

# Global Fund for Widows' 16th Annual Gala: Corporate, Private, and Individual Supporters Unite for Widows' Rights

*H.E. Graça Machel, H.E. Hilda Suka-Mafudze, and Kisioki Moitiko were honored for advancing economic opportunity and rights for widows and women.*

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*H.E. Graça Machel, former First Lady of South Africa and of Mozambique*

Widows' (GFW) 16th Annual Gala, held on Thursday, November 14 at New York City's Edison Ballroom, broke GFW's own fundraising records and garnered significant donor commitments to finance entrepreneurship and advocacy programs for widows living in poverty.

Also at the gala, special guest H.E. Graça Machel announced a partnership between the Graça Machel Trust and GFW to extend GFW's financial inclusion model, Widows Savings and Loans Associations (WISALAs), to

widows in Mozambique. African Union Ambassador H.E. Hilda Suka-Mafudze, and Kisioki Moitiko, Director of the International Collaborative also spoke about their activities and advocacy for widows living in poverty.

The event brought together representatives of large financial institutions and international non-profits, as well as GFW's funders and supporters. Over the course of the evening, attendees had the opportunity to create and reinforce partnerships to support widows to empower themselves around the world through economic opportunity and global advocacy.

This year's gala welcomed speakers that emphasized the need to champion the rights of widows, and highlighted GFW's efforts to end poverty among widows. Laura Osman, a GFW Board Member, illustrated GFW's impact saying, “The truth is, the widows have multiplied their initial capital by ten in 3 years. That means, for every bank we launch with \$2,500, in 3 years, the bank has grown to around \$25,000. That is transformative financing for development.”

Upon announcing the partnership between her trust and GFW, H.E. Graça Machel, former First Lady of South Africa and of Mozambique, renowned humanitarian, and Nelson Mandela's widow said “There is rarely a more damaging status than to be invisible in the eyes of your society. The

work of GFW is designed to ensure that widows and their children are heard and seen and can live healthy, stable, and dignified lives.”

GFW and the Graça Machel Trust, H.E. Ms Machel explained, will run a WISALA pilot that brings together local best practices, GFW's expertise and the Trust's networks to widows in Mozambique.

H.E. Hilda Suka-Mafudze, African Union Ambassador to the United States, said as she received GFW's Advocate of the Year Award, “the African Union is well-positioned to elevate the status of widows and ensure they are not left behind.” She also reiterated the African Union's commitment to human rights, social justice, and inclusive development in Africa.

Recipient of GFW's Financial Inclusion Award, Kisioki Moitiko, Director of International Collaborative, GFW's partner in Tanzania outlined the success of WISALAs in his region. He explained that with WISALAs “they [widows] have broken the glass ceiling. They are building new homes, and they are so empowered that they have run for our district council. They are now important leaders in my community.”

Heather Ibrahim-Leathers, founder of GFW, expressed her appreciation to the organization's corporate sponsors and patrons, government partners including the African Union, and strategic partners such as the UN Federal Credit Union Foundation.

The funds raised during the evening will support GFW's initiatives with widows in low-income communities in Egypt, Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique.

#### About Global Fund for Widows

GFW is challenging gender-based violence against 130 million widows worldwide. Through GFW, 30,418 widows supporting 74,665 children have become economically sufficient as of June 2024, and governments, the UN and the Association of Arab States have enacted policy changes in favor of widows.

GFW's primary intervention is building sustainable livelihoods through an award-winning financial inclusion model - Widows Savings and Loans Associations (WISALAs). WISALAs are micro-banks that provide a pathway to sustainable incomes to widows in poverty and which lead to a ten times increase in monthly income within a year.

GFW also advocates with governments and intergovernmental bodies to change the frameworks that allow violence against widows. Our advocacy at the UN resulted in the unanimous adoption of the UNGA Resolution on Widowhood in 2022.

For additional material on GFW's gala, mission, and activities, visit: [GFW's website](#)

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