



Social Connectedness Fellowship Program

Partnership Proposal



**SAMUEL CENTRE
FOR SOCIAL
CONNECTEDNESS**



Partnership Proposal

Partner Organization: Friendship Bench Zimbabwe

FB is an NGO in Zimbabwe that offers an evidence-based mental health program delivered in a task-shifted manner to primary health care users. The FB program is delivered in person in primary health care clinics or in the community and online. The online mode was designed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in which the original sites of Friendship Benches were either closed or their activities were so reduced that the Bench program was stopped. We created a training in order to empower our delivering agents to offer the program over the phone. The classic Friendship Bench delivering agents, the community health workers, did make less use of this format due to various reasons; clients requesting face to face meetings, clients not having airtime, clients not having privacy to talk on the phone. The openline service is offered by a slightly different group consisting of FB staff and those former attachment students who showed particular engagement and skill. The openline number is being advertised on social media and therefore attracts a different clientele. As far as we understand, people reaching out to openline are mostly Zimbabweans in and outside of Zimbabwe who have learned about Friendship Bench on social media or through friends.

Location of Fellow: Any location, remote

Description of Proposed Project:

As mentioned above, FB is also delivered in an online format. The “openline” services are being advertised on our social media platforms, therefore the clientele phoning our “openline” services is slightly different to the usual PHC clinic users.



We therefore propose to investigate this format in detail. We want to suggest the following areas that could be investigated in more detail.

1. Characteristics of openline users

- a. We could explore ways of getting more information about our international users for the study (and beyond) and create opportunities to engage them in qualitative interviews.

2. Effectiveness of open line (feasibility, acceptability)

- a. Create a way of getting regular/consistent feedback from the users with regards to these three implementation outcomes. What works for whom? (mixed methods)

3. What is really happening in online sessions?

- a. This one is particularly interesting for us. The fellow could explore recordings or transcripts of sessions to understand how the classic FB approach is being implemented over the phone/via texting/voice messages. What are the factors associated with the different online formats and how are the FB online counsellors experiencing this? What parts /components are essential to this form of communication. Is there fidelity to the intervention and does our fidelity checklist capture it? Or should we create a new more appropriate checklist? (mixed methods)

4. Experiences of openliners

- a. See above, this is an important component in order for us to learn about what else needs to go into the training and ongoing education to enable the FB openline counsellors to deliver quality counselling. How do the openliners experience their work?
- b. What are the similarities or differences between the openliners and the classic FB community health workers? How does each group deal with what topics that are brought to a counselling session? (mixed methods)

5. How to refine the booking system?

- a. As we do not run a hotline, we need to work with a booking system which is currently still going through a member of staff. This person



also answers personally all inquiries. Currently, the system is slow and sometimes time consuming. The fellow could explore the booking system and create recommendations how to improve it and/or help us develop a new one using state of the art tech options.

Specific skills / attributes of Fellow:

We would like the fellow to decide which one of these research questions they would like to work on and support the fellow in refining it. The fellow would get access to the data and be able to have regular meetings with some of our staff members. We expect the ability to work independently and be open and engaged with the FB team. We think that this fellowship is an excellent way of creating knowledge and understanding of the FB work. Basic statistics skills are required, and qualitative analysis experience would be important. Besides question 5 (IT skills), we would recommend someone to have a mental health or social sciences background. We expect utmost respect for especially clients who are willing to take part in interviews and that the fellow signs our code of ethics prior to engaging with the work.

Key Deliverables:

We are able to translate and transcribe documents and recordings and will help facilitate interviews. We would like to see knowledge and recommendations coming out of the fellow's work and potentially further research questions. For question 5, a guide towards a sustainable and adaptable system would be helpful for FB.

1. A final report [25-35 pages] detailing the findings of one of the possible research questions mentioned above;
 - a. Which includes key recommendations and a note on possible further questions.



2. If the fellow chooses question five, a guide on sustainable and/or adaptable practices
3. A blog post for SCSC & FB [Typically 500-1000 words].
4. Participation in a webinar if possible.

Goals:

The work the fellow will do will contribute to FB's overall impact numbers and will provide lessons that will enable openline to become a better program that can potentially be recognized and used by many more people. Openline is FB that is globally reachable, and we would look forward to creating a network of openliners that are located in every part of the world and are able to offer FB services to people anywhere. This will make a big difference with regards to our goal to have a Friendship Bench everywhere.

Contact Details:

Supervisor(s): so be the key contact with SCSC for all admin/partnership needs]

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