

Widows for Peace through Democracy (WPD) <https://www.widowsforpeace.org/> calls upon the UN Peacekeeping Commission to urgently ensure that conflict widows and half widows are represented and have a seat at peacebuilding tables in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325. Widows must be included in all processes, dialogues and meetings which are focused on the end of conflicts and achieving sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Wars and armed conflicts have led to a huge increase in the numbers of widows of all ages globally (50% of women in Eastern Congo are widows). In addition, there is a proliferation of half widows, women whose husbands are missing, leaving them in a legal, social and cultural limbo and unable to have funerals that bring closure. In Sri Lanka there are 40,00 half widows

In addition to the trauma of loss, conflict widows are extremely vulnerable to rape and sexual violence, to harmful traditional practices, family violence or ostracism, and vulnerable to forced migration and trafficking. It can be a key driver of withdrawing daughters from school and forcing them into early marriage and into the hands of traffickers.

Conflict widows and half widows are vulnerable to economic hardship, poverty, illness and lack of access to land and legal rights. This is often worse for widows who are refugees or in IDPs because they are unable to produce the death certificates necessary to access the social protection they are entitled to.

WPDs partner organisations (RONA in Kenya, IFISDI in Congo, and the National Council of Women Ukraine) report that widows, with their firsthand experience of loss and resilience, bring a unique perspective to peacebuilding. Widows can act as early warners of impending conflict because of their deep knowledge of their community. Collaboration with human rights organizations can enhance their impact, promoting a more inclusive and effective peacebuilding approach and can empower widows to advocate for peace and justice, ensuring a stronger and united front in conflict resolution efforts.

All countries call for international support to build widows organisations so that widows can be counted, listened to and given proper training so that they can fully contribute to policies that can bring a lasting peace. They also call for widows to be trained in the skills necessary to access the technology and information needed to understand their rights in post-conflict situations

In Sri Lanka after long periods of conflict, widow survivors have come together to testify and to form networks for economic opportunities and psychosocial support.

In Ukraine, widows have called for sperm banks to be set up as part of peacebuilding initiatives. Owing to small family sizes in Ukraine conflict widows would like the opportunity to continue the relationship they had with their husband by having his child. This can also help in the recovery and grieving process.

Including conflict widows, half widows and other widows at the peacekeeping table recognises the vital part that widows of all ages can play in helping to rebuild and transform societies that have been devastated by war and conflict.