

## **International Widows Day: Not Leaving Widows Behind**

### ***Empowering Lives with Opportunity and Dignity***

**23 June 2025, New Delhi-** To mark International Widows Day 2025, the CII Foundation in partnership with The Loomba Foundation, hosted a program in Delhi. The program brought together voices from international organisations, the Army Women's Welfare Association, civil society, widows, and young adults who have experienced personal loss to spotlight the challenges widows face and the collective responsibility to ensure dignity, inclusion, and opportunity for them.

This program builds on the momentum of the Her Skill, Her Future initiative, launched earlier this year by the CII Foundation and The Loomba Foundation in partnership with the Women's Collective Forum, which aims to equip 1,00,000 widows with livelihood skills and support systems.

Speaking of the challenges, especially the systemic barriers widows face, Ms. Smriti Irani, Vice President, The Loomba Foundation, Former Union Cabinet Minister, Government of India and Chairperson and Founder, Alliance for Global Good: Gender Equity & Equality, said, "From succession rights to mental well-being, widows deserve legal clarity, systemic support, and public recognition."

Addressing the gathering, Mrs. Sunita Dwivedi, President, Army Women's Welfare Association (AWWA), applauded the widows for their strength and resilience and said "Rising again after life's broken pieces is something we all can learn from our brave widow sisters. You are our role models—courageous, resilient, and full of grace." She also shared initiatives by AWAA to help widows and their dependents lead a life of dignity.

Highlighting the universal nature of the issues that widows face, Ms. Sally Taylor, Minister Counsellor - Development, Climate, Science and Technology at the British High Commission, emphasized the importance of data to ensure an equitable system that would benefit widows. "When we have gender-disaggregated data, we can create policies that are inclusive, evidence-based, and truly equitable. This is essential if we are to leave no one behind."

In deeply personal reflections, Ms Kanta Singh, Deputy Country Representative, UN Women India, and Ms Chahavi Moodgal, Founding CEO, IIMA Endowment Fund and Advisor to the IIM Calcutta Endowment shared their lived experiences of losing their fathers and witnessing the social and other barriers their mothers struggled with. They emphasized the need for building systems and policies that recognise the unique realities of widows to help them lead a life of dignity.

Dr Sandeep Marwah, Founder-President of the Asian Academy of Film and Television and Noida Film City spoke of the need for equity and emphasized the role of media in advancing the voices of widows, while offering his media platforms to amplify the voices.

A poignant highlight of the program was the "Voices of Resilience: She Rises" segment where widows and young adults who had lost their fathers shared personal narratives of loss, stigma, survival, and newfound hope.

To honour their courage and strength, widows and young adults who had suffered losses were felicitated at the program.

The program concluded with a call to action for policymakers, institutions, and citizens to actively champion the rights and inclusion of widows and build solidarity around this often-overlooked issue.

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