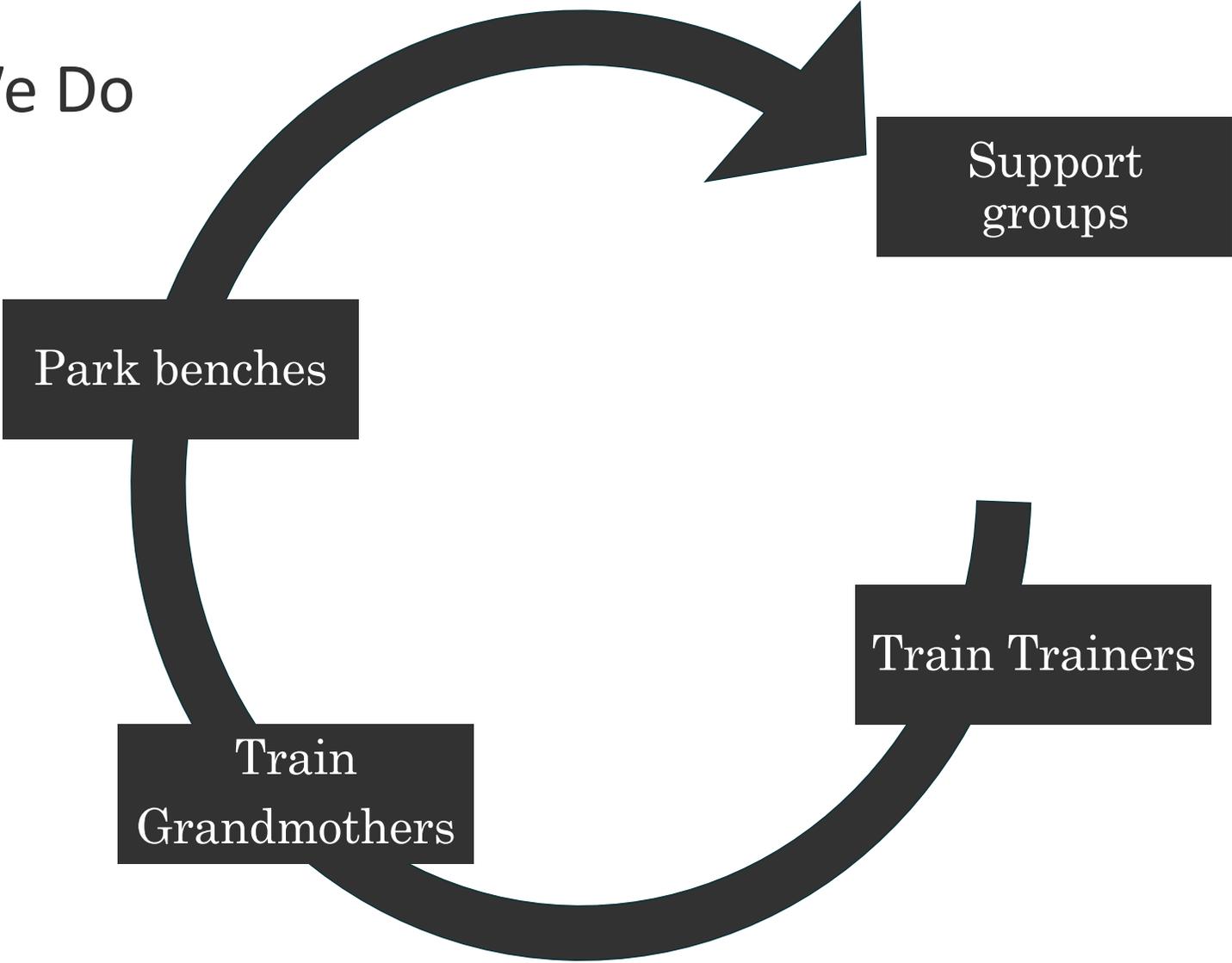




# Friendship Bench: Reaching A Million Clients-Lessons Learnt

January 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026

What We Do





Over 4000 Grandma's Delivering Friendship Bench



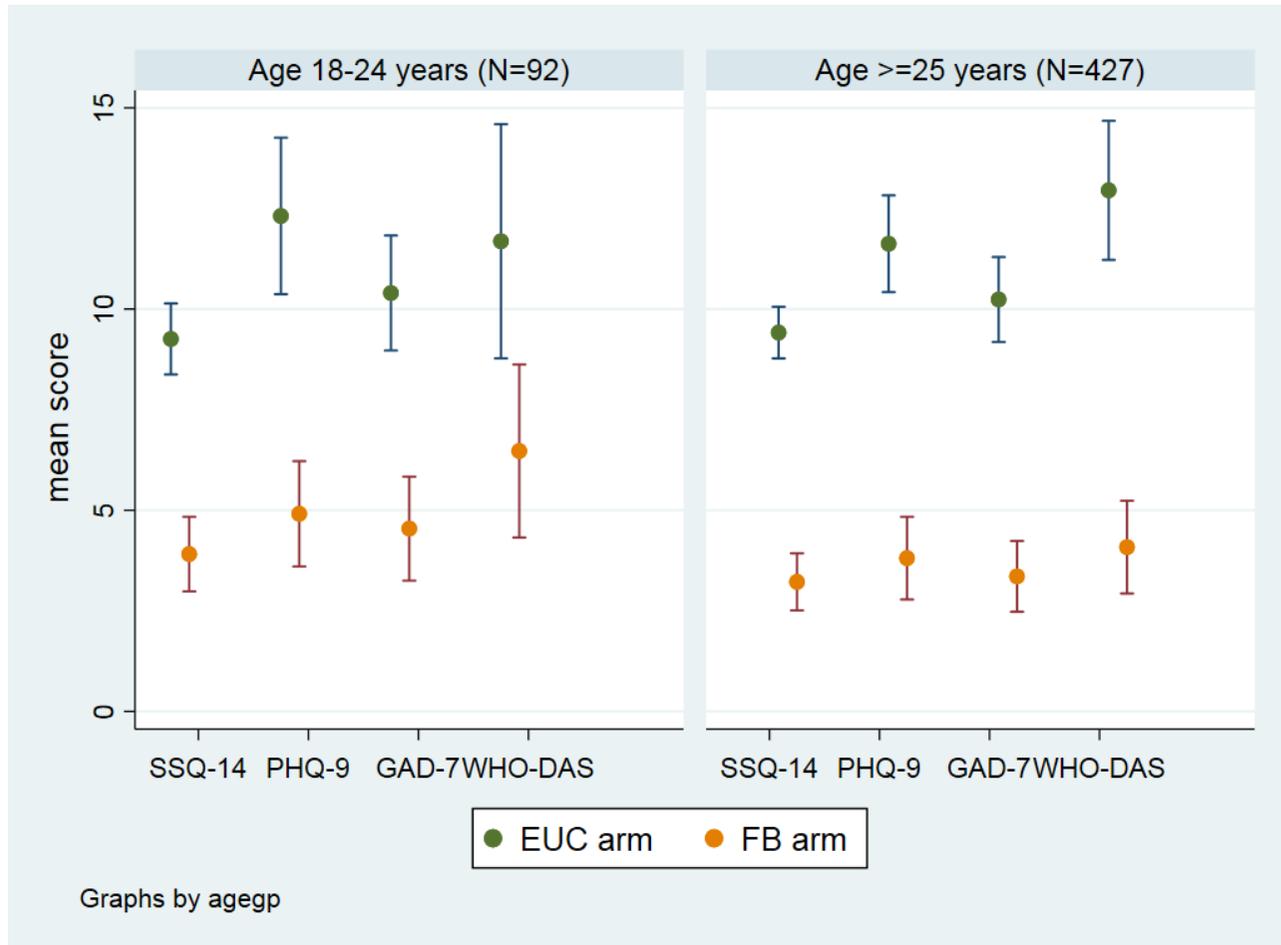
Research

JAMA | **Original Investigation**

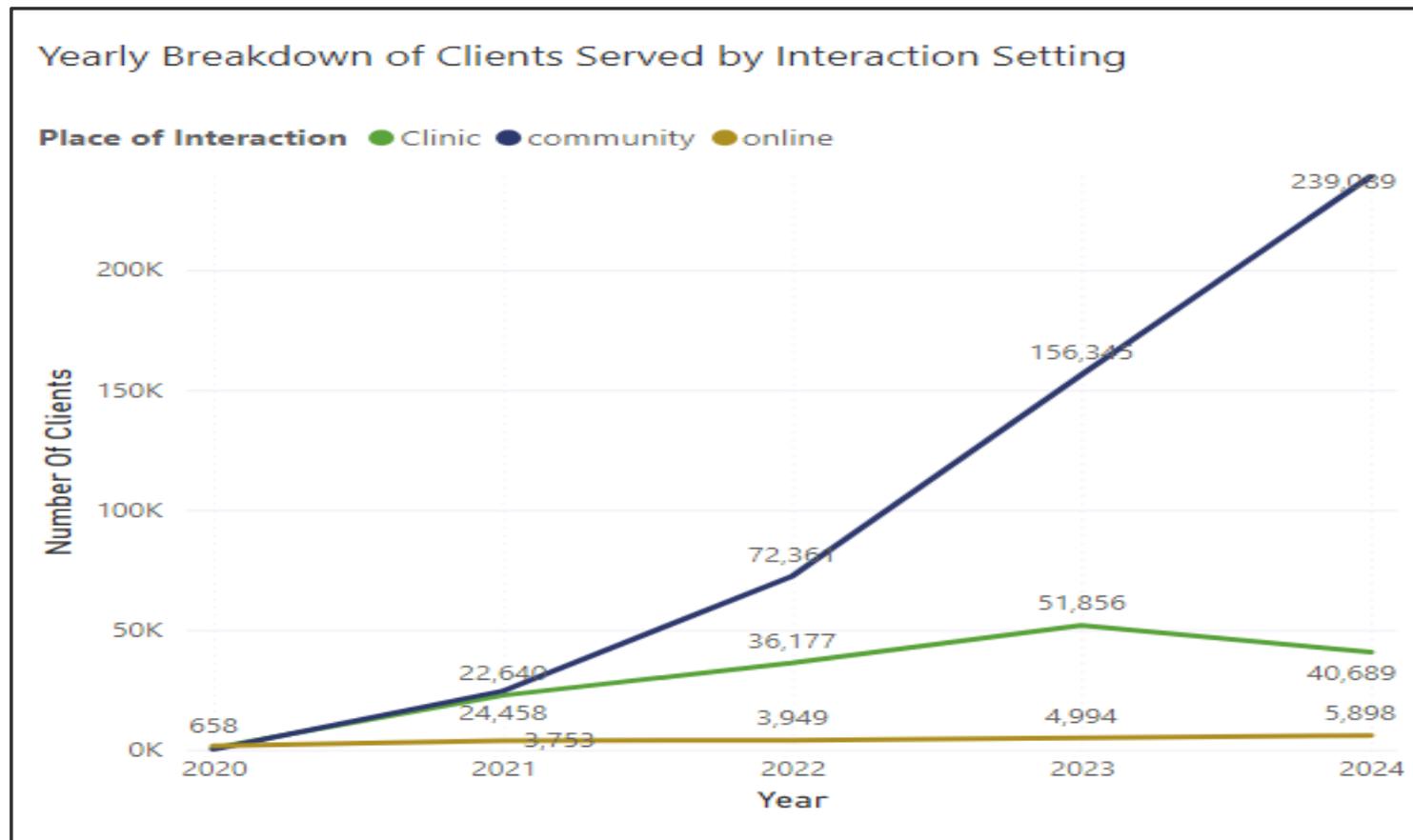
# Effect of a Primary Care–Based Psychological Intervention on Symptoms of Common Mental Disorders in Zimbabwe A Randomized Clinical Trial

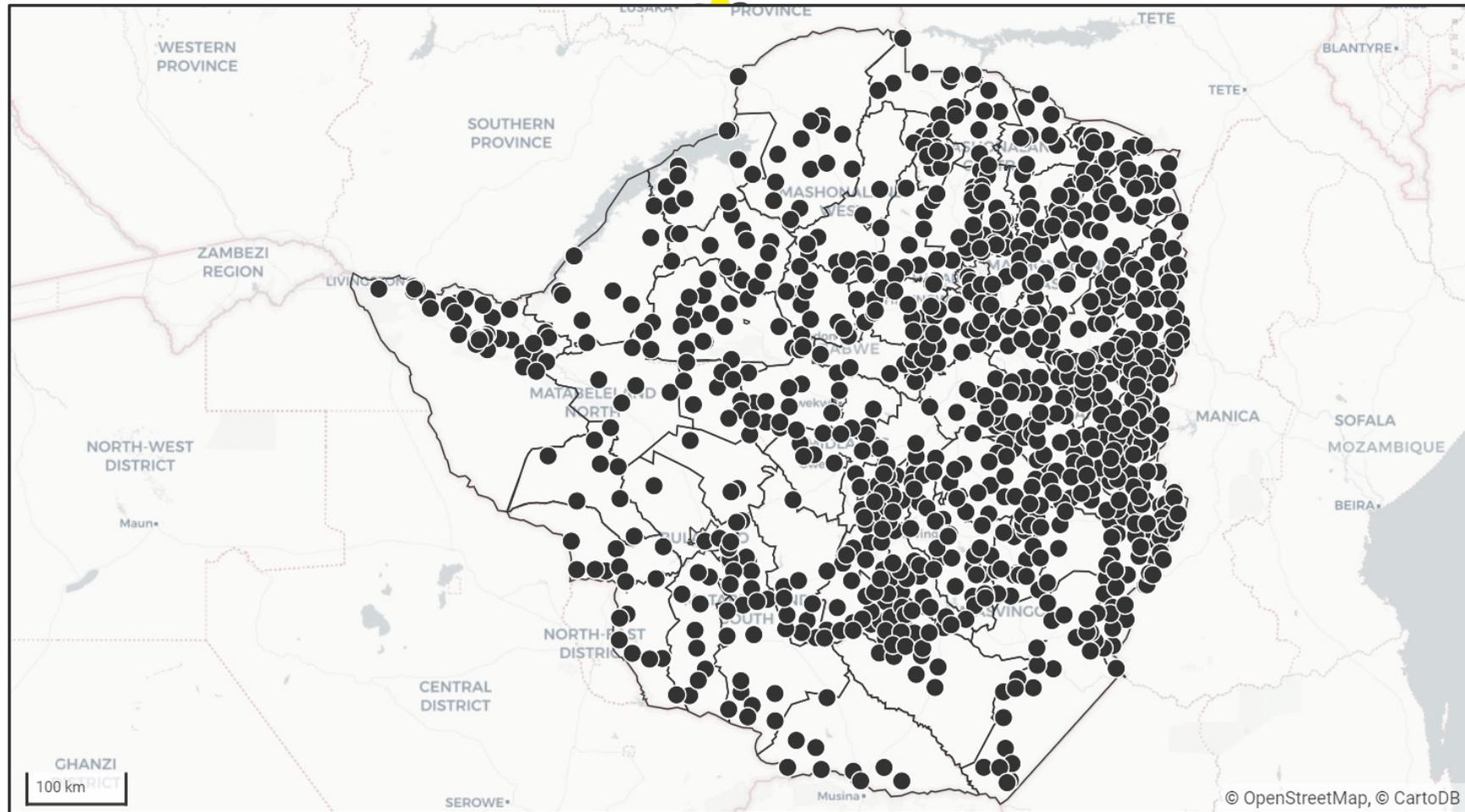
Dixon Chibanda, MD; Helen A. Weiss, DPhil; Ruth Verhey, MSc; Victoria Simms, PhD; Ronald Munjoma, SLC;  
Simbarashe Rusakaniko, PhD; Alfred Chingono, MSc; Epiphania Munetsi, MPhil; Tarisai Bere, BA;  
Ethel Manda, BSc; Melanie Abas, MD; Ricardo Araya, PhD

# Large intervention effect on depression & anxiety



# Clients served by place of session





# Location of Friendship Bench in Zimbabwe 2024

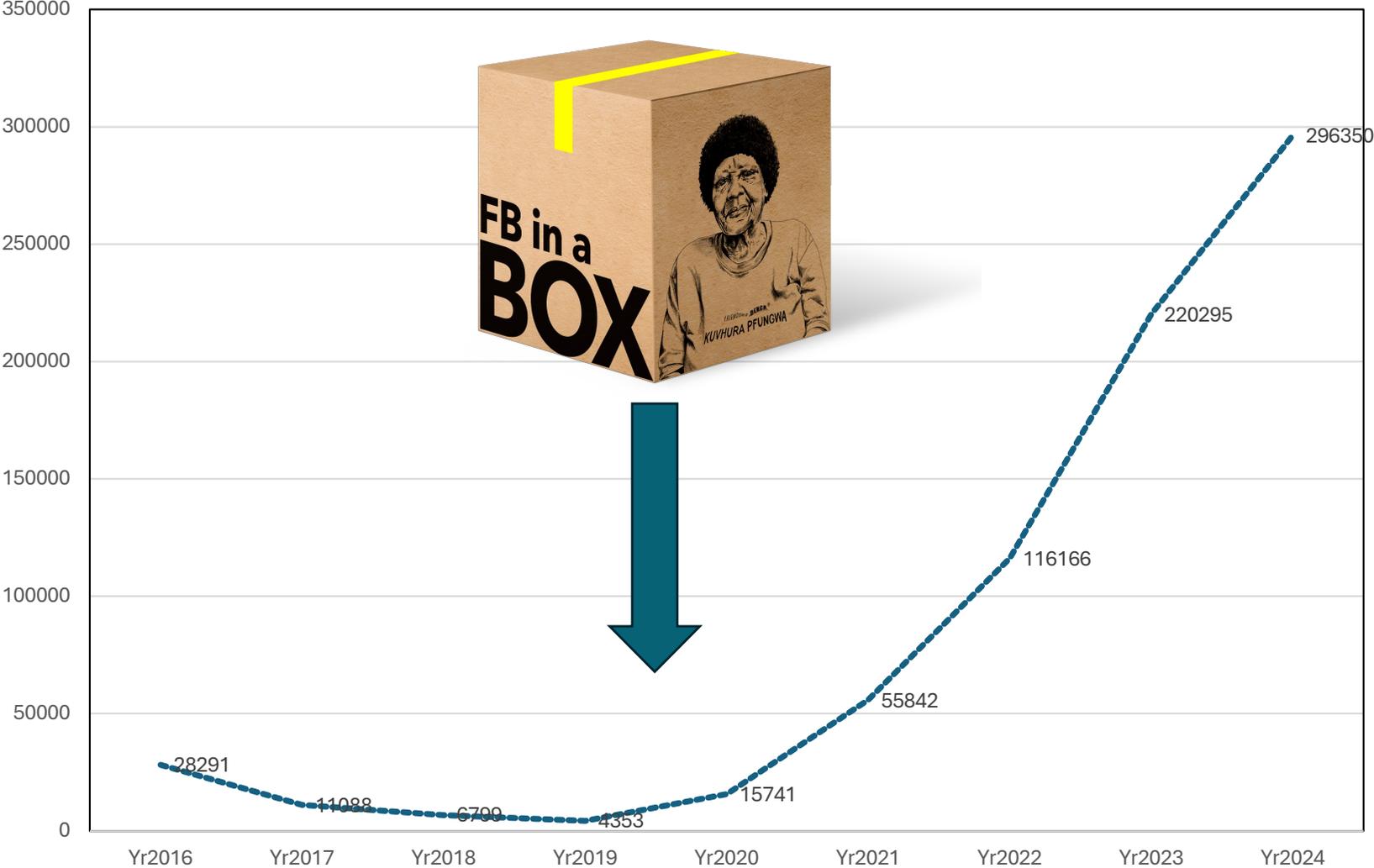
In 2025 over 300 000 received therapy .



Gogo Lucia

..... on a wooden park Friendship Bench

Clients Served From 2016



*Cambridge Prisms: Global  
Mental Health*

[www.cambridge.org/gmh](http://www.cambridge.org/gmh)

## Review

**Cite this article:** Patena J, Adenikinju D, Lanka P, Hameed T, Kulkarni S, Osei-Tutu N, Zuniga S, Ruan C, Shenoy S, Thakkar D, Noble E, Angulo B, Vieira D, Gyamfi J and Peprah E (2025). Evaluating implementation research outcomes for a task-sharing mental health

# Evaluating implementation research outcomes for a task-sharing mental health intervention: A systematic review of the Friendship Bench

---

John Patena , Deborah Adenikinju, Priyanka Lanka, Tania Hameed, Sumedha Kulkarni, Nana Osei-Tutu, Sophia Zuniga, Christina Ruan, Shivani Shenoy, Diksha Thakkar, Elizabeth Noble, Brian Angulo, Dorice Vieira, Joyce Gyamfi and Emmanuel Peprah

---

Implementing Sustainable Evidence-Based Interventions through Engagement (ISEE) Lab, Department of Global and Environmental Health, New York University School of Global Public Health, New York City, NY, USA

Limitations: Poor mental health systems  
Poor referral systems  
Stigma  
External funding  
No revenue model  
Vicarious trauma



Washington DC  
Friendship Bench  
Grandparents



Referral systems ( Hospitals), Stigma (church),

# New Orleans



CHW reimbursement (Medicaid)



**Resilience.**

**Grandmother Georgina**

Vicarious Trauma

ORIGINAL PAPER

**Resilience.**

**Potential Resilience to Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Common Mental Disorders among Lay Health Workers Working on the Friendship Bench Programme in Zimbabwe**

Ruth Verhey, PhD

Jonathan Brakarsh, PhD

Lorna Gibson, MPhil

Susan Shea, MPhil

Dixon Chibanda, MD, MMED (Psych), MSc public health, PhD

Soraya Seedat, MBChB, FC Psych, MMED (Psych), PhD

Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved 32 (2021): 1604–1618.





Intergenerational Connectedness

Beji-Chauke *et al.* *BMC Psychiatry* (2025) 25:673  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-025-06755-x>

BMC Psychiatry

RESEARCH

Open Access



# A cluster-randomized trial of interventions for adolescent mental disorders in Zimbabwe

Rhulani Beji-Chauke<sup>1\*</sup> , Victoria Simms<sup>2</sup> , Melanie Abas<sup>3</sup> , Kelly Muzariri<sup>1</sup>, Webster Mavhu<sup>4,5</sup> ,  
Collin Mangenah<sup>4,5</sup> , Ruth Verhey<sup>1</sup> , Ephraim Chiriseri<sup>1</sup> , Jermaine M. Dambi<sup>1,6</sup> , Ricardo Araya<sup>3</sup> , Helen  
A. Weiss<sup>2</sup> , Frances M. Cowan<sup>4,5</sup>  and Dixon Chibanda<sup>1,2,6</sup> 



Reily from Petaluma, California

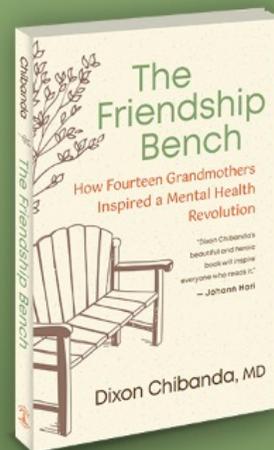
Revenue model (master classes). Building a Movement



Friendship Bench Kericho- Kenya

When we are gently,  
lovingly brought back  
into the fold of our  
community, we  
experience healing.

— Dixon Chibanda, MD, in the *The Friendship Bench: How Fourteen Grandmothers Inspired a Mental Health Revolution*



[newworldlibrary.com](http://newworldlibrary.com)

