



**THE LOOMBA FOUNDATION**  
*Caring for widows around the world*

## The Loomba Foundation Activity Report 2020-21

As we look back, 2020 has been an unprecedented year. The Covid-19 pandemic has killed many thousands of people and destroyed economy all over the world. It has spared no country. Sadly, the lockdowns and government restrictions have impacted on charities. The Loomba Foundation was no exception.

During April 2020, The Loomba Foundation donated 100,000 surgical face masks to Niti Aayog in India, to help fight against Covid-19. The Loomba Foundation worked closely with HLL Lifecare Ltd, a nodal company of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

HLL Lifecare Ltd is the main agency for the distribution of the face masks and protective equipment to all regions and population suffering from Covid-19.



Lord Loomba CBE, Founder and Chairman Trustee of the Loomba Foundation, a strong advocate for poor and needy widows across the world, emphasised why everyone should play their part, underlining that we wanted to play a small role to help the vulnerable people as the world comes together in these difficult times

Shri Amitabh Kant, CEO of NITI Aayog, thanked the Loomba Foundation, saying, "Philanthropic organisations such as yours can play a strong role in complementing the government in these difficult times by supporting us in several ways. I am ecstatic with the initiative and commitment shown by the Loomba Foundation by donating 1,00,000 surgical masks for distribution in crucial areas in India."

## International Widows Day - 23rd June 2020

*Raising awareness about the plight of widows around the world*

Lord Loomba CBE hosted a webinar to mark UN International Widows Day on 23rd June 2020 to raise awareness of the impact of COVID-19 on widows worldwide and to call for international support for widows' empowerment both financially and socially.



Chairman and Founder Trustee of the Loomba Foundation said, "As latest estimates show that there are 258 million widowed women globally and the current figures will be much higher especially as Covid-19 has exacerbated this situation. The role of local governments to support their welfare cannot be undermined, and the G20 countries must find a way to help support these and grassroots efforts to help widows."

Lord Loomba was joined on the panel by former First Lady, Mrs Cherie Blair QC CBE, President of the Loomba Foundation; Mrs Fatima Maada Bio, First Lady, Sierra Leone; Ms Simone Mensah, Vice President of the Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Foundation (Gabon); Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO (Niti Aayog), Government of India; Dr Peter Rajsingh and Mr Harjiv Singh, Trustees of the Loomba Foundation.

Mrs Blair emphasised, "During Covid-19, there are going to be many newly widowed women who will need our support as they fight these challenging times, as they are still living difficult lives in the society."

Mr Amitabh Kant, CEO Niti Aayog, Government of India agreed, saying, "The Covid-19 lockdown has left widows exposed as a vulnerable group with no access to finance to support their children or themselves." Explaining how the Indian government has ensured financial support has directly reached those widows affected, he underlined, "the role of civil societies, voluntary groups and citizens is extremely important."

Mrs Fatima Maada Bio, First Lady, Sierra Leone, highlighting the challenges faced in Sierra Leone, explained how difficult it can be for bereaved widows where cultural norms mean men often have up to four wives.

Ms Simone Mensah, Vice President, Sylvia Bongo Ondimba Foundation, joining from Gabon, was keen to stress, "It is extremely important for us to work together and change the atrocious practices against widows to support human rights. Widow empowerment is

UN Women's Statement of support for widows ahead of the day, by Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of UN Women, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, underlined the predicament widows face by saying, "We have seen the myriad ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic impacts the lives of women and men differently. Across every sphere, from health to the economy, security to social protection, the effects of the pandemic are exacerbated for women and girls."

The video of the full event can be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/M-jdoesWNwM>

## Virtual Diwali Webinar on 10th November 2020

*Empowering world widows through digital innovation*

The Loomba Foundation organised a virtual celebration of Diwali by hosting a webinar in London in partnership with Cambridge Wireless in London on 10th November 2020. The Cambridge Wireless innovation project will partner with local groups across the world, giving advice, support and technical expertise to empower widows in making the most of their abilities and ideas, laying the groundwork for future generations to benefit.



The webinar was attended by many dignitaries and supporters of the Loomba Foundation, including Mr. Rohit Kumar, Indian High Commission's First Secretary (ECO), Mr. Loknath Mishra, UK CEO of ICICI Bank, Lord Karan Bilimoria CBE DL, President of CBI and Chancellor of the Birmingham University, Mr. Jaideep Prabhu, Professor at the Cambridge University, Mr. Abhi Naha, CEO of Cambridge Wireless, Mr. Risto Harma, Author of World Widows Report, Mr. Alpesh Patel, Co-Chairman of the Advisory Council of the Loomba Foundation, Ms Bee Hayes, CEO of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, Mr. Sunil Dahiya, EVP, Global Wadhvani Foundation, Mr. Paulomi Shah, Managing Director of Goldman Sachs, Mr. Raj Gawera, UK CEO of Samsung and, of course, Lord Loomba CBE, Founder and Chairman Trustee of the Loomba Foundation.

Everyone who participated in the webinar agreed to help the Loomba Foundation to empower widows and their youths through digital innovation. The event was concluded by showing a musical video produced by Alok Prasad.

## Launch of Project Jeeva on 8th March 2021

*Empowering widows by giving them need based counselling*

The Loomba Foundation and Navjyoti India Foundation launched Project Jeeva to mark International Women's Day in Gurugram on March 8, 2021. Project *Jeeva* - Rediscovering the spirit in the lives of widows, is supported by The Loomba Foundation, and conceptualised & implemented by the Navjyoti India Foundation in association with the District Legal Services Authority, Gurugram.



A survey conducted by the NGO in the rural parts of Sohna Block, Gurugram revealed the dire economic, physical, and mental situation of these women who have lost their husbands early in life. The project aims to provide need-based counselling to the women and their families, facilitate linkages for them to avail legal aid and various welfare schemes and help build their self-esteem, confidence, and life skills.

The project was introduced by Ms. Chandni Bedi, Director of Rural Management and Training Institute, Navjyoti India Foundation. Mr. Atul Palta, Director – Skills Training and Empowerment from The Loomba Foundation shared about the mission of the Foundation and the ways skills training and employment have empowered the widows not just in India but globally as well.

Other panel members were Ms. Munmun Goyal, Advocate from District Legal Services Authority, Gurugram and Mr. Suresh Kumar Taneja, Section Officer, District Social Justice Department, Gurugram also took part in panel discussion and replied to the queries of audience.

Nirmala and Angoori Devi, two young widows who have been supported by Navjyoti India Foundation under Project Unnati, shared their success story of running a boutique and selling home-made spices. Mr. Hemant Kumar and Pawan Kumar, Team members of the Loomba Foundation were also present during the Launch of Jeeva Project. After a spirited discussion and questions from the audience, made up of widows from Sohna Block, the vote of thanks was delivered by Ms. Ujala Chaudhary, Executive Director of Navjyoti India Foundation.

During the year, the Loomba Foundation continued empowering widows and their youths in the states of Delhi, Maharashtra, West Bengal, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh in partnership with the Rotary India Literacy Mission and Rotary International Foundation.

## About Us

The Loomba Foundation was established in the UK in 1997 by Lord Raj Loomba CBE and his wife Lady Veena Loomba, in memory of Lord Loomba's mother who became a widow at the early age of 37 and succeeded educating all her seven young children single handedly.

For more information please visit our website

[www.theloombafoundation.org](http://www.theloombafoundation.org)

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