



## **Marriage and Money: Widows in India**

### **IMOW Curated Tours**

This tour focuses on the economic vulnerability of Indian women who were widowed when their farmer husbands committed suicide when faced with poor crop yield and the burden of debt. It features a slideshow depicting these widows struggles and responsibilities. The presentation package includes a downloadable multimedia slideshow, PowerPoint slides and a script.

The content in this presentation is part of the International Museum of Women's virtual *Economica* exhibition, which explores the relationship between women and the global economy. To offer the audience more context about the museum and this project, we suggest presenting the *International Museum of Women: Exhibiting Change* tour or playing the related video prior to your presentation(s).

We encourage you to immerse yourself in the content, personalize it, and give the presentation your own flair. Suggestions for presenters, approximate timing, and details about the tour follow.

[Note: The slideshows and related content for *Economica* are also available in Spanish on the IMOW website at [www.imow.org/economica](http://www.imow.org/economica)]

**TOTAL LENGTH:** 6 minutes, with Extension Ideas

**ADDITIONAL MATERIALS TO DOWNLOAD** from [www.imow.org/education/tours](http://www.imow.org/education/tours)

- “Growing Debt” slideshow
- Presentation PowerPoint

### **EQUIPMENT NEEDED**

- Computer with Quicktime Player and Microsoft Office PowerPoint
- Projector
- Screen
- Audio/speakers
- Microphone

### **SPEAKER TALKING POINTS**

#### **Launch the PowerPoint presentation**



## Slide 1

Purpose: Brief introduction to the Museum

### Key Talking Points:

- The International Museum of women is an innovative virtual museum, offering online and physical experiences in multiple languages and locations. The museum acts a creative catalyst for social change, using art and multi-media to engage new worldwide audiences in activism for women's human rights.
- Its online exhibition ***Economica*** features multimedia slideshows that illustrate the relationship between women and the global economy. This mini exhibition tour focuses on the economic vulnerability women face because of their marital status.

## Slides 2-3

Purpose: Provide background information on how a woman's economic well-being is tied to her marital status

### Key Talking Points:

- Many women's economic status is inextricably entwined with their marital status—whether she is single, divorced or widowed. The fate of her marriage can propel a woman into economic crisis.
- In many parts of the world, widows are uniquely vulnerable to poverty
  - Frequently a widow has no say in what happens to her, her children or her belongings when her husband dies
  - Fifty percent of the estimated 100 million widows in the developing world are impoverished, and 10% of widows' children will die before age 5 due to lack of resources
  - While approximately 60% of women in the developing world are engaged in some form of paid labor, the statistic drops to 20% for widows
  - Widows fall into the poverty gap for many reasons:
    - They lack favorable inheritance rights. In many nations, the husband's brothers or sons become the primary beneficiaries of the estate



- Widows don't even inherit ownership to their own homes or the land they farm. Even worse, in some countries, the widow actually becomes part of the estate, meaning that she can be forcibly married to her husband's brother

#### **Slide 4**

Purpose: Provide background information for the slideshow “Growing Debt”

#### Key Talking Points:

- India produces 12% of the world’s cotton
- 60 million people depend on the cotton and textile industries for their livelihood
- In 2002, genetically modified seeds were introduced to India
  - Many farmers borrowed heavily to buy those expensive seeds
- Factors like high costs, predatory practices and environmental devastation produced a very poor crop yield
- Unable to pay debts and support their families, thousands of farmers have committed suicide, leaving their widows responsible for their debt
- Lacking social and economic opportunities, these widows lack pathways out of poverty and are in intensely difficult and vulnerable situations

#### **Slides 5-7**

Purpose: Get audience to think about issues presented in the slideshow

#### Key Talking Points:

- As you watch the slideshow about two women, Vijaya and Lalitha, ask yourself:
  - What are the implications, positive and negative, when a woman’s economic well-being is tied to her marital status?

**Minimize PowerPoint, open Quicktime video**

**Play *Growing Debt* slideshow (4 minutes)**

**Minimize Quicktime Player, switch back to PowerPoint presentation**



## Slide 8

Purpose: Proposed solutions on a societal level

### Key Talking Points:

- All women, regardless of marital status, should have access to education, good jobs and support for domestic duties
- Widows are uniquely vulnerable and there is a critical need for more forms of systemic support for widows as well as a need for beliefs and practices to change:
- The first step is to ensure that married women are on an equal footing with their spouses.
  - Married women are more likely than their husbands to work in lower paid, part-time jobs or to give up paid work entirely, especially to meet the demands of child-rearing.
  - The structure of legal marriage encourages many wives to become economically dependent on their husbands for tax benefits, health insurance and income, which ultimately leaves women in a weakened position following divorce or a husband's death.
- It is critical for societies to support the economic rights and empowerment of all women – including married women – in order to make sure that women who are widowed have a strong economic foundation from which to rebuild their lives and families

## Slide 9

Purpose: Let audience know about related content on IMOW website

### Key Talking Points:

- Visit the International Museum of Women's website at [www.imow.org](http://www.imow.org) to find more information related to this issue. There you can browse Community Voices, which feature content from members of the IMOW community, listen to podcasts, access interviews with women's rights champions, read essays and reports written by experts and interact with various media and artistic pieces

To learn more about gender rights, you can:

- [Read an essay by Karen Offen](#), gender research scholar, and examine the history of marriage
- [Listen to a podcast with Peace Musiimenta](#), Ugandan peace activist, as she talks about how



women cannot own land without a man's approval

- [Hear from Heather Ibrahim-Leathers](#), founder of Windows for Widows, an organization that by invests in and empowers widows, as well as other women who are heads of households, by creating economic opportunity
- [View a video about family law](#) reform in Morocco

## Slide 10

Purpose: Provide tangible action items for audience members

### Key Talking Points:

- Make a donation to [The Loomba Foundation](#), which works to empower widows across the globe
- Campaign against dowry by visiting [SACHET's website](#) and joining their Fight Against Dowry
- Spread the word about what you've learned from this presentation – talk to your family members, friends, neighbors – make sure your voice is heard!
- Follow IMOW online

### EXPLORE MORE

- [Find organizations](#) that work around issues relating to dowries, widows' rights, and marriage
- [Access additional stories](#) about the benefits and drawbacks of microfinance

### EXTENSION IDEAS

If you are looking for ways to extend your presentation beyond 6 minutes, below are a few suggestions. You can mix and match the ideas to fit your needs, or come up with your own!

- Play two or more *Economica* slideshows together; choose from any of the seven
- [Present the transcript from an IMOW interview with Sejal Hathi](#), a young teenager who started an organization called Girls Helping Girls, which fosters dialogue between girls from the United States with girls from other countries
- [Play excerpts of videos](#) from the most recent Global Philanthropy Forum  
(*Note: this requires access to an internet connection*)
- Give the audience information from The Greenlining Institute, which looks to empower communities of color and other disadvantaged groups in the United States through multi-ethnic



economic and leadership development, civil rights. [Browse their "Publications" page.](#)