



2024 Annual Report

SOCIETY FOR PRE AND POST NATAL SERVICES

(SPANS)



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**From the
The Secretary and Chief Talent
Team Leader's DESK.**

Dear Team,

As we close out another remarkable year, I want to take a moment to reflect on our collective achievements and set the stage for an even more promising future. Our collective dedication, innovative spirit, and unwavering commitment to excellence have been the driving forces behind our success.

Our organization has continued to provide exceptional pre and postnatal services, ensuring that families receive the highest standard of care during one of the most critical phases of their lives. Our commitment to excellence has been unwavering, and this year we have reached new heights, touching more lives and making a substantial impact in our community.

One of our most notable achievements this year was our hosting of the 3rd International Conference on Maternal Mental Health in Africa (ICAMMHA). Our contributions to this global forum not only highlighted our work but also reinforced our position as leaders in the field. The insights gained and connections made at this conference have been invaluable, and will undoubtedly propel us forward in our mission.

In addition to our exceptional maternal services, we have also made significant strides in our mental health training programs. Our diploma in mental health training continues to empower future professionals, equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary to make a meaningful difference. This year, we have continued to enroll students, a testament to the quality and relevance of our programs.

Looking ahead, we have several ambitious projects on the horizon. We remain committed to innovation, compassion, and collaboration, which are the cornerstones of our success. Our focus will be on expanding our reach, enhancing our services, and continuing to lead in both pre and postnatal care, and mental health training.

Thank you for your relentless dedication, passion and hard work. Together, we will continue to achieve extraordinary things and make a lasting impact on the lives of those we serve.

With deepest gratitude and excitement for the future,

Linos Muvhu.

Mission:

Society for Pre and Post Natal Services (SPANS) is dedicated to enhancing mental health care services utilisation and improve quality of life in the community through effective therapy, training and support. We strive to become a household name in mental health care, creating a positive impact on the society through our services.

Vision:

We envision a world where mental health is recognised as essential to overall well-being and everyone has access to the resources they need to thrive. We see ourselves leading the way in promoting mental health care through innovative evidence-based programs.

About Us.

At Society for Pre and Post Natal Services (SPANS), we are dedicated to advocating for

mental health care in Zimbabwe. Our team of qualified family therapist, educators and volunteers work tirelessly to promote positive and sustainable change for families and communities.

Since our establishment in 2010, we have been at the forefront of perinatal mental health care advocacy and we continue to evolve rapidly. Today, our focus has expanded to include training competent mental health therapists through our Vocational Training Institute.

At SPANS, we believe that everyone deserves access to quality mental health care. Through our innovative programs, services and advocacy, we are committed to promoting mental health care and creating a positive impact on society.

Introduction



As we reflect on the year 2024 at the Society for Pre and Post Natal Services (SPANS), we are proud to share our achievements and on-going commitment to improving maternal mental health in our communities. Founded with the mission to support women during the critical perinatal period, SPANS has made significant strides in addressing the mental health needs of mothers and their families.

SPANS's mission is to become a household name in providing effective clinical practice of family therapy/counselling, training, psychological support, research and education, not only to save lives, but to improve mental health- care utilization and improve quality of life in communities- locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

We do so by:

Mental health education-prevention is better than cure so we educating women about the importance of sound mental health;

Training the next generation of family therapists: SPANS initiated a diploma in Systematic Family Therapy and Developmental Counselling in Maternal, Paternal and Child Mental Health course to close Zimbabwe's human resource gap;

Individual and Family Therapy Sessions: SPANS uses the systemic thinking in addressing mental health problems that affect families coupled with subsequent sessions using the booking system for those women who come for the routine antenatal and post-natal care visits and

Community Awareness Raising:

We are the organisers of the "International Conference on Maternal Mental Health in Africa"

(ICAMMHA) the biggest Afrocentric conference focused on promoting maternal, paternal, and child mental health which is an important day to the African continent.

Over the past year, we have expanded our outreach efforts, reaching more women than ever before. Our programs provide vital mental health support through family therapy sessions, referral, screening, continued support coupled with subsequent sessions, peer support groups, and strengthening health education with a particular interest in mental health, educational workshops, all designed to empower mothers and promote their well-being. Through strong partnerships with healthcare providers and community organizations, we have enhanced our referral systems and increased awareness of the importance of perinatal mental health.

This report highlights our key initiatives, the impact of our services, and the voices of the women we serve. We have seen remarkable improvements in mental health outcomes, demonstrating the effectiveness of our integrated approach. Our dedicated team of professionals, many of whom have lived experiences related to maternal mental health, remains committed to providing compassionate care and fostering a supportive environment for all.

As we look ahead, we are excited to build on our successes, adapt to emerging challenges, and expand our services to meet the growing needs of our community. Together, we can continue to create a brighter future for mothers and their children. Thank you for your support in this vital mission.

Strengthening mental health education

Mental health education is a cornerstone of effective community health initiatives, particularly in addressing the unique challenges faced by mothers during the perinatal period. At the SPANS, we recognize that empowering individuals, families and couples with knowledge is essential for fostering a supportive environment where mental health is prioritized and stigma is reduced.

Raising Awareness

One of our primary goals is to raise awareness about perinatal mental health issues. Through workshops, community seminars, and informational campaigns, we educate families about the signs and symptoms of mental health conditions such as postpartum depression and anxiety. By providing clear, accessible information, we help individuals recognize when to seek help, ultimately leading to earlier intervention and better outcomes.

In line with the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between SPANS and the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the organization pushes to deliver these mental health education sessions every weekday reaching approximately 40 women a day, amounting to approximately more or less than 280 women per week amounting to roughly 13440 women annually. Mental Health education has been emphasized for a long time and our duty is to strengthen it. Therefore, mental health education programs aim to increase understanding, informed consent, awareness, recognition, self-efficacy which can effectively promote sound mental health. By equipping individuals and families with critical thinking skills, mental health education can empower them to make sound health decisions.

Mental Health education fosters a sense of empowerment and autonomy among individuals and families.

We conduct regular community workshops that focus on various aspects of mental health, including stress management, coping strategies, and self-care techniques. These sessions are designed to be interactive and engaging, allowing participants to share their experiences and learn from one another. By creating a safe space for open dialogue, we foster a sense of community and support among attendees

Partnering with, healthcare providers, and community organizations such as the National Aids Council (NAC), Chiedza Chenyika and SMILES Zimbabwe amplifies our reach. Collaborative efforts allow us to integrate mental health education into existing programs, ensuring that information is disseminated through trusted channels. For example, training healthcare providers such as our trained family therapists to recognize mental health issues during routine check-ups helps create a more holistic approach to maternal care.

To assess the effectiveness of our educational initiatives, we regularly gather feedback from participants and track changes in awareness and attitudes toward mental health. This data informs our programs, helping us refine our approach and better serve the community's needs.

Family therapy for social issues

At the SPPNS we recognize that social issues significantly impact mental health, particularly during the perinatal period. Our family therapy services are designed to address these social challenges, providing support to mothers as they navigate the complexities of their lives.

Addressing Social Determinants of Health

Social determinants such as economic stability, education, social support, and access to healthcare play a crucial role in mental health outcomes. Our family therapists are trained to screen, provide family therapy sessions coupled with sequent sessions, early referral, continued on-going supportive family therapy identify and address these factors, helping clients understand how their social environments influence their well-being. By offering tailored family therapy sessions, we empower mothers and their families to develop coping strategies and navigate the challenges they face.

In addition to mental health support, our program recognizes the importance of family therapy for social issues that arise within the perinatal period and for women of reproductive age. SPANS uses the systemic thinking in addressing mental health problems that affect families coupled with subsequent sessions using the booking system for those women who come for the routine antenatal and post-natal care visits as well as the rest of the community that need the service. Many mothers face social challenges such as domestic violence, financial instability, and lack of support systems. Our trained family therapists provide a safe space for these mothers to discuss their concerns, facilitating access to resources and support networks that can significantly improve their well-being. As an organization we have also adapted the use of the PHQ-9 as a mental health screening tool as

it has made our sessions easier. Follow-up surveys indicate that 75% of participants report reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression after six months. By addressing both the psychological and social aspects of perinatal health, we have made substantial strides in improving the overall well-being of women during this critical life stage

Individual and family therapy session

We provide both individual and family therapy sessions aimed at addressing specific social issues. Individual therapy allows for personalized support, enabling clients to explore their unique circumstances, such as relationship struggles, financial stress, or isolation. Group therapy fosters a sense of community, allowing participants to share experiences and support one another in a safe environment. This peer interaction can be incredibly validating and helps reduce feelings of loneliness and stigma.

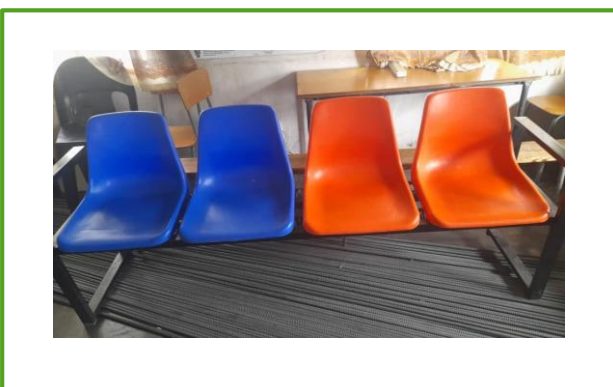
Many mothers face challenges related to their relationships, whether with partners, family members, or friends. Our Family therapy services focus on improving communication skills, resolving conflicts, and building healthy relationships. By helping clients navigate these dynamics, we aim to strengthen their support systems, which are essential for mental well-being.

Providing therapy for social issues is a critical component of our mission at SPANS. By addressing the social determinants that impact mental health, we support mothers in overcoming obstacles and achieving better mental health outcomes. Our comprehensive approach, which combines therapy, case management, resource navigation, and education, empowers women to build stronger, healthier lives for themselves and their families. Through these efforts, we aim to create a supportive community where every mother has the tools to thrive.

Lion's gala to fundraise for issues relating to perinatal mental health.

The LIONS Club in collaboration with SPANS are working to improve the infrastructure at the Ruwa clinic to improve the day to day experience of mothers and their families when they come for their antenatal routine check-ups as well as inquires at the clinic. This is to make the environment more safe and welcoming and to show the importance of the members of the community.

Donation from Africa giving.



SPANS received a donation from the Africa Giving organization in 2024. This donation was used to purchase benches to be used during the antenatal routine check-ups, mental health education as well as our peer group sessions. As an organization we faced a challenge of having shortage of furniture to use in our daily activities. It is widely known that it is not advisable for pregnant women to stand for a very long. Shortage of these benches, led to uncomfortable

antenatal care routine check-ups as they had to stand for a very long time whilst waiting for their turn to be assisted. This also resulted in passive listening during our mental health sessions as they would have been exhausted from the standing. In turn, we are grateful to Africa Giving for the donation.

ZIMNAMH succeed initiative Ruwa.

SPANS had the opportunity to attend to a workshop which was held at Ruwa Rehabilitation Centre by Zimbabwe National Association for Mental Health (ZIMNAMH) which aimed to promote the recognition on the rights of people with mental health challenges through advocacy and lobbying. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI, 2022), psychosis can occur in various mental health disorders, including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and severe depression. We have come to recognize that psychosis is a significant mental health issue characterized by a disconnection from reality, often manifesting through symptoms such as hallucinations and delusions. Understanding psychosis is vital for fostering mental health awareness, combating stigma, and promoting early intervention. SPANS as a stakeholder of the Ruwa community participates in the Support Comprehensive Care and Empowerment for people with psycho social Disability in Africa. The main aims were for a community rehabilitation approach whereby the community comes together to assist as well as using the Asset Based Community Approach, whereby the projects would be based on skills for livelihood as well as being rehabilitated within the comfort of their communities. Our role as an organization is to assist and identify individuals who can benefit from the program.

Zimbabwe alliance for maternal mental health (ZAMMH) initiative.

The Zimbabwe Alliance currently comprises of three national organizations working to improve the mental health of pregnant and postpartum mothers in Zimbabwe.

1. SPANS - who provide education and ongoing supportive family therapy and psychological support to the community.
2. The RhoNaFlo Foundation - a maternal health organization supporting vulnerable teenage mothers and their babies.
3. S.A.L.T Africa - working in the field of maternal mental health, suicide prevention, prison rehabilitation and drug and alcohol dependence.

The alliance aims for collaborations and support, global partnerships, community engagement, funding and resources as well as aiming for research and partnerships as well as advocating for change.

Main Focus Areas

Education	Training programs and resources to drive them.
Research	Clinical trials Data analysis
Advocacy	Policy change Awareness and lobbying
Collaboration	Shared vision Shared resources
Sustainability	Scalability Funding Monitoring
Maternal Mental Health Calendar	To guide the team throughout the year as well as commemorating all days that celebrates mental health throughout the globe. Have targeted campaigns

In October 2024, members of the alliance met at SPANS Vocational Training institute for a meeting that aimed at trying and working on an intervention that would address maternal mental health issues in Zimbabwe. The meeting was inclusive of women with lived experience in maternal mental health issues for deep insights of what could actually work given some of the women had gone through the trauma. Discussions held aimed to have an intervention with:

1. **Localized tools with cultural relevance** - tools that resonate with the African culture.
2. **Language accessibility** - availability in local languages.
3. **Community engagement**- local stakeholders in the design and implementation of the intervention whilst promoting **community ownership**.
4. **Adaptability** - creation of tools that could be easily modified to address the evolving needs of the community to address maternal mental health issues.

Overall, the meeting as well as the alliance strive to address maternal mental health issues, educating communities and raising awareness whilst addressing stigma surrounding perinatal mental health.

Lobby for creation of family therapist post within the ministry's mental health organogram.

Ministry of Health and Child Care acknowledged our request to consider the creation of family therapists' posts in the Mental Health organogram. Training the next generation of family therapists is our major goal as SPANS through our initiated Diploma in Systematic Family Therapy and Developmental Counselling in Maternal, Paternal and Child Mental Health course to close Zimbabwe's human resource gap. Ultimately, fostering collaboration between local health authorities and educational institutions can ensure that family therapists are not only well-trained

but also embedded in the community, creating a sustainable network capable of addressing the ongoing mental health needs of mothers and families. Developing a robust cadre of family therapists within local communities could offer a sustainable solution enabling support systems that address not only the individual needs of mothers but also the broader family context. By embedding therapists within Zimbabwean communities, we can facilitate culturally relevant care, improve accessibility, and promote mental wellness, ultimately seeking to enhance overall family health outcomes. Such initiatives could significantly contribute to breaking the cycle of poverty and improving societal resilience against mental health challenges. We would like to thank the ministry (MOHCC), the Allied Health Board and CPCAB for their continued support in this initiative.

All correspondences to be addressed
to the Permanent **Secretary for
Health and Child Care**
Telephone: +263-242-730011



Reference:
Ministry of Health and Child Care
P.O. Box CY1122
Causeway
HARARE

21 October 2024

SPANS Secretary and Chief Talent Team Leader

Society for Pre and Post Natal Services

Attention: Mr. Linos Muvhu

**RE: CREATION OF FAMILY THERAPISTS POST BEING ON THE MENTAL
HEALTH ORGANOGRAM**

The above subject matter and your minute dated 11 June 2024 refers.

The Ministry of Health and Child Care acknowledges receipt of your request for creation of Family Therapists' posts on the Ministry's organogram. Please be advised that your request is being considered and you will be advised of the outcome in due course.



Dr. A. J. V. Maunganidze
PERMANENT SECRETARY - MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND CHILD CARE

Letter from the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

SPANS vocational training institute.

2024 Enrollment

During the year 2024, our institution experienced a notable influx of new students. A total of 77 students enrolled, comprising 8 males and 69 females. This significant intake brought the overall student population to 397 by December 2024.

The enrollment process was divided into four distinct intakes, each with its unique characteristics. The first intake occurred in February, with classes commencing on February 24 and concluding on March 1, 2024. This intake saw a total of 25 students, consisting of 1 male and 24 female. Additionally, a weekend class was enrolled which had 15 students, 1 male and 14 females.

The subsequent intake took place in May, spanning from May 6 to May 10, 2024. During this period, 12 students enrolled, comprising 1 male and 11 females.

The July intake witnessed the enrollment of 10 students, with 2 males and 8 females joining our institution.

Lastly, the October intake, which took place from October 7 to October 11, 2024, saw the enrollment of 10 female students. A weekend class was also conducted, commencing on October 19 and concluding on November 2, 2024 and it had 5 students 3 males and 2 females.

In conclusion, the 2024 enrollment period was marked by a substantial increase in student numbers. Our institution remains committed to providing quality education and support services to our diverse student body.

Training and development initiatives

Throughout 2024, our institution conducted comprehensive tutorials on a block release basis. Students received notes, completed assignments, and participated in group presentations. At the end of each block, students sat for exams. To accommodate diverse schedules, we offered both midweek and weekend classes.

HIV rapid testing training

A significant achievement in 2024 was the successful training of 217 students in HIV Rapid Testing. This cohort comprised 129 (inclusive of all groups) students who graduated, 46 students who sat for their final exams in December 2024, and 42 students currently on attachment.

Attachment program

In collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC), our institution facilitated the deployment of Family Therapists (FTs) to general hospitals for industrial learning. Over 104 students were dispatched in two batches: January to March 2024 (64 students) and May to July 2024 (50 students). These FTs were assigned to various provinces across Zimbabwe, including Harare, Midlands, Mashonaland, Masvingo, Mashonaland West, Mashonaland East, Manicaland, and Bulawayo.

Placement Areas

During their attachment, Family Therapists gained valuable experience working in diverse units within hospitals. These areas included Antenatal Care (ANC), Neonatal Care (NNC), Outpatient Departments (OPD), Opportunistic Infections (OI), High Dependency Units (HDU), and Family Child Health (FCH) units.

Institutional Support

The institution provided students with necessary resources, including screening tools, files, logbooks, attachment case presentations, industrial attachment schedules, and attachment objectives.

The year 2024 marked significant milestones in our institution's training and development initiatives. We successfully conducted tutorials, provided HIV Rapid Testing training, and facilitated industrial learning opportunities for Family Therapists. Our partnership with the Ministry of Health and Child Care enabled us to fulfill our agreement, covering almost all 10 provinces in Zimbabwe.

SPANS Objectives for attachment:

- Linked academic theory to practice in family mental health therapy;
- Applied knowledge, skills and experience to a work environment;
- Acquired new learning through challenging and meaningful activities;
- Demonstrated professional skills in the workplace;
- Built and maintained positive professional relationships;
- Demonstrated awareness of community and/or organizational issues;
- Identified, clarified and/or confirmed professional direction as it relates to their academic studies and future career path;
- Developed self-understanding, self-discipline, maturity and confidence;
- Developed strong networking/mentoring relationships.

Duties

- The Family Therapist student works with people experiencing a wide range of emotional and psychological problems to help them bring about effective change and/or enhance their wellbeing.

- The Family Therapist student will talk to people to support them to overcome difficulties. Family Therapists do not diagnose issues. They help people to recognize and define their emotional, health, mental and lifestyle problems and to understand themselves and their behavior better.
- The Family Therapist student will work directly with patients/clients to evaluate their mental health needs, conduct mental health evaluations, and provide counselling services to help their clients come up with informed decisions.
- The students will work with people experiencing a wide range of emotional and psychological problems to help them bring about effective change and/or enhance their wellbeing.
- The students will do assessment of client's mental health status (Taking mental health temperature) through the use of the screening tool and refer appropriately.
- The students will hold sessions with individuals and groups and families in a safe and confidential environment. They will encourage their clients to examine their choices and find their own ways to make positive change.
- Collaborate on intervention plans with other mental health specialists, doctors, nurses, and social workers.
- They students will help people to deal with a wide range of mental health concerns and conditions, including:
 - *Pre and post natal issues*
 - *anxiety*
 - *depression*
 - *relationship problems*
 - *trauma*
 - *eating disorders*
 - *learning difficulties*
 - *substance abuse*
 - *parenting issues*
 - *loss or grief*
 - *managing the effects of a chronic illness*
 - *stress management*
 - *HIV and AIDS testing and counselling*
 - *helping people move on through life*
 - *Suicide*
 - *Special populations*
 - *Culture diversity.*

Mental health screening tool workshop training

In 2024, our institution conducted two comprehensive workshop training sessions for Family Therapist (FTs) The MoHCC facilitated the training, which focused on Mental Health Screening

Tools. The first workshop, held in April 2024, catered to 50 students who underwent attachment from May to July. The second workshop, conducted in December, prepared 42 students currently on attachment.

Workshop Training Objectives

The workshop training equipped FTs with essential skills and knowledge on various mental health disorders, including depression, anxiety, and suicide. Participants learned how to handle real-life issues and administer different mental health screening tools, such as PHQ-9, GAD-7, CAGE, and DUST.

External verification visits

The institution underwent two external verification visits in 2024. The first online visit, conducted by CPCAB (course accreditation body) on September 6, reviewed student assignments and projects. CPCAB provided a comprehensive feedback report. The second visit, held on November 15, was conducted by the Allied Health Practitioners Council of Zimbabwe (AHPCZ), which regulates counselors and training institutions in Zimbabwe.

Final Examinations.

In 2024, the institution administered two rounds of final examinations. The first group, comprising 64 students, took their exams from August 26 to 30, subsequently graduating in November 2024. The second group, consisting of 46 students, completed their exams from December 9 to 13. Despite a few students withdrawing due to incomplete modules, the institution is currently awaiting the release of their results and the subsequent graduation.

SPANS vocational training institute 2nd graduation ceremony.

On November 23, 2024, the SPANS Vocational Training Institute managed to host its 2nd graduation at the Jubilee Centre in Milton Park. The event celebrated 104 graduates, including 92 females and



Dr. Chipso Chimamisa - Addressing the graduates.

12 males, who successfully completed the Family Therapist program. The second graduation ceremony and presentation of graduates of the SPANS Vocational Training Institute was attended by Dr. A.V.J. Maunganidze, the Permanent Secretary for Health and Child Care, who was represented by Dr. Chipso Chimamisa from the Family Health Directorate.

The year 2024 witnessed pivotal advancements in our institution's training and development programs. We effectively conducted tutorials, offered HIV Rapid Testing training, and facilitated industrial learning opportunities for Family Therapists. Our collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) enabled us to fulfill our commitment, reaching nearly all 10 provinces in Zimbabwe. Since its inception in 2019, the institute has enrolled over 500 students. The successful graduation ceremony aligns with the organization's mission to mitigate the human capital shortage in the mental health sector by training a new generation of qualified family therapists. The effectiveness of the initiative is evidenced by the fact that the institute managed to deploy 68 students to various attachments across the country's ten provinces between January and September

2024, as per the memorandum of understanding signed between SPANS and the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

Throughout the academic year, students engaged in intensive tutorials for several weeks, followed by periods of individual study, all conducted on a block release basis. The training program spans two years. In addition to study notes, students were assessed through in-class evaluations, assignments, group projects, and block exams at the end of each session. These examinations were



designed to measure the students' proficiency in utilizing counseling approaches to address various mental health concerns.

3rd International Conference on Maternal Mental Health (ICAMMHA).

The Society for Pre and Post Natal Services managed to organise and host the 3rd ICAMMHA in December 2024 in Victoria Falls themed **“The future of perinatal mental health.”** The conference had a total of over 150 attendees both in person and virtually from across the globe. ICAMMHA was indeed successful as it had presenters from various presenters from different professionals whom had various integrated presenters on perinatal mental health issues and how to advocate and address the stigma surrounding perinatal mental health.

ICAMMHA, as a new flagship mental health conference, focuses on innovation in Maternal

Mental Health in Africa with emphasis on research and practice. The conference features world-class plenary speeches, distinguished Symposium talks, exhibits, oral and poster sessions, debates, and panels. The goal is to push the agenda of perinatal mental health across the globe while it helps us in researches, scientific evidence and evidence based interventions. The goal is to make ICAMMHA the biggest Afro-centric conference focused on promoting maternal, paternal, and child mental health which is an important day to the African continent.



A glimpse of the ICAMMHA 2024, more can be seen on the ICAMMHA website.

Integration of mental health and nutrition workshops

Last year, SPANS conducted a nutrition workshop facilitated by a nutritionist from Nestlé, aimed at educating participants on the importance of nutrition during the perinatal stage, which encompasses the period from 20 weeks of gestation to one month postpartum. The workshop attracted a diverse group of participants, including expectant and new mothers, healthcare professionals, and community health workers, all eager to learn about the critical relationship between nutrition and physical health for both mothers and infants. A primary focus of the workshop was the nutritional requirements during pregnancy and lactation. Participants engaged in discussions about how to incorporate essential nutrients into their daily diets, sharing personal experiences and challenges. The interactive nature of the workshop highlighted that while nutritional guidelines are straightforward, the reality for many mothers can be complex.

The workshop also addressed infant nutrition, stressing the importance of breastfeeding, particularly the recommendation for exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. This topic ignited passionate conversations among attendees, who shared their journeys and obstacles faced. The facilitator provided practical tips for new mothers, underscoring the significance of hydration and meal planning. Additionally, safe postpartum exercises were introduced, highlighting the benefits of pelvic floor exercises and gentle activities to aid recovery and improve mental health. The dual benefits of physical activity were emphasized, demonstrating that it facilitates recovery

while serving as a positive outlet for stress relief. Throughout the workshop, the importance of support systems was reinforced, encouraging participants to lean on family and friends and to seek professional help when needed.

Partnerships

Fathers Against Abuse

SPANS attended a meeting organized by **Fathers Against Abuse** in Caledonia East View, which provided an important platform for discussing gender-based violence and the often-overlooked experiences of men. The meeting underscored the necessity of recognizing that gender-based violence affects individuals of all genders. Many men suffer from abuse at home, yet cultural stereotypes frequently silence their experiences. The workshop highlighted the need to dismantle these stigmas and create a supportive environment for all victims of abuse. Additionally, discussions focused on the importance of awareness campaigns, including radio shows and roadshows, to educate the community on these issues.

National Aids Council

A key aspect of our program is our partnership with the National AIDS Council, which has been instrumental in our efforts to combat the spread of HIV. Through this collaboration, SPANS has been provided with HIV self-testing kits, making it easier for mothers to get tested and know their status. This initiative aligns with our goal of achieving the 95-95-95 targets: 95% of people living with HIV knowing their status, 95% of those diagnosed receiving sustained antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of those on treatment achieving viral suppression. We believe that by integrating HIV education and testing into our program, we can significantly reduce the stigma surrounding the disease and encourage more individuals to seek testing and treatment.

The organization managed to attend the **NAC Research Symposium** that was held in October 2024 themed “accelerating 95-95-95 targets among children”, so as to gain more insight on issues relating to the mother to child transmission, prevention and treatment as well as cross cutting issues within the community. This in turn helps the organization deliver health education and therapy sessions with up-to date information. Throughout the year, as an organization we made it a priority to attend all stakeholder meetings as well as the task force meetings.

Ministry of women affairs pertaining gender based violence issues

As an organization that works to improve mental health of women in 2024 we were privileged as an organization to attend an essential meeting hosted by the Ministry of Women Affairs. Significant issues pertaining to women's affairs, specifically gender-based violence (GBV) and women's rights, were covered at this meeting. Gender-based violence is defined as harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It encompasses various forms of violence, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse (World Health Organization). During the meeting, experts emphasized that GBV is not only a violation of human rights but also a public health issue that

affects women disproportionately across different cultures and societies. Effective protection of women's rights requires the establishment or strengthening of legal frameworks. The discussion included references to international treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which obligates signatory states to eliminate discrimination against women in all forms. Other instruments included the National Gender Policy (2024–2030), which was implemented to end gender discrimination and inequality in all areas of life and has eleven themes. As an organization that works with women, it is an honour to be considered a stakeholder and to be in a position to support and raise awareness within communities on gender based violence.

Mental health celebrations and stakeholder engagement

Our institution actively participated in mental health celebrations and stakeholder engagement initiatives. We commemorated World Mental Health Day in May by collaborating with stakeholders concerned with mental health. Through a stakeholder engagement with STAR FM Zimbabwe, we educated the nation on mental health issues via radio. Furthermore, on May 23, 2025, we showcased and marketed our Diploma program at the 3rd AHPCZ Conference, themed "Navigating Healthcare Post-COVID-19 Period.



SPANS students - Mental Health Day, 2024.

UNICEF -ELNINO

SPANS attended the Nutrition Sector Coordination Monthly Meeting at UNICEF headquarters. There, we had to present on our 2024 plans of the year which were based on emergency response for cholera, El Nino and nutrition. SPANS planned to give support through health educations and awareness to its clients and promised to collaborate with other organizations in order to render the best quality services for a better well-being. The organization also planned to track the nutrition status on children under the age of 5 by measuring their Middle Upper Arm Circumference MUAC.

SPANS was part of the **World Autism Acceptance Day** by the Harare Metropolitan Province Directorate which was themed "A day that focus on stories empowerment, challenges faced and the victories achieved in aligning SDGs with AUTISM AWARENESS". Autism was a mental health condition rarely celebrated and this marked as its first commemorated day in Zimbabwe and the Ministry of Health and Child Care is striving to make a difference starting with the need for awareness in the community so that we move away from stigmatization, superstition, exclusion and marginalization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, SPANS has made significant strides in promoting mental health awareness and support in Zimbabwe. Through our innovative and practical course, we have trained and deployed qualified Family Therapists and counsellors who can provide mental health care to families in need. We have also reached out to thousands of families with our mental health literacy program, which educates them on the importance of mental well-being and the available resources. Our achievements are aligned with the national and global policies and goals on mental health, and we are committed to continue our efforts to address the gap in human resources for mental health in this Country.

Contact details.

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