



**GLOBAL  
WIDOWS**  
EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION

'Helping To Bring Light In Dark Times'

*presents*

# COVID-19 & MENTAL WELLBEING

Coping with the effects of  
lockdown 2020

**SEPTEMBER 19, 2020  
SEMINAR REPORT**

Seminar facilitated by:



HM Government

In partnership with

**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
COMMUNITY FUND**

This seminar was made possible by funding from the Coronavirus Community Support Fund, distributed by The National Lottery Community Fund. Thanks to the Government for making this possible.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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On September 19, 2020, Global Widows Empowerment Foundation hosted a seminar with the theme "COVID-19 & Mental Wellbeing: Coping with the effects of lockdown 2020". The COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the resulting lockdown and changes in lifestyle, have had a negative effect on mental wellbeing. People world-over have been grappling with issues such as fear of the unknown, anxiety, increased domestic violence, stress, bereavement, loneliness and isolation, as a result of the pandemic. The goal of this seminar was to provide opportunity to discuss how to maintain mental wellbeing during COVID-19, as well as equip participants with strategies for managing the anxiety caused by COVID-19.

Following welcome remarks by Patricia Aboyeji, Founder and Director of Global Widows Empowerment Foundation, three emotional wellness consultants and speakers spoke on emotional wellness and how to become aware of and handle emotions in the context of COVID-19, practical tools for handling anxiety, and the importance of knowing when to reach out for help when struggling with one's mental well-being.

Participants were invited to complete an online survey after the seminar, the results of which are included in this report. There was a high level of satisfaction with the seminar, and all the participants indicated that they were highly likely to participate in similar events and seminars in the future. Participants also gave feedback on topics they would like to see covered in future.



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# INTRODUCTION

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The coronavirus pandemic has posed an unprecedented challenge for the entire world. We have all been thrust into a strange and difficult situation, as well as a vital social change. Society has been gripped by fear, and there is confusion within the community as we grapple with the threats of COVID-19.

Scientists are still working to study the characteristics of the virus, and the world is still watching to see how it behaves, because there is still a lot to be discovered about the virus. One thing is for sure, though; the pandemic has thrown much of what we think we know about the world and the way it works in the air. People are hurting, anxious, fearful, and traumatised by the horrific experience, and we keep asking questions and are desperate to know whether this actually marks the end of the world.

Within a short period of time, we began to realise that people's emotional and mental well-being has been affected due to the effects of anxiety and fear of the unknown, as well as bereavement and grief. In addition to this is the loneliness and isolation which resulted from the effects of the lockdown. This situation has led to the need to organise these health seminars in order to create mental health awareness on how we can manage the stress and anxiety we face, and how to cope and maintain our mental wellbeing during this period of COVID-19.

The goal of this seminar was to provide opportunity to discuss how to maintain mental wellbeing during COVID-19, as well as equip participants with strategies for managing the anxiety caused by COVID-19. With this seminar, we aimed to reduce the negative effects of depression, which come from being lonely and isolated, and anxiety. Our hope was that, by the end of this seminar, participants would have nothing to fear, other than following government guidelines on how to keep ourselves safe while we wait to see the end of the pandemic.

# SEMINAR AIM AND OBJECTIVES

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The aim of the seminar was to discuss issues surrounding COVID-19 and mental well-being, and equip participants with skills to cope with the effects of lockdown 2020.

In line with this aim, the seminar had the following objectives:

1. Discuss emotional wellness and how to maintain it during COVID-19.
2. Equip participants with specific strategies for dealing with anxiety during COVID-19 and lockdown 2020.
3. Discuss strategies to improve mental health during COVID-19.

# SEMINAR SUMMARY

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Following an opening prayer and brief welcome remarks from the facilitator, Dr. Justice Marwisa, opening remarks on the motivation behind the seminar were given by the founder and director of Global Widows Empowerment Foundation, Patricia Aboyeji. She mentioned some of the challenges that have come up as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting lockdown, including such things as fear of the unknown, anxiety, increased domestic violence, stress, bereavement, loneliness and isolation. In light of these, she emphasised the need for people to be taught how to safeguard their mental well-being in such a difficult time.

The first speaker, Yvonne Madhovi, spoke on handling anxiety in the context of COVID-19 and lockdown 2020. She defined anxiety and highlighted some common causes of anxiety, including imminent danger without apparent solutions, fear of the unknown, and uncertain outcomes. She also outlined some of the telltale signs of anxiety, which are often physical signs like sleep and appetite disturbances, body aches and pains, tension headaches, and digestive problems. Yvonne then spoke on strategies that are useful in handling anxiety, including relaxation exercises, choosing positivity, getting the facts, challenging anxious self-talk, staying socially connected, and practising spirituality.

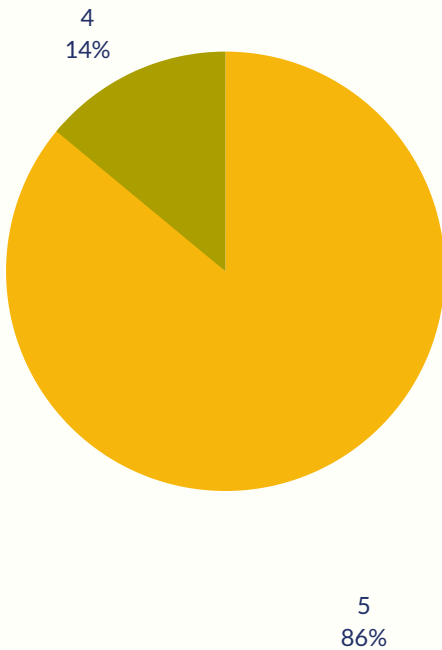
The second session was taken by emotional wellness consultant Pamela Marwisa, who led participants through a discussion on emotional wellness during COVID-19. Pamela defined emotional wellness as the ability to be aware of and accept our feelings, rather than deny them, and have an optimistic approach to life and enjoy it despite its occasional disappointments and frustrations. She emphasised the importance of identifying and naming emotions, and recognising what they signal about what is going on inside us. The session also covered the different ways of dealing with emotions, which include suppression, repression, displacement, and being overwhelmed. The drawbacks with each of these was discussed, and the session ended with an emphasis on the need to handle emotions by facing them, feeling them, and expressing them in healthy ways.

The third session was taken by Pamela Melisa Davies, the seminar's guest speaker. Pamela is a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities. Inspired by her experience raising a child diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and MLD, Pamela is an advocate for positive mental health and autism support. She is very passionate about creating awareness among the BAME on the stigma and inequalities attached to mental illness, autism, and learning disabilities. Pamela spoke on improving mental health during COVID-19. She highlighted that to some extent, struggling with anxiety and depression were normal especially during such uncertain times. However, she encouraged participants to recognise when the struggle became prolonged, in which case further help was needed to deal with it. She shared her own experience of experiencing trauma following the birth of her child, and testified to the need to acknowledge and express emotions fully after going through an ordeal. While she acknowledged the shame and stigma that are often attached to seeking help with mental health, she also emphasised that when there is need, people should not hesitate to reach out before things become dire, as help is always available through various platforms.

# SEMINAR EVALUATION

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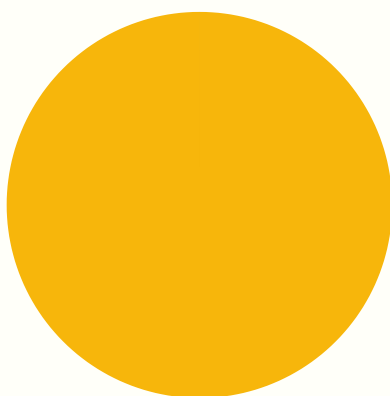
Participants were asked to fill in an online seminar feedback form, and the results from the 14 responses showed the following:



**86%**

**OF THE PARTICIPANTS RATED THEIR OVERALL SATISFACTION AT '5'**

When asked to rate how satisfied they were with the conference on a scale of 1-5, 86% of participants gave it a 5/5, while the remaining 14% rated it at 4/5.



**100%**

**OF THE PARTICIPANTS RATED THEIR LIKELIHOOD OF PARTICIPATING IN FUTURE SEMINARS AT 5/5**

Asked to rate how likely they are to participate in similar events and seminars in future on a scale of 1-5, all the participants who gave feedback (100%) responded 5/5.



# COMMENTS FROM THE FEEDBACK SURVEY

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## What did you like most about the seminar?

- Talking about men's welfare and where we are on COVID-19.
- Very educative.
- All presentations were informative.
- The relevance of the meeting, topics, speakers, and the way the interesting messages were conveyed.
- It talks about our emotions during this time of pandemic.
- All information given.
- It touches how to manage our mental wellbeing because of the trauma of COVID-19.
- It touches all aspects of emotional wellbeing especially during this period of COVID-19.
- The encouragement to speak out.
- The aspect of emotional stress control.
- All three sessions.

## What was your key take-away from this seminar?

- Mental well-being in these uncertain times.
- Not to be having a prolonged low mood.
- To do away with anxiety.
- Believing in yourself.
- Staying strong.
- Accepting challenges as part of living, moving on with it and helping others to.
- Am responsible for my mental wellbeing.
- I shouldn't worry about what I can not fix.
- Speak... Don't be ashamed of anything or anyone. Especially on mental health issues.
- Encourage people to speak up.
- Open up, reach out, and be grateful.

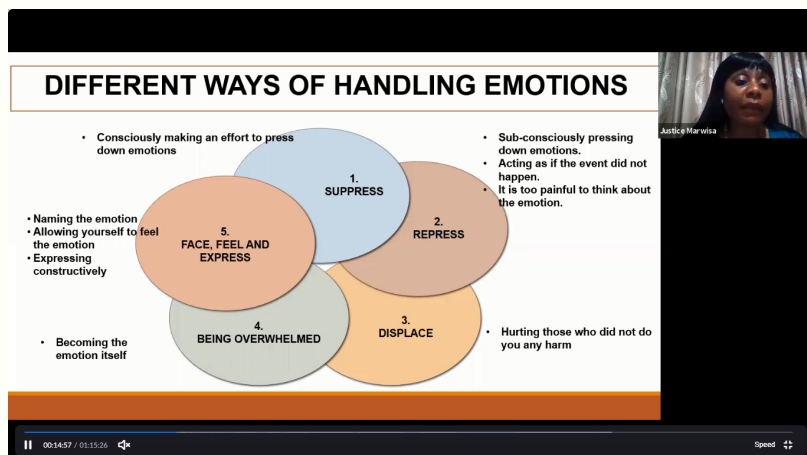
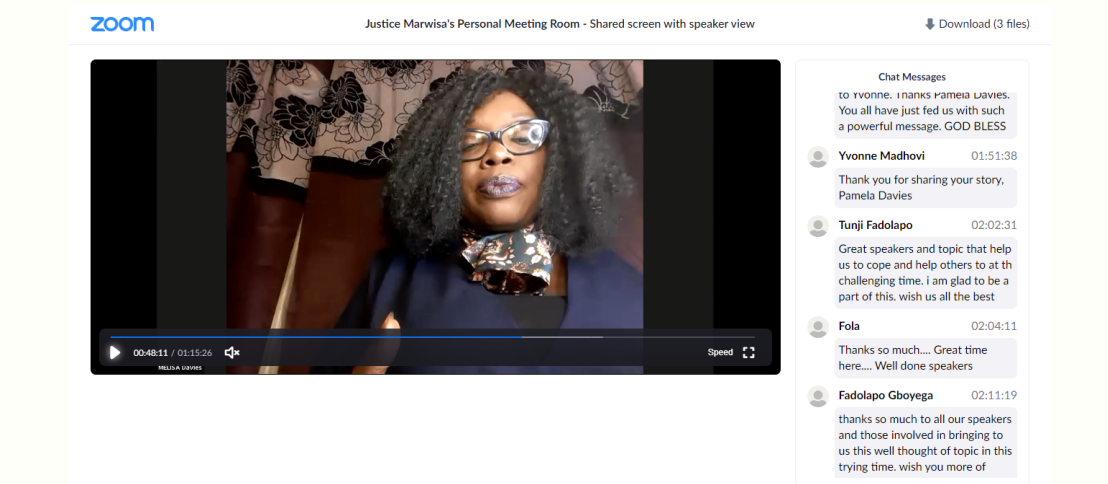
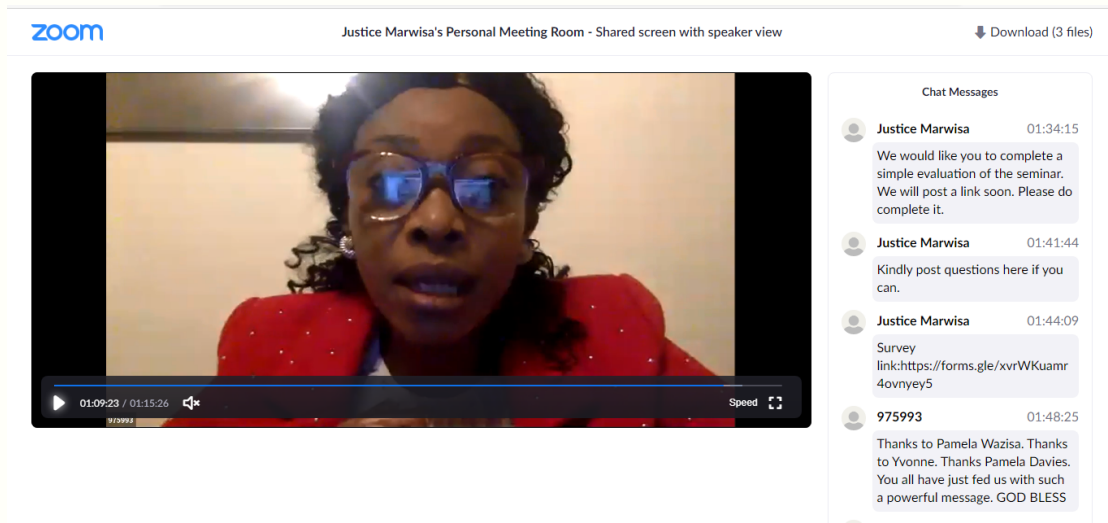
## In future, what would you like us to improve on?

- Time is a bit long. Make it shorter.
- Keep up the great work.
- Create time for attendees to share their experiences on the platform.
- Technical issues.
- For me it's okay.
- It was well put together. But reach out to more people.
- Nothing.
- Maybe more time for questions.
- You did well in regard to this... I can only wish the team greater grace.
- Everything went well.

## Which topics would you like to see covered at future seminars?

- How to help the men, because they don't talk about their feelings.
- How to get over fear.
- Relationships.
- Dealing with contemporary life and inherent challenges.
- Managing stress.
- Marriage.
- Mental health and finance.
- Supporting people with mental health issues.
- Any health and spiritual building related topics.
- We still need more of this please.
- More awareness in the black community. We must not suffer in silence.

# APPENDIX A: SEMINAR PICTURES



# APPENDIX B: SEMINAR FLYER

Organised by:



Funded by:



Facilitated by:



## COVID-19 & MENTAL WELLBEING

Coping with the effects of lockdown 2020

**ONLINE CONFERENCE**  
**SEPTEMBER 19, 2020**  
**6:00PM (LONDON TIME)**

**Hosted by:**

Patricia Aboyeji



**Co-host:**

Ms. Chizara Phillips



**Session 1:**

Emotional wellness during  
COVID-19: Pamela Marwisa  
(Emotional Wellness Consultant)



**Session 2:**

Managing Anxiety Caused by  
COVID-19: Yvonne Madhovi  
(Emotional Wellness Consultant)



**Session 3:**

Improving our Mental Health  
during COVID-19: Pamela Melisa  
Davies (Guest Speaker)



Meeting ID: 221 015 3946  
Password: 975993

**For more information, visit our website:**  
[www.globalwidowsempowermentfoundation.org](http://www.globalwidowsempowermentfoundation.org)

# **APPENDIX C: SEMINAR PACK**



*presents*

# COVID-19 & MENTAL WELLBEING

Coping with the effects of lockdown 2020

**ONLINE SEMINAR  
SEPTEMBER 19, 2020  
WELCOME PACK**

Seminar facilitated by:



In partnership with  
**THE NATIONAL LOTTERY  
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# Welcome Note



Dear Participant,

Welcome to our Global Widows Empowerment Foundation online seminar!

Our topic for this conference is, "COVID-19 and mental wellbeing". The COVID-19 pandemic, and resulting lockdown and changes in lifestyle, can have a negative effect on mental wellbeing. People world-over have been grappling with issues such as fear of the unknown, anxiety, increased domestic violence, stress, bereavement, loneliness and isolation, as a result of the pandemic.

The goal of this seminar is to provide opportunity to discuss how to maintain mental wellbeing during COVID-19, as well as equip you with strategies for managing the anxiety caused by COVID-19.

We look forward to your participation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background.

**PATRICIA ABOYEJI**  
**FOUNDER & DIRECTOR**  
**GLOBAL WIDOWS EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION**



## COVID-19 Message

The advent of the coronavirus pandemic has brought what is known as trauma, and an unprecedented challenge into the entire world. This has led to a strange and difficult situation as well as a vital social change, whereby we are all living in fear and finding everything strange. There is confusion within the community due to the pandemic, as no one sugarcoats the threats of coronavirus.

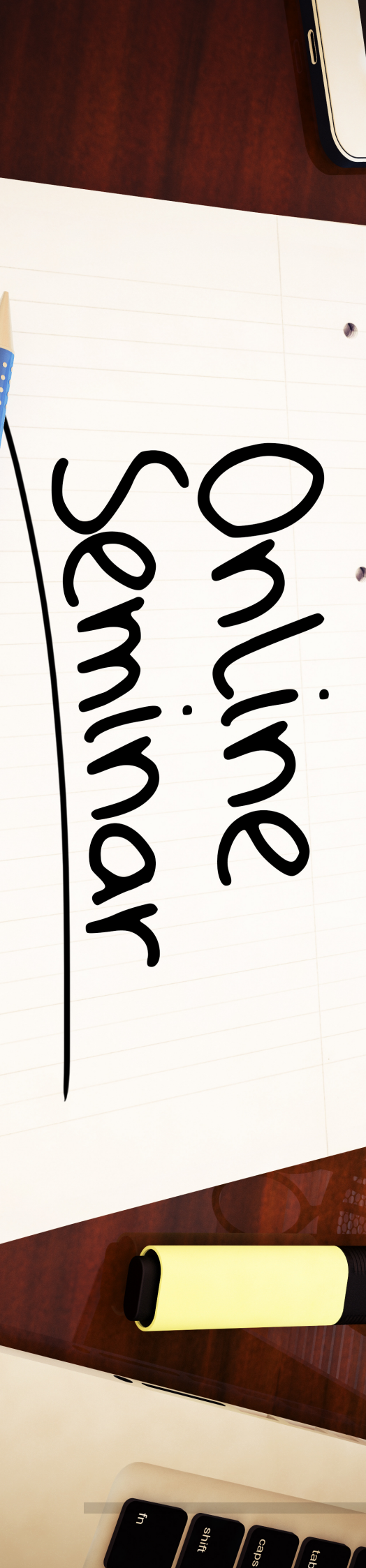
Scientists are still working to study the characteristics of the virus, which belongs to the family of coronaviruses. Some come with less severe diseases of the common cold, and some come with severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The virus has been around for a while now, but we are all still watching to see how it behaves because there is still a lot to be discovered about the virus. It still has tales to tell, and that is the reason why scientists are still working on it. One thing is for sure, though; the pandemic has thrown much of what we think we know about the world and the way it works in the air.

People are hurting, anxious, fearful, and getting traumatised by the horrific experience, and we keep asking questions and are desperate to know whether this actually marks the end of the world. We are all scratching our heads to know what on earth is happening to the entire world. Within a short period of time, we began to realise that people's emotional and mental wellbeing has been affected due to the effects of anxiety and fear of the unknown, as well as bereavement and grief. In addition to this is the loneliness and isolation which resulted from the effects of the lockdown.

This situation has led to the need to organise these health seminars in order to create mental health awareness on how we can manage the stress and anxiety we face, and how to cope and maintain our mental wellbeing, including ways by which we can boost our immune systems during this period of COVID-19. With these seminars and the arranged conferences, we aim to reduce the negative health complications from depression, which come from being lonely and isolated. Even at the initial ease of the lockdown, the reality is that people are still hesitant to be near anyone, and even children keep away from their parents when they see them cough or sneeze. It is indeed a strange situation we are facing.

Our hope is that, by the end of these seminars, we will have nothing to fear, other than following government guidelines on how to keep ourselves safe while we wait to see the end of the pandemic.





# Online Seminar

## Program

**6:00 PM**

PARTICIPANTS ARRIVE

**6:03 PM**

WELCOME REMARKS  
DR JUSTICE MARWISA

**6:05 PM**

OPENING REMARKS  
PARTRICIA ABOYEJI

**6:15 PM**

SESSION 1: EMOTIONAL WELLNESS DURING  
COVID-19  
PAMELA MARWISA

**6:35 PM**

DISCUSSION

**6:45PM**

SESSION 2: MANAGING ANXIETY CAUSED  
BY COVID-19  
YVONNE MADHOVI

**7:05 PM**

DISCUSSION

**7:15 PM**

SESSION 3: IMPROVING OUR MENTAL  
HEALTH DURING COVID-19  
PAMELA MELISA DAVIES  
GUEST SPEAKER

**7:35 PM**

DISCUSSION

**7:45 PM**

CLOSING REMARKS

# HOST

## **PATRICIA ABOYEJI** GLOBAL WIDOWS EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION



Patricia Aboyeji is an inspirational speaker and teacher. She is the chair of Global Widows Empowerment Foundation UK, as well as Saint Raphael Support Foundation Lagos, an organisation that provides social and economic empowerment, grief recovery services, depression counselling, and personal development mentoring to underprivileged widows. The work she does helps to bring succour to widows, promote their financial stability, and contribute to seeing widows without tears and intimidation. Patricia is also the author of "Through the Eyes of a Widow: The Tale of My Tears - A Journey of Grief, Growth and Grace". This is an inspirational book based on her own journey and experiences of widowhood.



# CO-HOST



## **MS. CHIZARA PHILLIPS** LIVING THE BEST LIFE



Chizara Philips is a self-motivated mental health and wellbeing advisor. She specialises in assisting people find positive elements from their experiences. Ms Philips educates people undergoing any type of health issue on their right against discrimination, exclusion and stigma. As the Vice Chair and Treasurer of Global Widows Empowerment Foundation, she coordinates projects that suit the needs of African women. She is passionate about empowering and assisting widows, single mothers, and lone women to integrate and connect with others in the community.

# FACILITATOR



## **DR JUSTICE MARWISA** LIVING THE BEST LIFE



Living the Best Life is a registered CIC that provides psychosocial support to migrants, predominantly African migrants, with the aim of helping them to build resilience and enabling them to find meaning and wellbeing in the countries and communities they find themselves in. Dr Justice Marwisa is the Founder and Director of the organisation. He holds a Doctorate degree in Transformational Leadership, and is a certified Christian counsellor. He is also a certified End of Life Coach and an accredited mediator with Conflict Dynamics, South Africa. He is a regular speaker at emotional wellness and family seminars.

# SESSION 1 SPEAKER

## **PAMELA MARWISA** LIVING THE BEST LIFE



A former microbiologist, Pamela Marwisa switched careers to follow her passion for helping people. She has a keen interest in community development, and now holds a Masters in Community Psychology. Pamela is also a certified Christian counsellor, and has vast experience in helping people deal with personal and family crises through counselling. She enjoys working with people immensely, and finds her occupation as an emotional wellness consultant fulfilling. Pamela is also a wife and mother of three.



## SESSION 2 SPEAKER

### **YVONNE MADHOVI** LIVING THE BEST LIFE



Yvonne Madhovi is an emotional wellness consultant with Living the Best Life. She is a speaker and facilitator, and enjoys helping people face and address their emotional life and issues that affect their mental wellbeing. Yvonne is also a qualified counsellor, with a Masters in Counselling Psychology. As a wife and mother of two herself, she enjoys using her background in psychology to design and coordinate programs aimed at helping women enjoy marriage, motherhood, and wholesome family lives.



## SESSION 3 SPEAKER

### **PAMELA MELISA DAVIES** GUEST SPEAKER

Pamela is a Registered Nurse Learning Disabilities, and currently works at Forensic Mental Hospital. She is a mother of four wonderful children, one of whom was diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and MLD. Pamela is an advocate for positive mental health and autism support. She is also a minister of God and sold out for Jesus.



Pamela is a speaker, and is very passionate about creating awareness among the BAME on the stigma and inequalities attached to mental illness, autism, and learning disabilities. She believes people experiencing mental issues or ASD diagnosis should not be ashamed to actively seek support to manage their conditions.

Pamela is kind, helpful, and compassionate; she is always willing to help meet the needs of others. She does a show Live on Facebook on Sundays at 7:30pm, where she raises awareness on mental health conditions, autism, and learning disabilities, as well as the stigma and shame attached to them. She is a people person and loves to see people find happiness.



## ABOUT GLOBAL WIDOWS EMPOWERMENT FOUNDATION

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Global Widows Empowerment Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Nottingham UK, founded by Patricia Aboyeji. A widow herself, Ms. Aboyeji has experienced the discrimination, challenges and oppression that come with widowhood. She uses her own experiences to help, encourage and inspire other women to stand up and face life's challenges.

At Global Widows Empowerment Foundation, we promote social inclusion in the lives of women, predominantly widows, widowers and other lone ones in the community, whose lives have been driven by exclusion. We assist them to integrate and connect with others in the community using principles of community cohesion. We also promote their social and economic empowerment through capacity building programs, seminars, trainings and workshops. In this way, we help to restore their past and build their future.

Research findings show that about 30% of women go into depression following the death of their husbands as a result of the stress hormones being produced by the body due to separation. Most widows die in silence because their agonies go unnoticed, and their voices are unheard. We raise our voices on behalf of the voiceless so as to raise the hopes of these forgotten sufferers. We raise the issues and plights of widows, to let the world know about the pain of these silent victims. We work with other corporate organisations, various individuals, groups, religious bodies and government at all levels, creating an awareness of the need to support the widows in the society; knowing that when we help the widows, we are building the Nation.

**For more information, visit our website:**  
[www.globalwidowsempowermentfoundation.org](http://www.globalwidowsempowermentfoundation.org)

Design work by:



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