



The Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf)
cordially invites you to a webinar on

The Climate–Mind Connection: How Climate Change Affects Our Mental Health

Date: 21 November 2025
Time: 12:00 – 13:30
Venue: Zoom
RSVP: [Click here](#) to register

Background

As the planet warms, its effects extend beyond the physical environment to our emotional and mental well-being. Climate change is linked to rising levels of anxiety, depression, and stress—especially among vulnerable populations. From floods and heatwaves to economic insecurity and displacement, environmental disruptions are taking a growing psychological toll.

This webinar explores the vital yet often overlooked connection between climate change and mental health. Experts will unpack the evidence, share insights from research and practice, and discuss strategies to build resilience and support mental well-being in the face of climate uncertainty.

Objectives

- Spotlight the mental health impacts of climate change.
- Encourage dialogue between researchers, policymakers, and practitioners.
- Share community-based and culturally relevant resilience approaches.
- Recommend pathways to integrate mental health into climate policy.

PROGRAMME

12:00 – 12:10	Welcome and Introductory Remarks Professor Caradee Wright , SAMRC
12:10 – 12:30	<i>Understanding and Supporting Eco-Anxiety in Children and Young People</i> Dr Caroline Hickman , University of Bath (UK)
12:30 – 12:50	<i>Youth Mental Health in the Era of Climate Change: A Culturally Grounded Approach to Building Psychological Resilience in Africa</i> Professor Deliwe Phetlhu , Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)
12:50 – 13:10	<i>Climate, Mind, and Society: Advancing Psychological Resilience through Global and Local Lenses.</i> Mr Thomas Nimo , Clinical Health Psychologist , Center for Wellness Research, Accra, Ghana
13:10 – 13:30	Q&A
13:30 – 13:40	Concluding Remarks Professor Caradee Wright





The Climate–Mind Connection: How Climate Change Affects Our Mental Health

MODERATOR



Professor Caradee Wright (PhD in Preventive and Social Medicine) is a Chief Specialist Scientist at the South African Medical Research Council leading the Climate and Health Research Programme. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the University of Pretoria and the University of Johannesburg. Her research is in environmental health epidemiology to understand climate change and air pollution impacts on human health and well-being to inform adaptation, interventions and policy development in Africa. Her research fields also include solar ultraviolet radiation dosimetry and skin cancer prevention.

Dr Wright has published more than 180 research articles in peer-reviewed accredited journals. Dr Wright was a Committee member of the World Health Organization Air Quality Guidelines Committee, an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Assessment Report 6 Africa Chapter Author, a Chapter Lead Author of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) / Stockholm Environment Institute African Assessment on Climate Change and Human Health and an author of several recently published UNEP reports. Dr Wright is currently Technical Advisor to the World Health Organization (Air Quality, Ethics), the International Livestock Research Institute (One Health), and the Health Effects Institute (Global Health Oversight Committee); the Clean Air Fund (Grants and Charitable Activities Committee); and a Review Lead for the National Institute of Health (NIH) / Nature Journal Collection on Data Science for Health in Africa (Environmental Health / Climate Change). Dr Wright was named as one of the 2024 NIH Climate and Health Scholars and is working with the Fogarty International Centre.

SPEAKERS



Dr Caroline Hickman is a psychotherapist, lecturer, and researcher at the University of Bath, with extensive experience in social work and psychotherapy. She holds a BA (Hons) in Applied Social Studies with Social Work from Sheffield Hallam University and has worked in mental health and child and family services in South London. Since joining the University of Bath in 2008, she has focused on the psychological dimensions of the climate and ecological crisis, studying children and young people's emotional relationships with nature in the UK, Maldives, South Pacific, and other vulnerable regions. Her research explores eco-anxiety, resilience, and emotional responses such as grief, guilt, and hope in the context of environmental change. Caroline serves on the Executive Committee of the Climate Psychology Alliance, develops therapeutic and educational programs, and contributes to initiatives like XR Wellbeing and the Deep Adaptation Forum. Her TEDx talk and publications highlight the need to address psychological barriers to climate action.



Mr Thomas Kwame Atta Osei Nimo is a Clinical Health Psychologist whose research bridges mental health and environmental change in West Africa. He holds advanced training in clinical health psychology and specialises in psychological capital, coping strategies and distress among individuals affected by chronic illness and ecological disruptions.

In his recent work, Nimo explores how phenomena such as eco-anxiety, climate worry, resilience and psychological responses to environmental change manifest in Ghanaian and broader African contexts. In a 2025 article he examines "Coping strategies for climate change anxiety: a perspective on building resilience through psychological capital" which positions positive-psychology interventions (optimism, self-efficacy, hope) as tools for managing climate-related mental health burdens.

Through his combined clinical practice and research, he aims to inform mental-health policy and intervention in settings vulnerable to climate shocks, emphasising the emotional as well as physical dimensions of climate change.



Professor Deliwe Rene Phetlhu has been appointed Head of the Department of Nursing Science (DNS) at the School of Health Care Sciences, Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU). A seasoned academic and leader, she previously served as Programme Director for the Global Fund TB Programme at TB HIV Care. She has held multiple strategic and leadership roles at the University of the Western Cape, including Head of the Centre for Teaching and Learning Scholarship (CENTALS), Head of Clinical Programmes, and Head of Teaching and Learning. Prof Phetlhu has also served as Head of Department (Nursing Science) and Senior Lecturer at North-West University and as Programme Director for Communicable Diseases at the North West Government, overseeing TB, HIV, and immunization programmes. She has supervised numerous master's and doctoral candidates and continues to do so. Prof Phetlhu has multiple publications in peer-reviewed journals, contributed a chapter to a Community Nursing Science book, and serves as reviewer for various institutions, including NRF, as well as associate editor for an international journal.