outcast widows around the world, says a new report for International Widows Day, June 23. The COVID pandemic is a widow-maker for thousands of the world's most vulnerable women, causing them an "unbearable level" of sorrow and suffering, says the report — **Coronavirus Intensifies Hardships for Widows** — by GFA World (www.gfaau.org).

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GFA World (www.gfaau.org) is a leading faith-based global mission agency, helping national workers bring vital assistance and spiritual hope to millions across the world, especially in Asia and Africa, and sharing the love of God. In GFA World's latest yearly report, this included thousands of community development projects that benefit downtrodden families and their children, free medical camps conducted in more than 1,200 villages and remote communities, over 4,800 clean water wells drilled, over 12,000 water filters installed, income-generating Christmas gifts for more than 260,000 needy families, and teaching providing hope and encouragement available in 110 languages in 14 nations through radio ministry. GFA World has launched programs in Africa, starting with compassion projects in Rwanda. For all the latest news, visit our Press Room at <https://gfanews.org/news/>.

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