

Good afternoon everyone,

My name is Ruth Ebubechukwu, one of the youth representatives for WiDO from Lehigh University.

I am honored to speak about the Widow Development Organization (WiDO), an organization committed to uplifting widows in Nigeria and empowering them to lead dignified and independent lives.

Many widows in Nigeria face stigma, economic hardship, and social exclusion. Some lose their homes, are denied inheritance rights, or struggle to support their children. Without financial independence or legal protection, their futures remain uncertain.

WiDO works to raise awareness, advocate for widows' rights, and provide economic and social support through:

- Small business support and skills training, including oil mills and loan schemes, to help widows achieve financial stability.
- Advocacy to ensure widows reclaim their homes and rights.
- Educational support, offering scholarships to widows and their children.
- Partnerships with global organizations like the Global Fund for Widows and UNDP, expanding resources and impact.

An inspiring achievement is the establishment of a local oil mill and water systems through the Global Fund for Widows. This initiative has significantly reduced labor-intensive work, improved economic independence, and enhanced community well-being. The introduction of a semi-automated oil mill, which is now being used by community members, has not only empowered widows, who were previously marginalized and dehumanized, but also elevated them to positions of authority and respect. Additionally, the income generated from the mill supports widows and their families, while also enabling them to contribute to broader community development initiatives. As a result, widows in the community now feel healthier, respected, and empowered.

The work is far from over! Moving forward, WiDO aims to expand skill acquisition programs, increase funding for widow-led enterprises, and deepen partnerships with global organizations to advocate for widows' rights on a larger scale.

Together, we can continue changing lives, breaking barriers, and giving widows the opportunities they deserve. Thank you!