



SOCIETY FOR PRE AND POST NATAL SERVICES (SPANS)
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The Society for Pre and Post Natal Services (SPANS) has been a steadfast advocate for the well-being of mothers, children, and families in Mashonaland East and other parts of Zimbabwe. Our commitment extends beyond physical health to encompass the critical, yet often overlooked, domain of perinatal mental health. We have initiated several vital programs aimed at strengthening mental health support within communities such as the process of establishing a wellness centre, training of family therapists in addition to our ongoing initiatives such as mental health literacy, the International Conference on Maternal Mental Health in Africa (ICAMMHA) and individual/family therapy. However, the progress of these crucial activities is significantly hampered by a severe lack of funding, jeopardizing our ability to meet the escalating mental health needs of the region. This report details the current state of our mental health initiatives, highlighting the profound impact of insufficient financial resources and underscoring the urgent need for philanthropic support to unlock a pathway to wellness for the people of Mashonaland East.

The mental health landscape in Zimbabwe, and particularly in Mashonaland East, presents significant challenges. A 2022 report by the World Health Organization (WHO) indicated that mental health services in low-income countries often receive inadequate funding, leading to substantial treatment gaps. This reality is acutely felt within our operations, where the demand for mental health support far outstrips the available resources.

Establishment and Service Fee for a Toll-Free Line

SPANS has been working on attaining its own toll-free mental health helpline offering an immediate, confidential, and accessible avenue for individuals experiencing psychological distress to seek support. This service is particularly vital in a region where access to physical mental health facilities is limited and for our clients who have to travel a long distance to access services. The establishment and ongoing service fee for a toll-free mental health line are currently beyond our financial capabilities. This means that a critical lifeline for individuals in crisis remains unavailable. The absence of such a service leaves many feeling isolated and without immediate recourse during moments of acute distress, potentially leading to tragic outcomes. The cost of setting up and maintaining such a line, including telecommunications infrastructure and trained operators, is a significant barrier that only external funding can overcome.

Unlocking a Pathway to Wellness: Opening a Wellness Centre

The ultimate goal of SPANS is to establish a comprehensive wellness center in Mashonaland East, a dedicated space offering a range of mental health services, including counseling, group therapy, psychoeducation, and recreational activities. This center would serve as a beacon of hope, providing a safe and supportive environment for individuals on their journey to recovery. The dream of unlocking a pathway to wellness through the opening of a dedicated wellness center remains unrealized due to the substantial capital investment required for property acquisition, renovation, equipment, and initial operational costs. This ambitious yet essential project is currently stalled, leaving a significant gap in the provision of holistic mental health care in the region. A wellness center would not only provide direct services but also serve as a hub for community engagement, research, and advocacy, fostering a culture of mental well-being.

Mental health literacy

In its ongoing efforts,

SPANS has provided vital mental health education and support services to a target population of over 2000 mothers. Enhancing access to mental health services during the pre and postnatal periods is crucial for several reasons. Maternal mental health is essential to the well-being of both mothers and their children. During the perinatal period, women are particularly vulnerable to mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and postpartum psychosis. If left untreated, these conditions can have severe consequences for the mother's ability to care for herself and her child, potentially affecting the child's development and long-term health outcomes. Furthermore, research indicates that maternal mental health issues can have intergenerational effects, influencing the mental health and well-being of children and other family members. By increasing access to mental health services during the pre and postnatal periods, SPANS can identify and address potential issues early, thereby reducing the risk of long-term consequences.

Conclusion and Call for Funding

The activities outlined above are not merely aspirations; they are critical interventions that directly address the pressing mental health needs of Mashonaland East and the rest of Zimbabwe. The current slow pace of progress is a direct consequence of insufficient funding, hindering our ability to make a tangible and lasting impact. SPANS urgently appeals to philanthropic organizations, international donors, and compassionate individuals to partner with us in this vital mission. Your financial support will directly enable us to:

- Train and deploy a robust cadre of community mental health therapists.
- Disseminate comprehensive mental health education and literacy programs across the region.
- Strengthen early identification mechanisms for psychological distress within communities.

- Expand our reach through increased home visits and streamlined referral pathways to clinical services.
- Establish and sustain a life-saving toll-free mental health helpline.
- Realize the vision of a dedicated wellness center, a sanctuary for healing and recovery.

By investing in SPANS, you are not just providing financial aid; you are investing in the mental well-being of an entire community, fostering resilience, reducing suffering, and unlocking a pathway to wellness for countless individuals and families in Zimbabwe. We believe that with adequate resources, we can transform the mental health landscape of the region, creating a healthier, more resilient, and thriving society.