

# From Despair to Hope – How I Became a Lawyer and Psychotherapist for Abused Women and Children in Cameroon

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*Hope  
for the Abused & Battered*

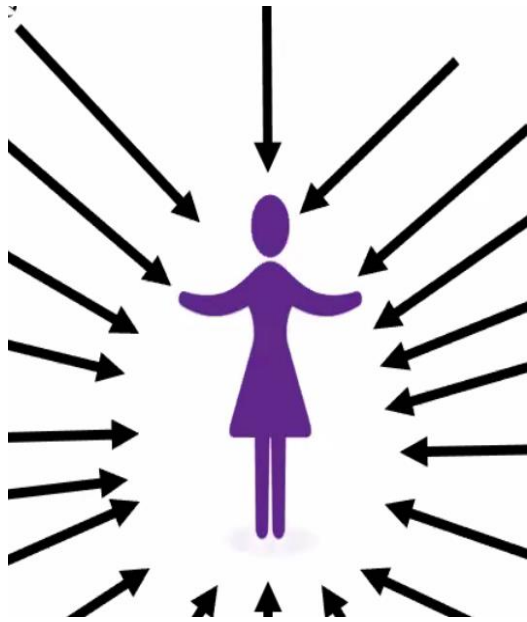


mental health matters



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## Marriage my refuge (or so I thought)

- My rocky and traumatic childhood coupled with norms and culture lure me to coax a marriage proposal.
- My mental health (state of being. It affects how we think feel and how we handle stress and relate to each other) was already on the line.
- The signs and struggles set in early like arrows from all angles.

# Despair sets in



- I had been through tough times before – but...
  - ✓ Domestic violence is different;
  - ✓ I tried to cry out for help:
  - ✓ I tried to be abusive too;
  - ✓ I tried to find solace elsewhere;
  - ✓ I tried to take my own life...

IT WAS ALL HOPELESS

# LEAVING TO LIVE

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I LEAVE MY MARRIAGE & COUNTRY  
– LEAVING MY SONS BEHIND

**26<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011**

I LAND IN BELGIUM AFTER TWO  
YEARS IN OTHER WILDERNESSES

**13<sup>TH</sup> JAN 2013**

**2<sup>ND</sup> AUG 2015**

I RETURN TO MY COUNTRY READY  
TO FACE IT ALL

# Doing all it takes

- Processing my past
- Working with a life coach
- Publishing my memoirs
- Going to see a psychiatrist and psychotherapist
- Connecting with the world through the WWW
- Putting in the work (review habits and commit to healthy ones such as balanced diet, sports, sleep pattern)



## The Phoenix always rises

- The body keeps the score;
- I can SOAR if I commit to trying;
- Obstacles don't scare the phoenix;
- Ashes can serve another purpose;
- Hence I rise to use those ashes to help all I can.



# 10<sup>TH</sup> DEC 2018: H4AB IS BORN

- Talking about our mental health means we are going crazy
- Mental health challenges and disorders as caused by witchcraft or spiritual possessions
- There is no cure for mental disorders or mental illnesses
- People living with a mental



*Hope  
for the Abused & Battered*



## HOPE FOR THE ABUSED AND BATTERED ASSOCIATION

There is hope for the abused and battered in our society

### OUR FOCUS AREAS

1. Domestic Violence and Gender Based Violence

2. Mental Health and Mental Illness

3. Adverse Childhood Experience

4. Emotional Wellness



[www.hope4abusedbattered.com](http://www.hope4abusedbattered.com)  
Infoline/Whatsapp : 672576011  
[hope@hope4abusedbattered.com](mailto:hope@hope4abusedbattered.com)

## We are in this together

- We collaborate with other organizations and people of goodwill
- It's a He4She and She4He business



## Stigma



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- **From without:** Society condemns those who left their marriages due to domestic violence – you are expected to stick it out ... and shut up if you leave or are thrown out
- **From within:** We are scared of sharing our lived experiences and our advocacy is ignored or discredited
- **Stigma affects everyone:** The whole economy takes a hit as result of a loss in income and productivity & functionality resulting from domestic violence and or mental ill-health

# Stigma



- **We have to combat stigma:** People are ashamed to talk about any mental health challenge,
- **Stigma prevents us from information & help:** Awareness about mental health leads us to have knowledge about mental health challenges and disorders, what to do, where to get help

In  
a  
nutshell

- Mine is a tale from “ HOPELESS  
...HOPEFUL
- I am on a mission no matter how bleak a lot seems especially with this other pandemic

In  
a  
nutshell

- DO NOT SUFFER IN SILENCE;  
REFUSE TO BE SILENCED
- WHEN YOU KNOW BETTER YOU  
DO BETTER
- IT'S EVERYBODY'S BUSINESS

# Meet the GMHPN team

*Marie A Abanga*  
Regional Representative  
for Africa  
Cameroon



## How and why I got into the mental health field ...

I grew up with trauma and it seemed I was helpless because I continued ending up in one traumatic relationship after the other. What was really wrong with me? Or was it with others? And then my brother, the 'perfect son' in all his ways, was diagnosed with epilepsy and the spiral began. Both my brother and I suffered from mental health problems – for me, to the point of attempting suicide. That was my wake up call.

I abandoned life as I knew it, decided to get into the mental health field in spite being a lawyer, learned and worked on myself, and then returned to the life I left behind a new woman. In the meantime I had gotten myself a label "PTSD", but I was bent on not letting that label define me. I showed up with so much pomp and pageantry, broadcasted my label, my experiences and talking about mental health like it was an ordinary subject taught in schools. I mean, why shouldn't it be right? So, another very important reason I got into the mental health field is because I want to demystify and de-stigmatize mental health and mental health conditions. If one is not stigmatized for having cancer, why should one be stigmatized for having mental health condition? That's my motivation and this led me to study psychology and became a certified cognitive behavioural therapist specialized in mental health and wellness. I now have a practice in my country Cameroon where I am a full of passion and energy pacesetter, and am currently doing a Masters as a Commonwealth Scholar and am an avid learner of all things I can lay hands on pertaining to mental health and care practices. Joining the GMHPN in 2018, is another alignment in my new mission that I am most grateful for.

## My message to others with lived experience ...

You are not that diagnosis; you have something within you the world awaits – do it for YOU too.




Global Mental Health Peer Network  
[www.gmhpn.org](http://www.gmhpn.org)



I AM ALIVE TO  
TELL IT ALL & DO  
MUCH MORE



*Hope  
for the Abused & Battered*

  
WORLD PULSE  
AMBASSADOR  
LIFTING UP THE VOICES OF  
WOMEN IN MY COMMUNITY  
[WWW.WORLDPULSE.COM](http://WWW.WORLDPULSE.COM)

  
*Hope  
for the Abused & Battered*





#domesticviolence  
#mentalhealthmatters  
#thereishope

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Email	Kindly email my organization at: <a href="mailto:hope@hope4abusedbattered.com">hope@hope4abusedbattered.com</a>
Visit	Visit our website <a href="http://www.hope4abusedbattered.com">www.hope4abusedbattered.com</a>
Give	Give us a call/WhatsApp # +237672576011

**#hopefortheabusedandbattered**

**#mentalhealthmatters**

**#notostigma**

**#thereishope**

**#bethehope**



*Hope  
for the Abused & Battered*



THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
KIND ATTENTION

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