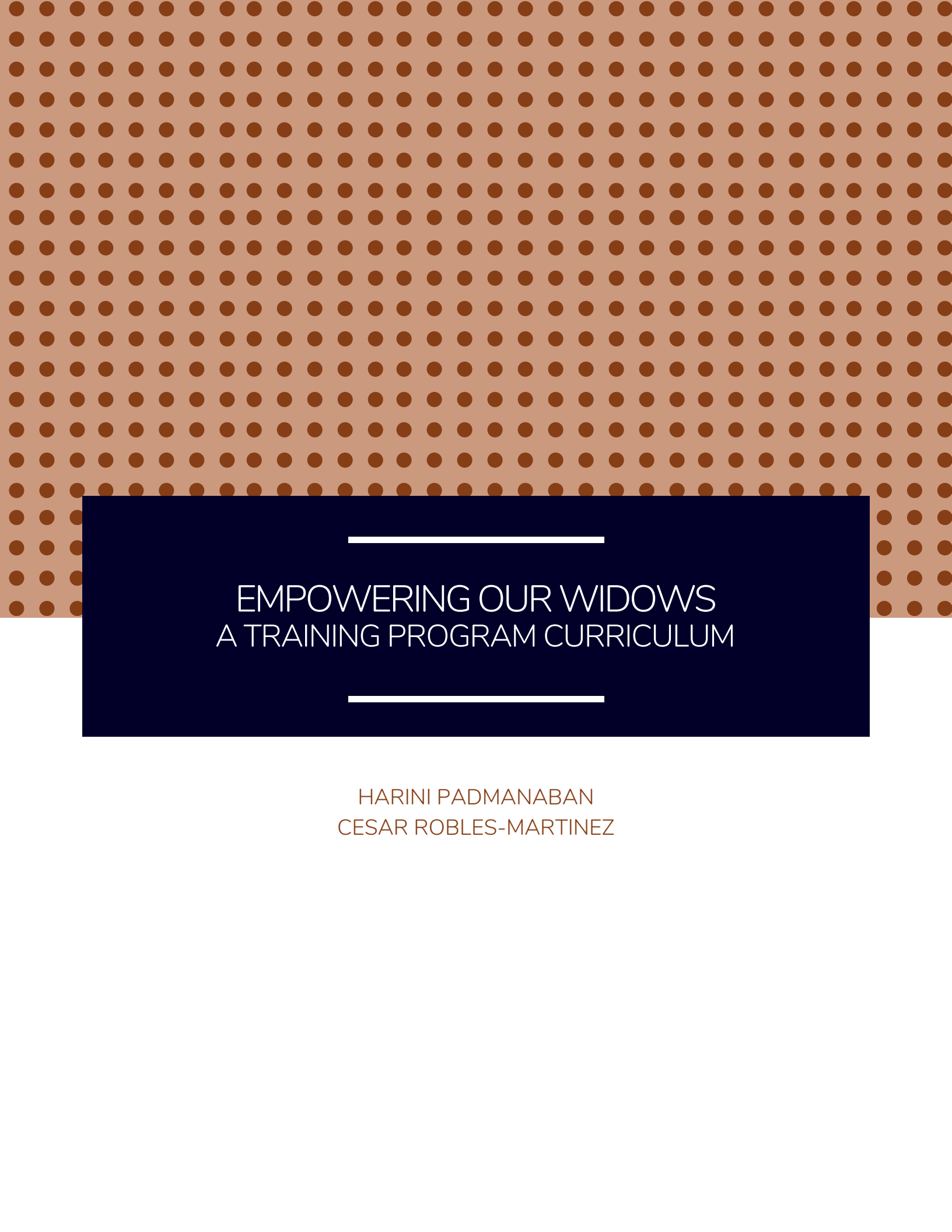




EMPOWERING OUR WIDOWS A TRAINING PROGRAM CURRICULUM

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health Issue: There are approximately 250 million women around the world who have been widowed (Adebayo, 2020). In many cultures, there are traditions and practices related to widowhood. In several African countries in particular, many communities practice widow cleansing rituals and there are traditions regarding inheritance of widows.

Our team recognizes and appreciates that cultural traditions around the world are best understood by those who practice them, and should be viewed with an open mind and mindset of cultural humility. However, studies conducted about these rituals, as well as personal anecdotes from women who have experienced these rituals, have demonstrated the harmful effects of some of these traditions. Rituals may include: (i) Having to engage in unprotected sexual intercourse with a male relative of the deceased husband; (ii) Shaving of all body hair; (iii) Forced bathing in the presence of community members; (iv) Seclusion or isolation, and many others (Akinbi, 2015).

Many of the communities in this region share the belief that these rituals protect the family and community from negative events that may occur due to the deceased husband's spirit – in order to appease this spirit, the recently widowed woman is forced or coerced into practicing these rituals. If she chooses not to participate, she may lose economic support for herself and her children, and may be ostracized from her family or community (Akinbi, 2015).

A qualitative study conducted in the Luo community in Kenya found that widows are incentivized to engage in sexual intercourse with an “inheritor” who will then provide some support to the woman in terms of assisting with maintaining her home, such as conducting repairs in the house (Perry, 2014). However, the belief in this community (like others) is that unprotected sex is a requirement for success of the ritual – this in turn has led to greater rates of HIV transmission for these women. The women are also not always in a position to negotiate condom use due to power imbalances. A quantitative study conducted in Mozambique also found that 61% of the 359 respondents believed that the widow cleansing rituals need to evolve to address high HIV transmission rates due to the rituals, and to better respect the human rights of the women involved (VeraCruz, 2018).

In several African countries, interventions exist which address key issues, including (i) violence against women, (ii) economic empowerment of women, and (iii) HIV prevention. Campaigns to address these social norms have also been conducted. However, we were unable to find a curriculum for a training program that brings together key stakeholders from multiple disciplines to address this issue through inter-professional collaboration. The curriculum below therefore addresses this gap.

Where: This training program will be conducted in a city in Nigeria; participants will be members of communities where these rituals are prevalent, specifically in the Yoruba and Igbos communities. However, the training program can be adapted for other African countries, which have documented similarities in rituals and beliefs, such as Kenya (Luo community) and Mozambique (Sofala, Manica and Tete provinces).

Who: Training trainees will be multidisciplinary community leaders, including lawmakers, religious leaders, advocacy group leaders and health workers.

What: This curriculum is for a 5-day training program on widow cleansing rituals. The program would ideally be followed by monthly gatherings, organized by trainees, which would consist of educational events covering topics of interest expressed by trainees. These follow-up gatherings would also provide an avenue for sustained collaboration on addressing this issue, thereby achieving long-term goals.

When: As the trainees are all professionals who work full-time, our training program will take place every Saturday, over the course of 5 weeks. As Fridays and Sundays are significant for certain religions, we have planned for this training to take place on Saturdays. The sessions will commence at 9 am, include a lunch break, and conclude at 4 pm. We will implement this training during a 5 week period in which there are no major religious observances or festivals.

OVERVIEW OF TRAINING PROGRAM

Goals: Long-term goals for this training program, with a timeline of 10 years, include (i) changing social norms surrounding widow cleansing rituals, (ii) improved economic empowerment of women, (iii) decreased abuse against widows and (iv) implementation and enforcement of laws and policies against harmful widow cleansing rituals. Short-term goals are (i) increased awareness of this issue, (ii) development of an interdisciplinary team to address this issue in various sectors, (iii) establishment of a system for future collaboration between stakeholders following conclusion of the training, and (iv) increase in will-creation and preparedness for family support among men in the community.

Trainers: An inter-professional team consisting of two alums from the Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, in collaboration with three local leaders from the communities of interest.

Trainees: 2 individuals from each of the following categories (twelve trainees total): (i) Lawyers, (ii) Traditional religious leaders, (iii) Ministers/Priests from local churches, (iv) Imams from local mosques, (v) Advocacy group leaders and (vi) Health professionals (including psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses, or physicians).

Adult education methods and strategies: This training curriculum will ensure that sessions and activities build on trainee's existing knowledge and skill sets. Activities will incorporate facilitated discussions, case-studies, role-play and so on, which will allow trainees to learn actively and use their own expertise. Although there will be some facilitation, these activities will encourage independent learning and ownership of the material. Trainees will be reminded that they all play an important role in addressing this issue, which will motivate participation. Appendix A provides 2 detailed session plans which demonstrate how these methods and strategies have been applied.

TRAINING PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

By the end of the training program, trainees will be able to:

1. Recognize 3 mental health effects of widow cleansing rituals[^];
2. Recognize 3 sexual health effects of widow cleansing rituals[^];
3. Explain the importance of will-writing for economic empowerment of women[^];
4. Support efforts to communicate with community members about this issue⁺;
5. Apply knowledge gained from training to engage colleagues in discussion about this issue⁺;
6. Design a strategy for future collaboration to address this issue⁺; and
7. Facilitate collaboration between various stakeholders on this issue^{*}.

[^] objective will be measured during a post-test at the end of the training program;

⁺ objective will be measured by observation during a brainstorming session at the end of the training program;

^{*} objective will be measured during a follow-up interview, 3 months after the training program has concluded.

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

	SATURDAY 1	SATURDAY 2	SATURDAY 3	SATURDAY 4	SATURDAY 5
Topic → Plan ↓	Coming Together	Mental Health, Stigma & Shame	Sexual Health & Prevention of HIV	Economic Empowerment & Inheritance	Moving Forward
9 AM	30 min - Introduction 30 min - Ice-breaker	30 min - Team-building 30 min - Review Pre-test	30 min - Team-building 30 min - Review of HW	30 min - Team-building 30 min - Review of HW	30 min - Team-building 30 min - Existing laws & policies & resources
10 AM	30 min - Overview of training program 30 min - Classroom Norms	15 min - Pair & Share - discuss thoughts on case-study 15 min - Debrief 60 min - Panel discussion from women who've experienced these rituals 30 min - Q&A with panelists	60 min - Documentary screening	60 min - Presentation on conversations about difficult topics	60 min - Presentation on successful / unsuccessful efforts to address similar issues (e.g. FGM)
11 AM	30 min - Pre-test 30 min - Intro to Widow Cleansing Rituals		30 min - Processing the documentary 30 min - Protecting one's health - what to do when condom use is not possible...	30 min - Role-play 30 min - Debrief	30 min - Post-test 30 min - Q&A
12 PM	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch

	SATURDAY 1	SATURDAY 2	SATURDAY 3	SATURDAY 4	SATURDAY 5
Topic → Plan ↓	Coming Together	Mental Health, Stigma & Shame	Sexual Health & Prevention of HIV	Economic Empowerment & Inheritance	Moving Forward
1 PM	45 min - What do you already know about this issue 15 min - Debrief	15 min - Presentation from health professionals 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	15 min - Presentation from advocacy group leaders 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	15 min - Presentation from lawyers 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	45 min - Brainstorming solutions & strategies 15 min - Group 1 presents the results of brainstorm
2 PM	30 min - What do you hope to get out of this training 30 min - Discussion	15 min - Presentation from traditional religious leaders 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	15 min - Presentation from church ministers / priests 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	15 min - Presentation from imams 45 min - Q&A / Debrief	15 min - Group 2 presents the results of brainstorm 45 min - Debrief on strategies for moving forward.
3 PM	20 min - Summary 20 min - Intro to next week & homework (HW) 20 min - Conclusion & survey	20 min - Summary 20 min - Intro to next week 20 min - Conclusion & survey	20 min - Summary 20 min - Intro to next week 20 min - Conclusion & survey	20 min - Summary 20 min - Intro to next week 20 min - Conclusion & survey	Closing Ceremony > present certificates > photographs
HW for next week:	> Case-study - personal narratives from women who have experienced these rituals > Prepare for presentation	> Reading - Health effects of Widow Cleansing Rituals > Prepare for presentation	> Reading or Video - Economic empowerment of women & inheritance > Prepare for presentation	> Brainstorm about next steps & future collaboration	

SESSION STRUCTURE

As seen in the curriculum overview above, the training program consists of five sessions. The general structure of each session is as follows. The day-long session commences with team building activities and review of material that was assigned prior to the session. This is followed by an introduction to new material on the topic of interest. Following an hour-long lunch break, the remainder of the session will consist of interactive activities, an introduction to what will take place in the following session, and finally a survey conducted as part of the evaluation. Appendix A below provides a detailed plan for Sessions 1 and 2, which demonstrates the mix of push and pull strategies, as well as other adult education methods.

EVALUATION PLAN

Our plan for evaluating this curriculum consists of strategies and tools to address the four levels of Kirkpatrick's hierarchy. Firstly, to measure "reaction," a satisfaction survey will be completed by trainees after every session (refer to Appendix B1 for this tool). To measure "learning," pre and post-tests will be conducted to gauge knowledge at the beginning of the first session versus knowledge at the conclusion of session five. These tests will be anonymous and unmatched – therefore an aggregate will be used. This is in order to utilize paper surveys which may be more feasible.

"Performance" will be measured by in two ways. Firstly, a brainstorming session will take place during session 5 in which trainees will prepare and present on strategies to collaboratively address the issue of widow cleansing rituals – an observation of this activity, alongside qualitative feedback, will be utilized. Secondly, a follow-up interview will take place 3 months after the training program has ended, to measure intermediate-term outcomes.

Population-level surveys in communities of interest will be conducted 1 year following the training program to measure "impact." Finally, the trainers will complete a checklist during each session to evaluate fidelity as part of a process evaluation.

BUDGET

The budget for the Empowering Our Widows training was estimated to be around \$104,575, for an average of about \$8,700 per trainee. This budget was made based on other similar programs previously implemented in this region, and based on a cost analysis conducted prior to arriving in Nigeria. Our budget was broken down into 5 categories: (i) Facilitators, (ii) Materials, Equipment and Facilities, (iii) Participants, (iv) Miscellaneous, and (v) Evaluation. Under our budget for facilitators, we allocated funding towards paying for the salaries of two full-time Columbia University facilitators, as well as the salaries of three part-time local Nigeria representatives. Aside from their salaries, we also allocated funding towards their food, travel, and accommodations as needed.

Given that part of our curriculum included three panelists, we also included a small honoraria award for each participant. The training team estimated that about \$2,000 would be spent on program training materials and facilities, and about \$1,875 would be spent on participant's travel, food, and refreshments. To facilitate communication for Columbia University facilitators in Nigeria, money was allocated for the purchase of cellular sim-cards that would allow them to connect with trainees and program representatives as needed. \$300 was set towards a closing ceremony for trainees to celebrate their accomplishment. Lastly, our budget included \$8,250 for program evaluation, which would pay for an external evaluator's stipend, travel, and accommodations in Nigeria, as well as for the cost of disseminating the results of their findings.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES

Although a review of the literature was conducted, we believe that other interventions could already exist in several of these countries that are not easily found through online searches. Perhaps curricula already exist for training programs that have simply not been published, and therefore we were unable to find these in our research.

This curriculum is rooted in evidence and theory, however a vital component missing in the creation of this curriculum is input from members of the communities in which these traditions and rituals are practiced. These training curriculum would be strengthened greatly by involving key stakeholders from the communities of interest in all phases of designing and implementing this curriculum. This would also be the most equitable way in which to engage with these communities. Due to the scope of this assignment, it was impossible to engage with these key stakeholders.

APPENDIX A – Detailed plans for Sessions 1 and 2

Session 1	Date: To be determined	Topic: Coming Together
Learning Objectives: Following this session, trainees will be able to: 1. Identify fellow trainees by name; 2. List 3 classroom norms that have been agreed upon by the group; 3. Describe 2 personal goals for their participation in the training; 4. Describe 1 widow cleansing ritual that takes place in their community.		
Facilitators: Columbia & local facilitators		
Preparation: • Review the program, including materials needed. • Collect materials needed. • Review presentation slides.		Evaluation: • Pre-test at the beginning of session • Satisfaction survey at the end of session
Time	Activity & Description	Materials needed
09:00 – 09:30	Introductions > Instructions to trainees: • Pair up with someone whom you have not met before. • Each person will have 3 minutes to introduce themselves and discuss an interesting fact about yourself. • Once both partners have had a chance to speak, we will then go around in a circle and each of us will introduce our partner!	Name tags
09:30 – 10:00	Ice-breaker > Divide trainees into 2 small groups of 6 - 1 representative from each stakeholder in a group. > Instructions to trainees: • Each group will be given only 2 sheets of paper (1 is for practice). • Each group will have 20 minutes to discuss a design for a paper-plane & build it. • We will then race our planes to see which one goes the farthest! > Follow the activity with a debrief on team-building & collaboration.	4 Sheets of paper Tape
10:00 – 10:30	Overview of training program > Review timeline of training > Review the structure & plan for sessions	Copies of program timeline
10:30 – 11:00	Classroom Norms > Instructions to trainees: • Ensure that the following norms are included: Respect for each other's experiences & Confidentiality & privacy with regard to personal anecdotes that may be shared • Paste the poster with all norms in a location where it will be clearly visible for the duration of each session - if the training venue will change every week, ensure that a copy of the norms is always present & visible for each session.	Poster paper Marker Tape

11:00 – 11:30	Pre-test > Instructions to trainees: • This pre-test is not graded. • It does not impact your participation in the training - it is simply to gain information about what the group already knows. • The pre-tests are anonymous. • The information collected may be used to evaluate how effective the training program was & to improve future offerings of the training.	
11:30 – 12:00	Introduction to Widow Cleansing Rituals > Use power-point slides to introduce the issue	Power-point slides AV equipment
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	
13:00 – 14:00	What do we already know about this issue > Instructions to trainees: • Sit in a circle facing the center so that you can see your fellow trainees. • Remember our classroom norms – during this activity that all experiences are valid, even if we do not fully understand or agree with them. • We will be passing around this speaker's staff. • Each of you will hold the staff for 3 minutes - while you are holding the staff, you will share any experience related to widow cleansing that you are aware of and would like to share with the group. • For example, perhaps you have worked with women who have experienced these rituals. Or you have loved ones who have experienced or enforced these rituals. Or you may have seen these rituals in your own community. • You should not share any names or identifying information, unless it is your personal experience and you feel comfortable disclosing this. • While one of our fellow trainees is speaking, the rest of us will sit in silence. • We may not interrupt, argue, ask questions, or comment in any way. • We will only listen & hear what they are saying. > Debrief on the activity	Decorated speakers staff Timer
14:00 – 15:00	What do we hope to get out of this training > Each trainee is provided with a post-it note or index card. > Instructions to trainees: • Over the next 10 minutes, each of you will silently reflect as an individual about what you hope to achieve from this training. • Think about the reasons why you joined this training, and what you hope to gain - would you like to better understand this issue? Would you like to find collaborators to work with in addressing this issue? Do you feel this issue is misunderstood, and you hope to bring your perspectives to others? • Note down up to 3 personal goals that you hope to achieve over the course of the training program.	Index card / post-it notes Pens / pencils

15:00 – 15:20	Summary > Review the material covered during the session, including (i) Classroom norms, (ii) Introduction to widow cleansing rituals, and (iii) Goals for the training.	
15:20 – 15:40	Introduction to next week > Review the outline for next week's session. > Instruct trainees to review case-study prior to the session. > Discuss the weekly presentations that trainees will be responsible for preparing: • Week 2 – Healthcare professionals & Traditional religious leaders • Week 3 – Advocacy group leaders & Church ministers / priests • Week 4 – Lawyers & Imams > Instructions for trainees: • Each of you already has a wealth of knowledge & expertise in your respective professions - you may have encountered the issue of widow cleansing already in some way through your work. • We would like for you to work with your fellow representative & develop a 15 minute presentation on this issue from the perspective of your profession, so we may better understand it from this view point. • Guidelines for the presentation are provided to you. > Homework • Case-study • Prepare presentation (Healthcare professionals & Traditional religious leaders)	Printed case-study Printed guidelines for presentations
15:40 – 16:00	Conclusion > Ask trainees if anyone was any questions - spend about 10 minutes on Q&A > Distribute the survey to trainees - remind them that this is anonymous & is for the purpose of improving the training experience. > Give them the last 10 minutes to complete this at their pace. > Remind trainees that you will be available if anyone would like to speak with you.	Printed surveys Pens / pencils

Session 2	Date: To be determined	Topic: Mental Health, Stigma & Shame
Learning Objectives: Following this session, trainees will be able to: 1. Identify 3 mental health effects of widow cleansing rituals; 2. Evaluate 3 negative impacts of widow cleansing rituals; 3. Identify 3 ways in which healthcare professionals can address this issue; 4. Identify 3 ways in which traditional religious leaders can address this issue.		
Facilitators: Columbia & local facilitators		
Preparation: • Review the program, including materials needed. • Collect materials needed. • Contact panelists to confirm participation.		Evaluation: • Satisfaction survey at the end of session
Time	Activity & Description	Materials needed
09:00 – 09:30	Team-building > Instructions to trainees: • Split up into your 2 groups of 6 from yesterday. • Imagine that your team is stranded on a deserted island; you can choose 3 out of the following items: a mosquito net, a can of petrol, a water container, a mirror, a compass, a rope, & a waterproof sheet. • Discuss which ones you would choose & decide on which 3 your team would choose – after 15 minutes, we will share with the group!	Name tags
09:30 – 10:00	Review Pre-test – Following a review of results from the pre-test, discuss topics that will be coming up in following sessions to address any gaps in knowledge.	Results of pre-test
10:00 – 10:30	Pair & Share > Instructions to trainees: • For the next 15 minutes, pair up with someone whom you haven't had a chance to work with yet & discuss your thoughts on case-study that was assigned last week. • We will then share with the group. > Debrief	
10:30 – 12:00	Panel discussion > Introduce the 3 panelists > Thank them for their time & openness to sharing with the group > Panel followed by Q&A & discussion	
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch	
13:00 – 14:00	Presentation – Health professionals will present on widow cleansing rituals from their professional experience, followed by Q&A & a debrief with all participants.	AV equipment
14:00 – 15:00	Presentation – Traditional religious leaders will present on widow cleansing rituals from their professional experience, followed by Q&A & a debrief with all participants.	AV equipment
15:00 – 15:20	Summary – Review the material covered during the session.	

15:20 – 15:40	Introduction to next week > Review the outline for next week's session. > Instruct trainees to review readings prior to the session. > Remind trainees about presentations that will take place next week. > Homework • Reading - Health effects of Widow Cleansing Rituals • Prepare presentations (Advocacy group leaders & Church ministers / priests)	Printed readings
15:40 – 16:00	Conclusion > Ask trainees if anyone has any questions - spend about 10 minutes on Q&A > Distribute the survey to trainees - remind them that this is anonymous & is for the purpose of improving the training experience. > Give them the last 10 minutes to complete this at their pace. > Remind trainees that you will be available if anyone would like to speak with you.	Printed surveys Pens / pencils

APPENDIX B – Sample Evaluation Tools

B1. Satisfaction Survey – to measure “reaction”

Dear Trainee – Please complete this short survey to help us improve this and future trainings. Your responses are anonymous and will be kept confidential.					
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Today’s session was a good use of my time.				
2	I learned something new today that I did not know about widow cleansing rituals.				
3	I had meaningful interactions with my fellow trainees today.				
4	There was enough time in the session for me to ask questions.				
5	The facilitators were easy to understand.				
6	The training materials provided were easy to understand.				
7	The training materials provided today are useful to me.				
8	The pace of today’s session was good (not too fast or too slow).				
9	Rate today’s session	Very Good	Good	Bad	Very Bad
10	Please share any additional comments you have –				

B2. Interview guide for 3 month follow-up – to measure “performance”

1. *How have the monthly follow-up meetings been going for you, since the program ended?*

Probes:

- Has it been easy / difficult to coordinate? Why?
 - Examples: due to logistics, scheduling conflicts, funding etc.
- Has it been easy / challenging to find guest speakers?

2. *How have you continued to collaborate with your fellow trainees since the program ended?*

Probes:

- Applied any of the strategies that were discussed during training?
- What has made this collaboration easier / harder?

3. *How have you supported efforts to communicate with community members about widow cleansing rituals?*

Probes:

- Examples of topics that you might have been engaged with: Will-writing, Human rights, Mental Health, Sexual Health / HIV prevention
- Collaborated on project with fellow trainees?
- Conducted any workshops / talks / discussions?
- Talked to family members or friends?
- Created outreach materials on this issue?

4. *How have your clients / community members responded to your efforts?*

Probes:

- What has been easy?
- What has been challenging?
- Have you found certain groups to be less / more receptive to these discussions?

5. *It has now been 3 months since the training ended. Looking back on your experience, what would you change to make the program more helpful to you?*

Probes:

- What would you keep the same? What was missing? What would you change?
- Examples:
 - Topics that were not discussed (specify)
 - Topics not discussed in enough detail (specify)
 - Key stakeholders who were not represented (specify)

APPENDIX C – Detailed Budget

"Empowering our Widows" - Training Program Budget

Facilitators (Training Program Design & Implementation)	Days	Unit Price / Rate	No. of Facilitators	Line Item Total
1. Salaries: for the 2 Columbia University facilitators (full time)	60	\$225.00	2	\$67,500.00
2. Salaries: for the 3 local representatives (part time)	40	\$150.00	3	\$18,000.00
3. Honoraria: for the 3 panelists	1	\$100.00	3	\$300.00
4. Food & Accomodation: rental house, groceries etc.				\$3,000.00
5. Travel: local round trip fare for the training sessions	5	\$10.00	5	\$250.00
6. Travel: international for 2 CU facilitators	1	\$1,500.00	2	\$3,000.00
Materials, Equipment, and Facilities		Unit Price / Rate	No. of Sets	Line Item Total
1. Training materials: Paper, printing, stationary, supplies,				\$500.00
6. Facilities: Equiped with tables, chairs, projector, screen, speakers, etc.		\$300.00	5	\$1,500.00
Participants	Days	Unit Price / Rate	No. of Participants	Line Item Total
1. Travel (to and from training): Round trip fare multiplied by number of participants	5	\$10.00	12	\$600.00
2. Food/Refreshments: Lunch, beverages, disposable dinnerware	5	\$15.00	17	\$1,275.00
Miscellaneous		Unit Price / Rate	No. of Units	Line Item Total
1. Communication: Local sim-card (phone plan) for Columbia facilitators		\$50.00	2	\$100.00
2. Closing ceremony: Certificates, Token of appreciation for participants				\$300.00
Evaluation	Days	Unit Price / Rate	No. of Evaluator	Line Item Total
1. Stipend: 1 time stipend for external evaluator	20	\$225.00	1	\$4,500.00
2. Travel: to and from training location		\$1,500.00	1	\$1,500.00
3. Accomodation: for duration of stay	28	\$75.00	1	\$2,100.00
4. Dissemination of findings: to all stakeholders				\$150.00
COST PER PARTICIPANT: ~\$8,700.00	GRAND TOTAL:			\$104,575.00

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