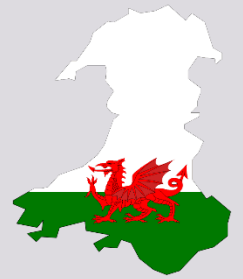




**Ethnic Minority Welsh Women
Achievement Association**



Newsletter Jan 2026

Celebrating the life and achievements of ethnic minority women in Wales



I am deeply humbled and profoundly honoured. When I received the news of my DBE, I was stunned. This recognition is not mine alone; it belongs to my family, who tolerated my long hours and moments of chaos; to my mentors and colleagues, who challenged and supported me; to my friends, who sustained me; to the communities that embraced me; and to the charity workers and volunteers who walked alongside me throughout this journey.

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER JAN 2026

Professor Meena Upadhyaya was made a Dame for services to community cohesion in Wales and to medical genetics in New Year honours

I arrived in this country several decades ago with nothing more than a 20-kilogram suitcase and the hope of building a life with my husband. I could never have imagined that one day I would be recognised in this way.

This honour is historic. It is an extraordinary distinction bestowed upon someone who has always considered herself an ordinary person. Yet its significance reaches far beyond my own story. It sends a message to every immigrant who arrives on these shores with uncertainty in their heart but determination and resilience in their spirit: your contribution matters, your presence matters, and your dreams belong here, too.

Dame Prof. Meena Upadhyaya



AGNES XAVIER- PHILLIPS

JP DL FLSW

RECIPIENT OF EMWWAA
LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT
AWARD IN FEBRUARY'25.

In April, I completed a very successful year as Master of the Worshipful Company of Wales.

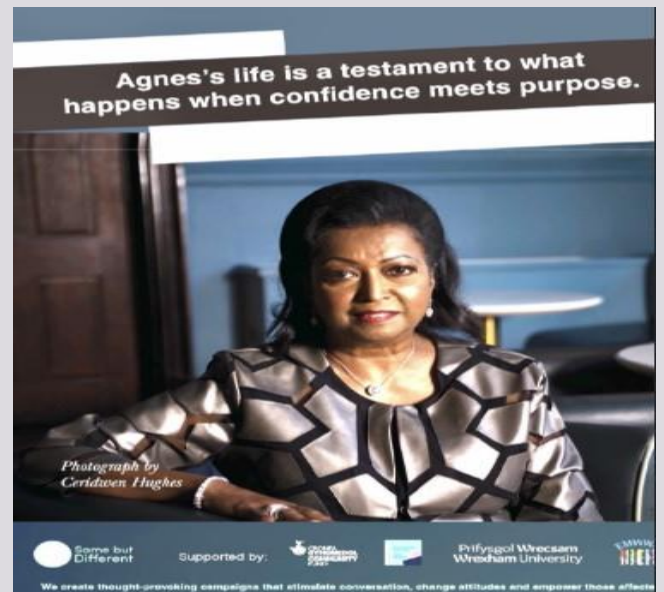
I received the High Sheriff of S. Glamorgan's Award in recognition of great and valuable services to the Community in March.

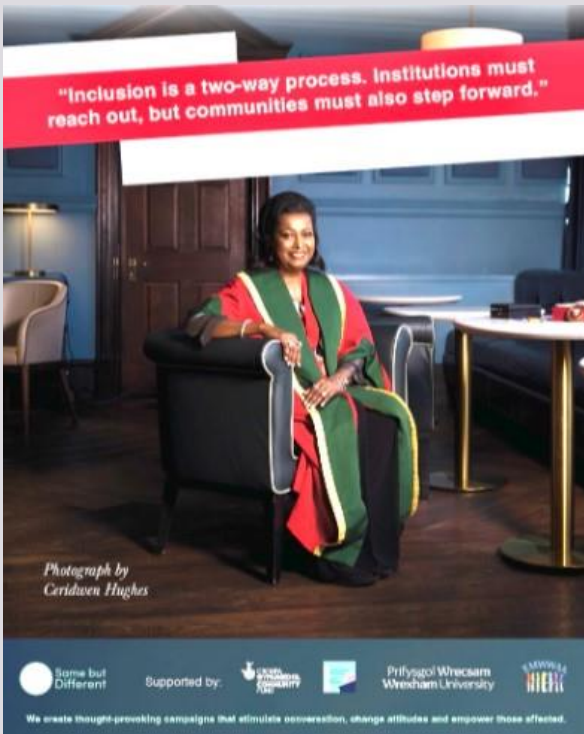
I was elected as Fellow of The Learned Society of Wales (FLSW) in May.

Also in May, I was interviewed by Same but Different and contributed to their project Inspiring Women in Wales. The project received an overwhelmingly positive response at the Eisteddfod in Wrexham.

Read Agnes' story here:

<https://www.samebutdifferentcic.org.uk/inspiringwomeninwales-agnes>





MADHVI DALAL

Founder and CEO

PadMad

Listed Top 100 Kenyans 2025

Global Leadership & Creative Excellence: In 2025, Padmad emerged as a global thought leader, shifting the conversation from basic aid to systemic innovation. We advocated for circular-economy solutions for feminine hygiene at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Zero Waste Global Forum in Turkiye. Our advocacy also took a creative turn; our film, “Bleed with Pride,” was shortlisted at the **Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity**, challenging global stigmas on a historic scale and proving that dignity is a universal language.

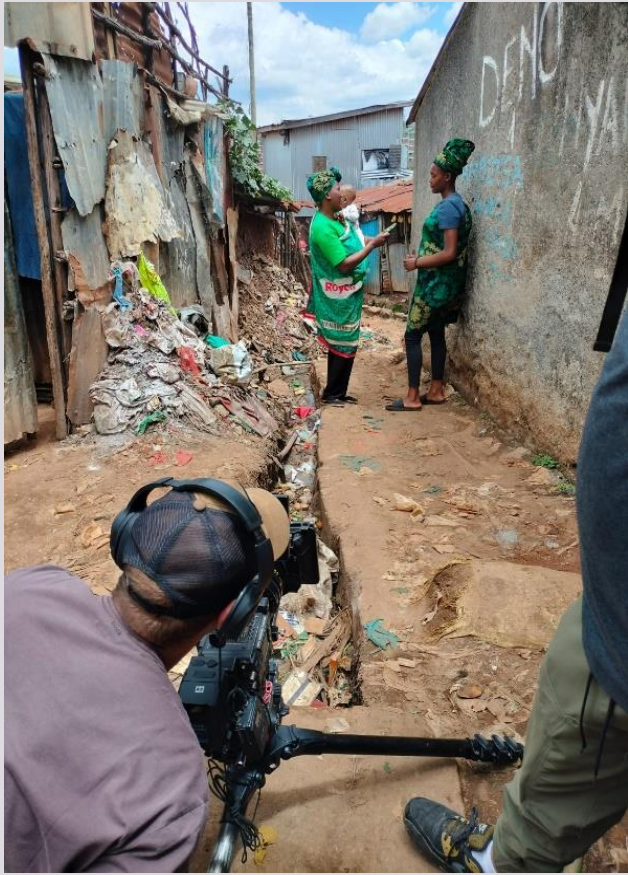


Strategic Impact & Policy: We have shifted from providing temporary handouts to building permanent systems. By partnering with **KEBS**, **UNFPA**, and the **Swedish Institute for Standard**, we helped develop the **ISO/TC 338 global standards** for menstrual products, ensuring safety for women everywhere. Locally, through powerhouse collaborations with the **Eliud Kipchoge Foundation**, **The Samburu Project**, **Sopa Lodges**, and the **Jasper Foundation**, we are proud to share that **over 100,000 women and girls have been supported this year alone**. By providing high-quality sustainable tools and reproductive health education, we have ensured that dignity is no longer a barrier to their education or economic potential.

Community & Solidarity: Our movement escalated globally through profound acts of solidarity featuring a vibrant walk at [North Michigan College](#), where students marched for their sisters in Kenya. Proudly, our community now spans continents. We also hit the global cultural stage with a screening of “[Powerful Women](#)” at the historic **State Theatre in Traverse City**, sparking vital dialogue across borders.

The Crowning Moment: To close this landmark year, Padmad founder, Madhvi was officially named one of [Kenya’s Top 100 People Who Make Impact](#). This recognition is a powerful testament to our mission: that when we invest in inclusive leadership and grassroots innovation, we don’t just solve local problems, we redefine the future for women globally.







Dr Sonali Dasgupta (PhD, FRCP, PG Dip)

Consultant Medical Oncologist

(Colorectal and CUP),

Velindre University NHS Trust

Cancer of Unknown Primary (CUP) Lead,

Wales Cancer Network

Cancer of Unknown Primary (CUP) Lead,

South East Wales

Dr Sonali Dasgupta

Born in Kolkata, my heritage is from Bengal, India. Me and my best friend from Med School (who later became my husband) came to UK soon after our graduation, looking for new adventures and professional experience. My post graduate qualifications are all from UK, well spread out between England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. After years of work-related travels, we have finally settled down in Wales.

During my journey, my mindset changed from just 'bagging a good job' to 'giving my work and life, the best part of me.' Each of my experiences, regardless of positive or negative outcomes, became cumulative learning opportunities. When I moved on to the next level of challenge, I was stronger and better prepared. Leaving the security of my family and a buzzing social life, I went to Northern Ireland to pursue a prestigious clinical PhD Fellowship (Queen's University) funded by Cancer Research UK (CRUK). In my second year of research, I became pregnant. During my maternity leave, nursing my newborn daughter, I completed my Post Grad Diploma from Newcastle Uni with distinction marks. Post completion of PhD and CCT, my first Consultancy was in a newly established Cancer centre in Northern Ireland (Londonderry), where I set up and led on new services that had a significant overarching impact on regional Cancer services. Coming back to Wales, I joined Velindre University NHS Trust as a research active Medical Oncology

Consultant. Over the last 5 years, I have transitioned from regional, to all Wales and finally to national leadership roles in cancer services.

Outside work, I pursued other areas of interest. My Father used to say that all Bengalis are born with literature and poetry encrypted in their genes. True to his prophecy, I morphed into a social poet and word artist, sharing platform at prestigious venues with learned and renowned professionals and learning first hand from their skills and experience. I realised that my professional passion on addressing the unmet clinical need, mentoring the next generation of healthcare professionals with deep rooted values of integrity and aspiration for excellence; and my original works in literature challenging the social prejudices and fixed narratives, have a common theme- rooting for the 'underdogs' and celebrating high moral standards.

Importantly, I am also a daughter, a sister, a wife, and a mother (in chronological order. Somewhere along my journey, I also acquired a black belt in martial arts, training side by side with my young daughter, setting a real-life example of a role model, both as a mature learner new to martial arts, as well as a parent ring fencing her time in ever so busy calendar, for bonding with her child through shared experience. It was indeed a memorable day when I graduated as 1st Dan side by side with my 12-y old daughter, we punched the air together in jubilation!

As a first-generation migrant from the ethnic minority group, as a woman determined to have her own identity in a male dominated world, unsurprisingly I have faced many barriers, and several covert/overt biases that I had to overcome. But these challenges also shaped me, and helped me become the woman, the leader and innovator, the mentor and patient advocate that I am today.



Aminat Ayodele

Thank you for this opportunity to share my journey since receiving the EMWWAA award in May 2025. The recognition has been incredibly affirming and has strengthened my identity as an ethnic minority woman leader based in Wales, working to create global impact.

Since May, I have led three significant initiatives through Women and Girls' Voice Advocacy Initiative (WAGVA):

- 1. Menstrual Hygiene Awareness Campaign (May 2025):** With other volunteers, we launched an online campaign to break the stigma around menstruation and promote menstrual health education. While I coordinate the online activities, hundreds of women and girls were reached across multiple regions, providing vital information about hygiene practices and body positivity, using posters and other visually attractive resources.
- 2. 2025 Back-to-School Educational Support Drive (September 2025):** From my base in North Wales, I successfully coordinated a project that reached over 600 primary school children across Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja, Nigeria. We raised ₦667,659 (approximately £340) from friends and online supporters, and distributed essential school supplies including notebooks, pens, uniforms, and socks. Beyond materials, we conducted interactive sessions on body safety, self-esteem, and the value of education. This project exemplifies how ethnic minority women in Wales can leverage our unique position to bridge communities and create tangible change across continents.
- 3. Gender-Based Violence Awareness Campaign:** With other volunteers, I led an online advocacy campaign raising awareness about Digital Violence against Women, shared resources for survivors, and promoted a culture of speaking up against digital abuse. Living in the UK (Wales) and gave me the platform to amplify voices that might otherwise go unheard. I was able to access relevant resources and share contacts of cyber crisis support platforms with women digital creators who are exposed daily to digital abuse.

1. Digital Violence Against Women Campaigns

<https://www.facebook.com/share/r/14QjfZv2uRR/>

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid02VbPirtZd8D8hzsgL63j34zfoQ6YB1k7UfpKnDGFQbpy9euXo4iXeUvVx5nE5fp3ml&id=100000738680984

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Back to School Project (photos attached)

<https://www.facebook.com/share/1CEb7XjCzA/>

Menstrual Health Campaign (Online)

https://www.tiktok.com/@womenandgirlsvoice?_r=1&_t=ZN-92kRPDPXROo

I remain grateful for this platform and the community of inspiring women it has connected me with.



WOMEN AND GIRLS' VOICE ADVOCACY INITIATIVE

2025 BACK TO SCHOOL SUPPORT

Distribution of school supplies to **600** primary school pupils across: Lagos, Ogun & Abuja

Sponsor a child with just **₦1,500!**

Budget: ₦900,000

Donation Details
 Account: **4110186347**
 Bank: Fidelity Bank
 Name: Women and Girls' Voice Advocacy Initiative

Contact Us
 08136795775 | 09063142580
 07047591819

Advocating for EVERY child



Poranee James



Prior to coming to Wales, Poranee worked at the United Nations in Bangkok. Poranee worked in the Police Department from 1976-1984, she then joined Thompson Foundation in Cardiff. She has a long record of helping others and speaking out for others when this is needed.

Belated Happy New Year to you all.

2026 Marks my 50th year of helping people from all walks of life. Whether they were/are from Sierra Leone, China, Ethiopia - my neighbours and most of all Thai people.

I do not know how and where I can begin to tell you the stories because each one is very long. I cannot count how many hundred people I have helped.

The causes have been varied but the end result has been and still is the same "success".

I have hundreds of stories to tell but no time to begin. When you meet me you may put the questions. I am sure, with my experience in solving problems and with my general knowledge, I will be able to share those with you.

I will continue to carry on helping, caring, and sharing until the day I die. My "pay to do work" is 24/7.

I have been doing my "pay to do" work long long long before I was awarded the "Life time achievement award". I have also received UN Peace Medal and also "Ambassador for Peace" from Universal Peace Federation.

Best wishes to you all.

Poranee James (PJ)

Dr Layla Jader (AKA Alfaham)

MB ChB DA MD FMPHM FLSW,



Retired Consultant in Public Health Genomics

1. Continued to strengthen my role as a member of two committees of the Learned Society of Wales: Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group and the Scrutiny Committee on Leadership in Professional, Educational and Public Sectors.
2. I was also invited to contribute to a book published in Baghdad under the heading ‘Gatherers of Light’ “Inspiring Stories of High Achieving Iraqi Women”. It covers the biography of 220 Iraqi women living in Iraq or who have immigrated from Iraq.

This book is a journey into the worlds of Iraqi women... between creativity and strength, between pain and patience, between dream and reality, and between vision and its realization.

It is a narrative for affirming the self, discovering creativity and achievements, and for overcoming obstacles while moving along a path rich with challenge, to become a tangible reality.

It is a message to all women, to know that you are a bridge that extends across the ages, a river of patience and love that never dries, and a fragrant root deep in the earth—without which life does not flourish.
