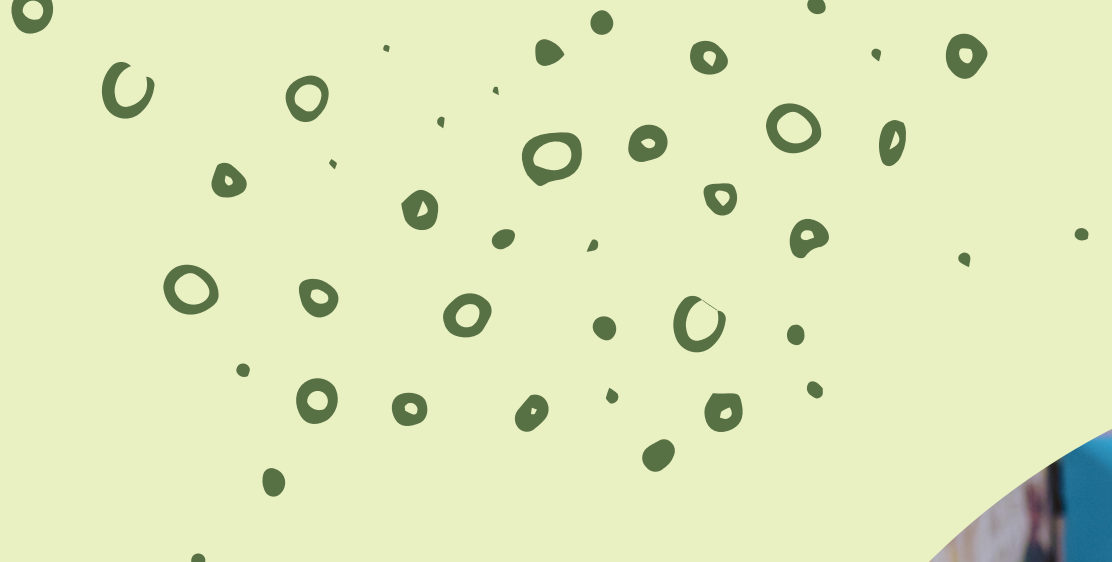




ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 2025 - MARCH 2026



SA Federation for
Mental Health

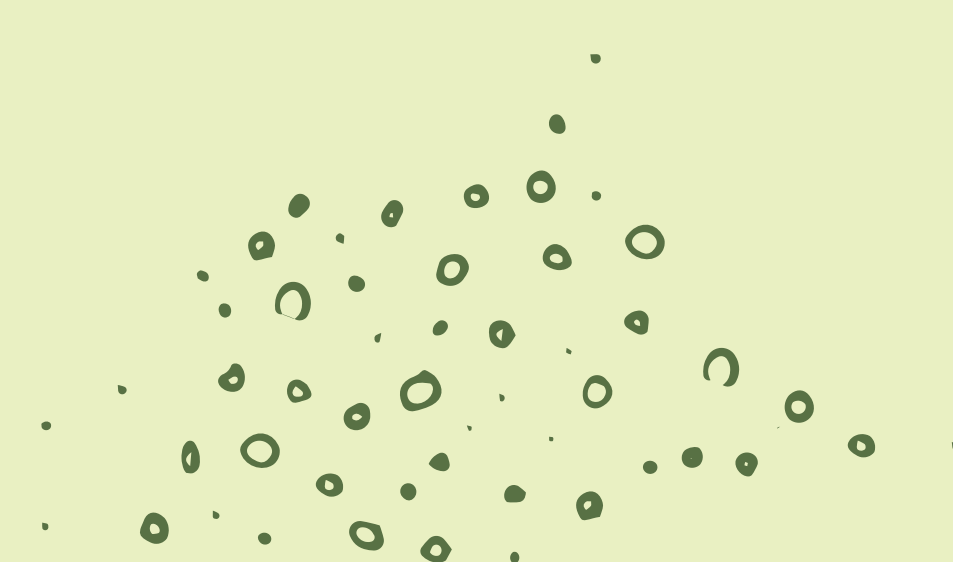


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PRESIDENT'S NOTE

AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST YEAR IN SERVICE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FEDERATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH, I FIND MYSELF DRAWN, AGAIN AND AGAIN, TO THE STORY OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

Youth mental health is not a peripheral concern for our sector – it is, increasingly, the centre of it. The evidence, both global and local, tells us why. Worldwide, the World Health Organisation estimates that one in seven adolescents aged 10 to 19 live with a diagnosable mental health condition, accounting for roughly 15% of the global burden of disease in this age group.



Half of all mental health conditions that emerge in adulthood have their onset by the age of 18, and yet the great majority go undetected and untreated. Depression, anxiety and behavioural disorders remain among the leading causes of illness and disability among young people globally, and suicide continues to rank among the leading causes of death for adolescents and young adults. South Africa's youth carry this burden with particular weight.

Systematic review data compiled by the South African Medical Research Council, released ahead of World Mental Health Day, found that 10.1% of young South Africans live with a depressive disorder, 6.7% experience an anxiety disorder, and starkly: 17.6% present with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, a figure that speaks directly to the levels of violence, abuse and adversity so many of our children are exposed to before they reach adulthood. The same research found that over a third of young people under 18 have used alcohol, and close to one in ten has used cannabis.

A UNICEF U-Report poll this past year found that 60% of young South Africans said they had needed mental health support in the preceding twelve months, while SADAG's data continues to show suicide among the leading causes of death in South African teenagers.

Behind every one of these figures is a young person navigating school, family, community and, often, poverty and violence, with too little support and too few trained professionals to turn to. As researchers at the SAMRC have noted, the vast majority of young people with mental health difficulties in this country do not receive care - not because effective treatments don't exist, but because of resource constraints, a shortage of appropriately trained practitioners, and the stigma that still surrounds mental illness in homes, schools and communities.

This is precisely where SAFMH's work matters most.

Through our member organisations, our advocacy, and our partnerships across the health, education and social development sectors, we continue to push for a South Africa in which no young person's mental health is overlooked simply because they are assumed to be "too young" to be unwell, or because the system around them is not equipped to notice.

Our efforts this year to strengthen community-based support; to build the capacity of caregivers and educators; to recognise early signs of distress, and to advocate for youth-responsive mental health policies, are all in service of closing this gap.

The task ahead remains substantial. But I remain convinced that with sustained advocacy as we continue to do, investment, better data, and a collective refusal to let young people's mental health needs go unseen, we can shift these numbers.

I want to thank our staff, our member organisations, our funders and partners, and above all the young people and families who trust us with their stories, for the work we have been able to do together this year.

Prof Sheila Mokoboto-Zwane

President, SA Federation
for Mental Health

DIRECTOR AND BOARD'S NOTE

The past year reminded us of the extraordinary courage and resilience of people living with mental health conditions, and the families, communities, and organisations who walk alongside them. The SA Federation for Mental Health is not only about policy advocacy and awareness programmes, but also makes determined efforts to ensure and uphold the dignity and hope that every person deserves to be seen, heard, and supported within their communities to ensure their mental well-being.

During 2025-2026, we strengthened our advocacy to ensure government accountability and nurtured the capacity of member organisations to ensure that mental health is recognised as a fundamental human right. Among our most meaningful initiatives were the following:

- **National Youth Advocacy Forum:** reached a total of 17 youth in four provinces. A proud moment, which helped young people to become more included in conversations that shaped the mental health landscape in South Africa.
- **SAFMH Empowerment Fund:** seven mental health care users were supported with ongoing education, startup of enterprises, and ongoing counselling towards recovery.
- **National Campaigns:** we fought stigma and promoted the employment of persons and youth with mental health conditions to contribute to workplace diversity.
- **The Mental Health Helpdesk:** continued to offer individuals and families opportunities to find out more about mental health, available services, procedures, referral pathways, whilst offering them the opportunity to be heard.
- **Advocacy at National and International Platforms:** we participated in the first UN Multisectoral Hearing on NCDs and Mental Health in New York on Friday 2 May 2025, where the urgency of rights-based approaches and the inclusion of lived experience in global commitments were emphasised. At the FPD Conference on Mental Health in July 2025, youth forum members shared lived experiences and were introduced to partners across health and human rights.

On behalf of SAFMH, I offer my heartfelt gratitude to all who walked this journey with us. Your support enables us to keep pushing boundaries, telling stories of impact, and mobilising for change.



Bharti Patel

National Executive Director,
SA Federation for Mental
Health



It has truly been a privilege to serve on the Board of the South African Federation for Mental Health (SAFMH).

Being part of this organisation, which is dedicated to supporting people with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, has been both humbling and inspiring.

My role as a board member has given me confidence and the opportunity to stand alongside those who are most vulnerable, helping to ensure they have hope and the chance to build better lives. I feel honoured that my voice is heard in this space, where together we can make a real difference.

Through this journey, I have learned so much about the important work SAFMH is doing. I have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, and I have seen how SAFMH's programmes bring dignity, inclusion, and empowerment.

I remain committed to supporting SAFMH's mission and to working with my fellow board members to strengthen community support, uphold rights, and inspire resilience across South Africa.

Sibongile Tsosobe

Board Member, SA
Federation for Mental
Health

WHO WE ARE

The South African Federation for Mental Health (SAFMH) is a **national, human rights organisation** with a 100-year plus track record of creating a society where mental health is better prioritised. We work to ensure **rights-based and evidence-based** mental health services are included within South Africa's policies, systems, and care.

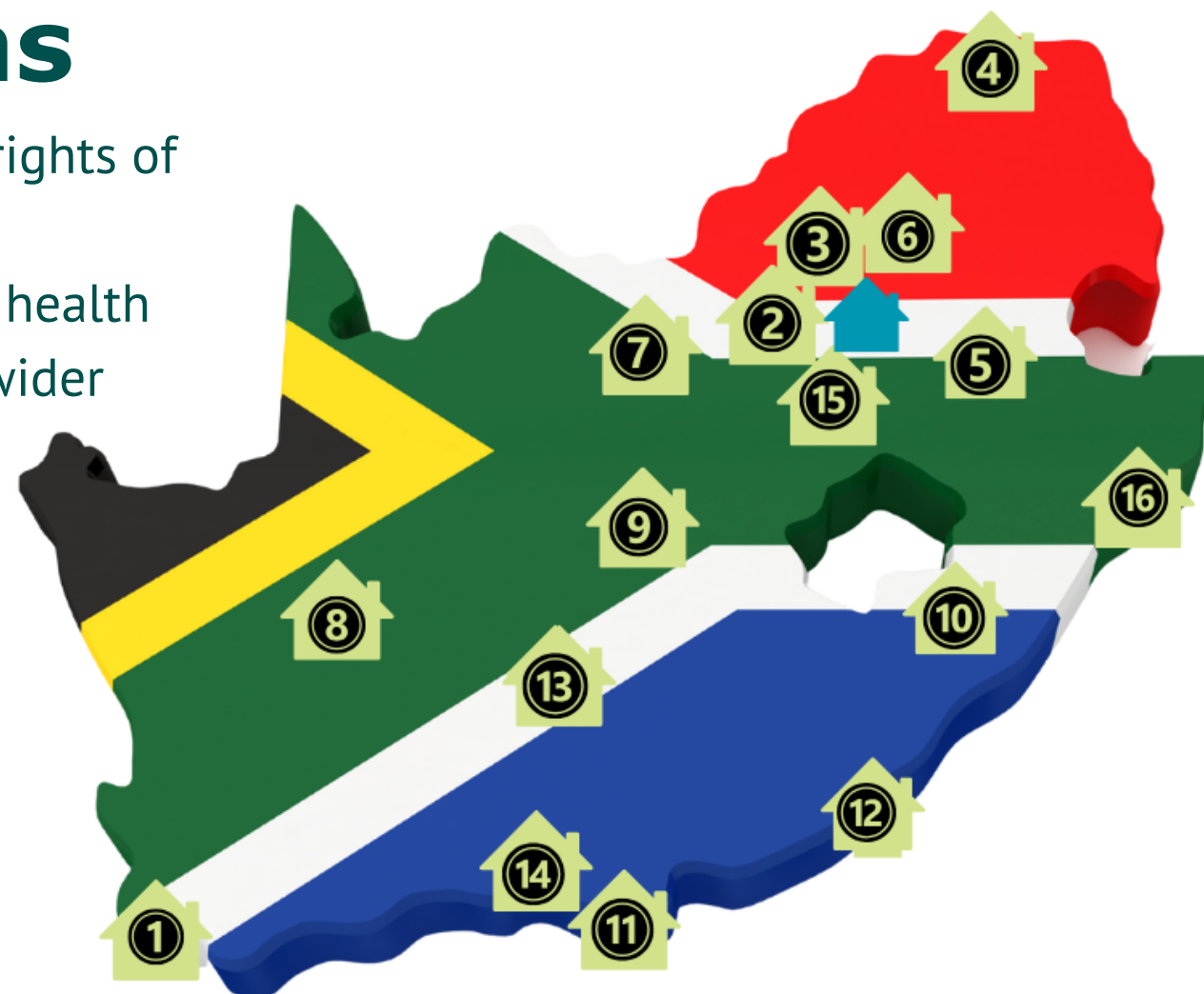
Our Mission is to work with the community and key stakeholders to achieve the highest possible level of mental health for all.

Our Board is constituted of provincial representatives from Mental Health Societies. The 16 Mental Health Societies are independent organisations with their own governance and finance structures. These organisations provide community-based mental health services to communities that are often vulnerable and under-resourced.

The map shows the national reach of SAFMH and the location of the Mental Health Societies

Key Focus Areas

- Protecting and advocating for the rights of mental health care users
- Ensuring that the voices of mental health care users, their families, and the wider South African public are heard
- Raising awareness of mental health and providing mental health information
- Working with community-based mental health organisations towards quality, sustainable, and consistent mental health services at community level



- 1 Cape Mental Health
- 2 Central Gauteng Mental Health
- 3 Laudium Mental Health
- 4 Limpopo Mental Health
- 5 Mpumalanga Mental Health
- 6 North Gauteng Mental Health
- 7 North West Mental Health
- 8 Northern Cape Mental Health
- 9 Northern Free State Mental Health
- 10 Pietermaritzburg Mental Health
- 11 Indlela Mental Health
- 12 REHAB
- 13 Southern Free State Mental Health
- 14 Uitenhage Mental Health
- 15 Vaal Mental Health
- 16 Zululand Mental Health
- ▲ SAFMH's National Office

MEET OUR TEAM



Bharti Patel
National Executive Director



Leon de Beer
Deputy Director



Primrose Chamboko
Finance & Operations Manager



Michel'le Donnelly
Communications & Awareness Lead



Victor Mbinga
Advocacy Lead



Nomacala Tango
Mental Health Support Administrator



Cindy Mthethwa
Bookkeeper



Costa Chimbalanga
Groundskeeper



Noxolo Colvel
Youth Forum Coordinator

YEAR IN REVIEW



Legal support referrals for
7 CASES



**673 PEOPLE
SUPPORTED**
via our helpdesk



**4 NATIONAL
CAMPAIGNS**
across four thematic areas



12 PRESENTATIONS
delivered to
12 ORGANISATIONS



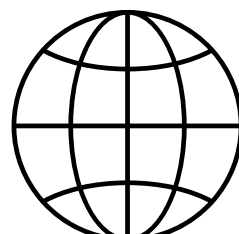
Effective work alongside
31 PARTNERS
across
9 provinces



**17 YOUNG
PEOPLE**
continued to be supported as
part of SAFMH's national
youth advocacy forum



info@safmh.org



www.safmh.org



011 781 1852



076 078 8722



OUR ADVOCACY

Our mental health advocacy work aims to change major structural and attitudinal barriers to achieving positive mental health outcomes for everyone in South Africa.

Achievements from 2025-2026 include:

1

Continued running SAFMH Empowerment Fund, supporting 7 persons with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities via startup funding for business, education, and support services.

2

Attended UN multi-stakeholder hearing in New York as part of Global Mental Health Action Network's 40-advocate, 30-country short-term action group on NCDs and mental health.

3

Launched a Positive Mental Health Photo Library with The Masiviwe Project aimed at destigmatising mental health and sharing positive photographs of mental health care users in South Africa.

4

Publicly and unequivocally condemned the negligence of Northern Cape Mental Health Hospital and Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe Hospital, as reported by the Health Ombudsman in July 2025.

5

Attended a stakeholder engagement session on the Disability Bill, hosted by the South African Law Reform Commission in partnership with the Department of Women, Youth, and Persons with Disabilities.



OUR YOUTH FORUM



A joyful moment from our Youth Forum's end-of-year celebration.

Our Youth Forum received a third year of funding, and we focused on two key priorities: (1) refining and relaunching the alumni programme by merging the cohorts from the previous two years, and (2) successfully recruiting a Youth Forum Coordinator to support sustained and structured engagement.

The Forum continues to empower young mental health advocates to guide national mental health advocacy and awareness work, while enhancing their voices, advocacy skills, and mental health knowledge.

Click on the links below to find out more about:

[Our Forum members](#)

[The Forum's Impact](#)

[How the Forum was developed](#)

OUR PARTNERSHIPS



A group picture of the wonderful speakers at our 2025 World Mental Health Day celebrations.

Partnerships are a fundamental cornerstone of SAFMH's work in the mental health, disability and human rights sectors, locally and internationally. It enables us to ensure mental health is effectively integrated into the work of other organisations, stakeholders and decision-making platforms.

We want mental health to become everyone's business, as it is a core component of all aspects of health and wellbeing.

Some of our key partners include the Departments of Education, Health, Social Development and Women, Youth and Persons with Disability, the [World Federation for Mental Health](#), [United for Global Mental Health](#), the [South African Disability Alliance](#), [the Child Mind Institute](#), [The Counselling Hub](#), [The Masiviwe Project](#), [the South African Law Reform Commission](#), [SNF Global Center](#), [the South African Human Rights Commission](#), the National Coalition of Social Service Organisations (NACOSS) and our 16 Mental Health Societies.

OUR CAMPAIGNS



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS THIS YEAR

PDAM 2025

Psychosocial Disability Awareness Month (PDAM) is celebrated annually in July. For 2025, we focused on the theme **“It’s the hour to make our youth empowered”**. We highlighted the state of youth mental health in South Africa and argued the need for increased investment to ensure our youth have adequate access to quality and sufficient mental health services, and are thus allowed to feel well, thrive and achieve. In support of the campaign, we highlighted the [SAFMH National Mental Health Youth Advocacy and Advisory Forum](#). Read our campaign summary [here](#).

Men’s Mental Health 2025

For Men’s Health Month 2025, SAFMH focused on **prostate cancer and mental health**, highlighting facts and figures on prostate cancer [including causes and risk factors], but specifically honing in on the mental health implications of a prostate cancer diagnosis. The content of the piece was augmented through the lived experiences of a gentleman who kindly shared his story, including his mental health struggles, about prostate cancer. SAFMH continued to raise awareness of men’s mental health on a range of platforms, including on SABC News [watch [here](#)] and on the RedemptionX podcast [watch [here](#)]. Read the campaign summary [here](#).

World Mental Health Awareness Month 2025

Whilst SAFMH supported the theme selected by [the World Federation for Mental Health](#), **“Access to Services: Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies”**, for World Mental Health Day 2025 [WMHD], SAFMH localised the theme and focused on “Addressing violence as a significant challenge to mental health in South Africa”. Read our WMHD campaign summary [here](#). In support of World Mental Health Month, SAFMH hosted an event at our offices, where we further unpacked the link between GBV and mental health and highlighted the need to prioritise sufficient mental health support for survivors of GBV. Read more about the event [here](#).

IDAM 2026

For Intellectual Disability Awareness Month 2026, SAFMH focused on the theme **“My Safety, My Right, My Grant: Understanding the Vulnerabilities of Young People with Intellectual Disability and their experiences in accessing social assistance”**, with the aim of emphasising the rights of young people with intellectual disability (ID) to live safe and dignified lives, where they are included in society, and to access social assistance in the same way as other persons with disabilities. We raised awareness about the support services provided by our Mental Health Societies, including Cape Mental Health’s Access to Justice Programme. The programme was started over twenty years ago in response to the need to provide access to justice for persons with ID who had been sexually abused. You can hear more about it [here](#).

OUR AWARENESS

445k

Social media reach across Facebook,
Instagram and LinkedIn

12

Organisational
awareness
presentations

1055

Newsletter subscribers to 22
EMpowered Mind Newsletter Editions

4

National
campaigns run

6

Appearances in
the media

OUR HELPDESK

REFLECTIONS FROM OUR HELPDESK

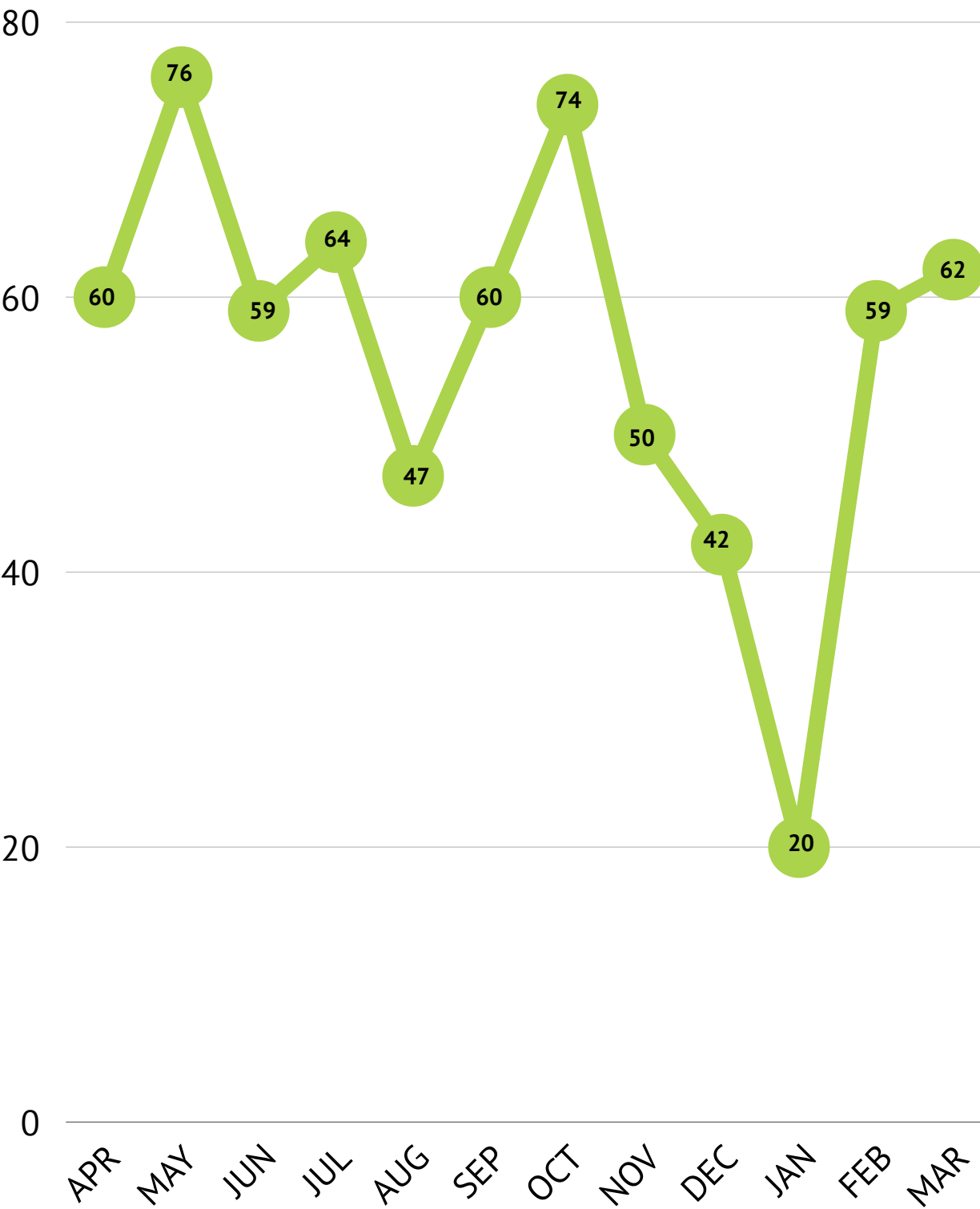
The SAFMH helpdesk continues to serve as an important national mental health information, support, and referral service, providing accessible assistance to individuals, families, caregivers, professionals, and organisations across South Africa. Through its partnership with the National Department of Health, the helpdesk plays an important role in improving access to reliable mental health information and appropriate services while helping to address gaps in awareness and support.

During the 2025-2026 year, the helpdesk responded to a diverse range of enquiries, reflecting the ongoing need for accessible mental health information and referral pathways. Enquiries included requests for residential mental health facilities, free or affordable counselling and psychosocial support, legal and human rights-based information, hospital admissions, educational resources, workplace mental health guidance, advocacy opportunities, and general mental health information. SAFMH also continues to receive large numbers of requests from people wishing to volunteer in the mental health sector.

The helpdesk maintains a secure and confidential database to record all enquiries. Quarterly analysis of helpdesk data provides valuable insights into the ever-evolving mental health landscape.

SAFMH remains committed to providing timely, accurate, and person-centred support. People can contact the helpdesk for high-quality support from Monday to Thursday from 07:30-16:00 and Friday from 07:30-13:30. We are accessible via telephone, SMS, social media, our [website](#) and WhatsApp.

ENQUIRIES RECEIVED IN 2025 - 2026



OUR HELPDESK

EXAMPLE OF A HELPDESK ENQUIRY

A social worker, whose primary area of practice was child protection and child-related cases, contacted the SAFMH helpdesk, requesting guidance regarding an adult with a mental health condition, which fell outside her usual scope of practice.

The social worker had been approached by the mother of an adult son who was both a mental health care user and experiencing substance use challenges. According to the mother, her son's drug use had escalated significantly, leaving her overwhelmed and unsure of where to seek appropriate assistance. She expressed that she was desperate and was seeking support to have her son admitted to a rehabilitation facility where he could receive the care and treatment he required.

SAFMH responded to the enquiry by providing the social worker with a list of appropriate rehabilitation centres equipped to support the individual. This enabled the social worker to identify a suitable facility and facilitate the referral process.

Thanks to SAFMH's assistance, the social worker reported that a suitable placement had been secured for the individual at a suitable rehabilitation centre and that the admission process had been initiated.



THE BIG PICTURE



Sharing experiences and insights at the 2025 in-person Directors' Meeting.

SAFMH annually collects, collates and analyses statistics from its Mental Health Societies. From the responses, we compile a detailed overview of their collective community-based mental health service provision across South Africa, highlighting trends and challenges within the mental health sector.

The information guides SAFMH's advocacy work and collaborations with stakeholders and decision-makers, including government.

SAFMH acknowledges the contribution made by the staff of the Mental Health Societies, who work tirelessly to assist mental health care users and their families in the communities they serve. We thank them sincerely for their hard work and the care shown to those who benefit from their services.

SOME KEY FINDINGS FROM OUR ANNUAL STATISTICS 2024 - 2025

DEVELOPMENTS

- [Cape Mental Health](#) hosted a successful two-day International Kite Festival featuring local and international kites. The event included a gala dinner and auction at the TAJ Hotel. R9.4 million in media coverage was obtained.
- [Limpopo Mental Health](#) collaborated with Humana People To People, which advocates for sex workers. This collaboration will focus on GBV cases where Limpopo Mental Health will offer services to victims.
- [Pietermaritzburg Mental Health](#) installed a solar power system to save on electricity costs.

CHALLENGES

- [Central Gauteng Mental Health](#) reported several operational and service delivery challenges, including limited funding, shortages of staff and resources, inadequate office space and infrastructure, and insufficient maintenance of facilities and vehicles.
- Vaal Mental Health reported that their government subsidy was not sufficient and was not being paid on time, thus hampering the excellence of their work.
- [Indlela Mental Health](#) reported challenges with admissions to public hospitals for people with psychosocial disabilities.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR UPSCALING SERVICES

- Northern Free State planned to apply to the Department of Social Development for a post for the social auxiliary worker they helped train, so that DSD could subsidise the post.
- [REHAB](#) piloted new income-generating programmes that operated on a fee-for-service model as part of its long-term fundraising and sustainability strategy.
- [North Gauteng Mental Health](#) was in talks with the Tshwane municipality to acquire land for a special care centre, which would be a 24-hour mental health care facility.



The main cross-cutting issue for most Mental Health Societies was persistent financial challenges pertaining to government subsidies in particular, including inadequate, reduced, or late payments. Many experienced significant knock-on effects, such as inadequate resources, facilities, and problems with maintaining high-quality service provision in the face of severe financial difficulties.

LOOKING FORWARD

Having had one of our busiest years in recent memory in 2025-2026, we look forward to taking on the new year, which will undoubtedly be jam-packed with even more new opportunities, with unbridled vigour.

With a new year comes new challenges and new, exciting opportunities. Here at SAFMH, there are many new prospects on the table; we have a new Advocacy Lead, who brings a wealth of community-based experience and a deep passion for human rights and mental health. Our youth forum will see an entirely new group of passionate young people joining this illustrious platform. Our work around men and mental health keeps gaining traction as we continue to see more about this at community level, in organisations, in the press, and even within government spheres. Our awareness programmes keep going from strength to strength, with a strong focus on the promotion of community-based mental health care. And we keep helping hundreds of people through our helpdesk. We are privileged to face another year of working hard to keep putting the focus on mental health wherever we go.

SAFMH'S COMMITMENT FOR THE YEAR AHEAD.

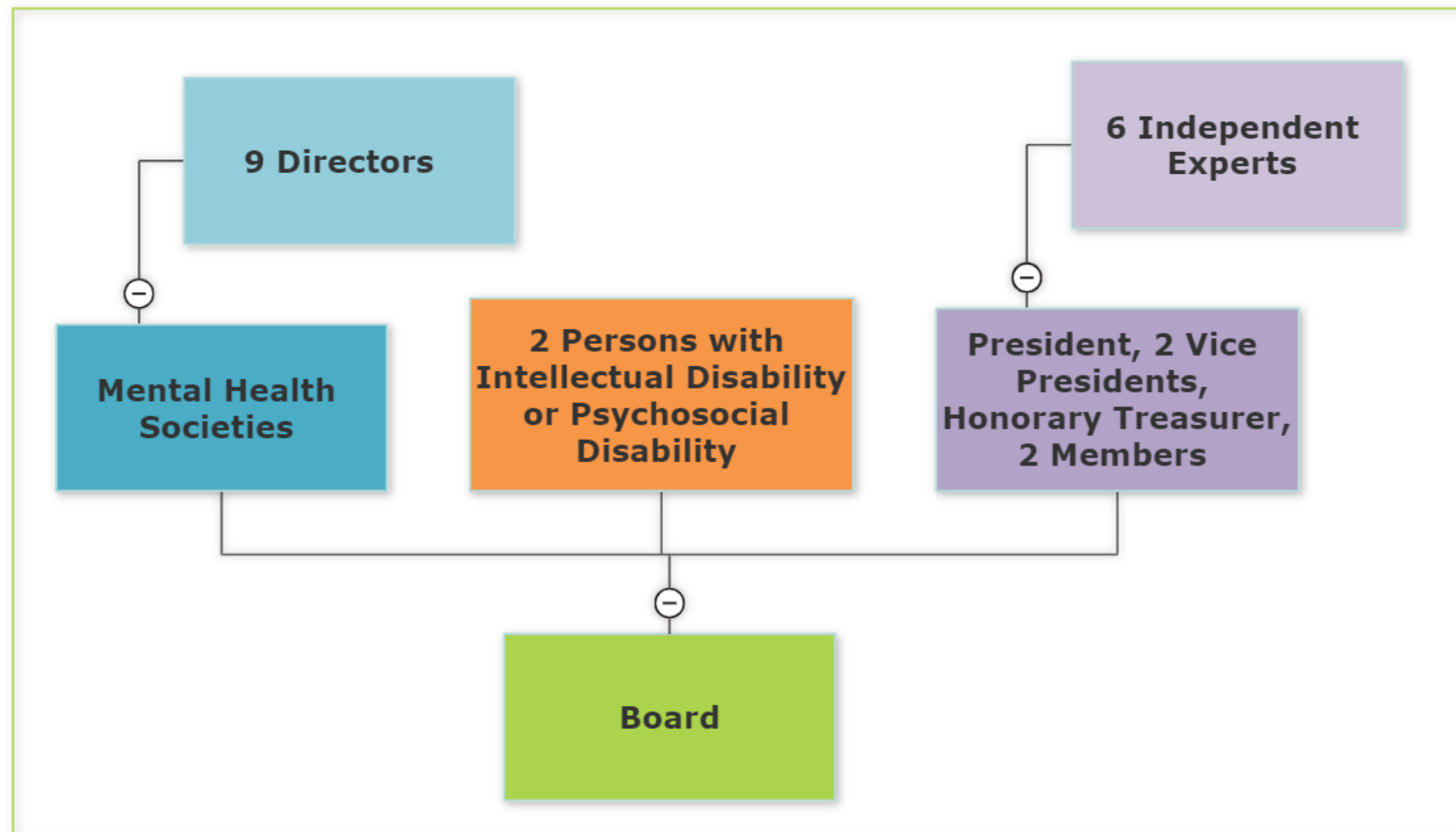
WE WILL:

- Continue to monitor the implementation of the Mental Health Policy Framework and Strategic Action Plan 2023-2030, while supporting the continuous growth of our Youth Forum.
- Advocate for the inclusion of mental health at all levels, with a particular focus on community-based mental health care.
- Provide inputs into reports, publications, policies, and legislation.
- Continue building meaningful partnerships and networks.
- Research and consolidate mental health literature.
- Continue to make our mental health helpdesk available to all those seeking help.
- Continue our awareness and public education work through online and broadcast media, our annual awareness campaigns, commemorating important calendar days, running awareness sessions within organisations, and organising a mental health walk for October 2026.
- Continue publishing mental health content through infographics, blogs, and articles, while publishing life stories of persons with lived experience and our fortnightly newsletters.

OUR GOVERNANCE

SAFMH is committed to ethical conduct, transparency and adherence to the relevant regulations and policies applicable to NPOs. Our governance structure is empowered to ensure accountability and sustainable value creation, using the various tools listed below:

SAFMH Governance Structure



OUR GOVERNANCE

SAFMH is committed to ethical conduct, transparency and adherence to the relevant regulations and policies applicable to NPOs. Our governance structure is empowered to ensure accountability and sustainable value creation, using the various tools listed below:



Constitution updated and stamped by the NPO Directorate



NPO Report submitted annually and status updated



Tax Clearance Certificate/ Letter of Good Standing for all tax compliance requirements



BBBEE Certificate (including letter issued by auditors)



NPO certificate



Submission of Annual Report



POPIA compliance and registration with the regulator



Employment contracts aligned with labour legislation



Updated Employee Guide



Audited Financial Statements

OUR FINANCES

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2026 R	2025 R
ASSETS		
Non-Current Assets		
Property, plant, and equipment	1,877,768	1,910,306
Investments	17,742,539	17,954,675
	19,620,307	19,864,981
Current Assets		
Trade and other receivables	36,830	62,934
Cash and cash equivalents	212,687	149,586
	249,517	212,520
Total Assets	19,869,824	20,077,501
Equity and Liabilities		
Equity		
Retained earnings	19,269,501	19,386,058
Current Liabilities		
Trade and other payables	600,323	691,443
Total Equity and Liabilities	19,869,824	20,077,501

OUR FINANCES

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME		
	2026 R	2025 R
Revenue	4,234,234	5,904,990
Other income	1,378,447	1,439,216
Operating costs	(6,145,023)	(6,415,723)
Operating loss	(532,342)	928,484
Finance income	415,785	571,229
Surplus/Deficit before tax	(116,557)	1,499,713
Tax expense	0	0
Surplus/Deficit for the year	(116,557)	1,499,713

Tom Davies, SAFMH's treasurer:
“Year on Year revenue has declined, and going forward this is the millstone around our neck. Expenses were well controlled, giving an outstanding result for the year.”

THANK YOU

Thank you for believing in our work and supporting SAFMH. Your generosity changes lives. Thank you for powering our mission.



Two residents from Gordonia smile for the camera as part of the Positive Mental Health Photo Library



000-238 NPO
PBO 130003099

OUR CONTACTS :



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267 Long Avenue, Ferndale



www.safmh.org



**SA Federation for
Mental Health**

