



Social Dialogue Forum

Living Out Your Potential:

A Focus on Mental Health, Critical to Organization Success and
Wellbeing

Friday, 31st May 2024

Forum 2024 Report



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	2
Introduction	3
Report Summary	4
Achievements of the Forum	5
Panel 1: Balancing Act: Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health and Performance in the Workplace	6
Panel 2: Balancing Act: Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health and Performance in the Workplace	8
Actionable points	10
Glossary	11
Resources	12

Solid Minds Aspirations



Mission

To provide high-quality, evidence-based expert services to our partners to empower them to live out their potential.



Vision

To help people and organisations transform challenges into life-enhancing opportunities.



Services

Workshops/ Trainings
Counselling &
Coaching
Research
Wellness
Engagements



Acknowledgements

Dear Participants,

We, at Solid Minds, would like to take a moment to extend our utmost gratitude to you for investing your time into attending and participating in the forum, *Focus on Mental Health, critical to Organizational Success and Well-being* on Friday May 31. Your presence and contributions were fundamental to the resounding success of the event.

We left bolstered and energized by your clear enthusiasm for the investment in mental wellbeing of employees and leaders in the workplace. We are grateful for your deeply valuable insights and for collectively fostering an atmosphere for genuine, meaningful discussion that works towards the collective goal of a happier, healthier, more productive workforce.

Once again, thank you for your attendance and we look forward to continuing these conversations with you at the next Solid Minds forum.

We all face difficulties and it is okay not to be okay. Your struggles do not define you, your ability to face and overcome does."

Sam Munderere

Co-founder & CEO, Solid Minds





INTRODUCTION

The inaction of workers in the labor force due to mental illness, such as depression, has been estimated to be responsible for a productivity loss of over a billion USD (PPP 2018) at the national level each year, according to a 2020 systematic review. Solid Minds is working to address this loss by 1) developing an understanding of the interrelated relationship between the wellbeing of individuals and their contributions both in and outside of their role as employees, 2) exchanging knowledge across sectors of best practices to support staff and foster healthy working environments and 3) disassemble the compartmentalized view of the individual as either a student or an employee and recognize that one grows into the other, carrying with them the skills and ideals learned in this first workplace. This was achieved at the forum *“A Focus on Mental Health, critical to Organizational Success and Well-being”*, on Friday, 31st of May, 2024.

We invited representatives from corporations (CEOs, MDs, HR Directors, etc), higher learning institutions, international schools, private sector federation (PSF), international and local organizations together to exchange knowledge from a diverse range of experiences.





This document aspires to summarize this knowledge and to provide actionable recommendations to bring this knowledge into practice in your respective sectors. It is broken down into: findings and key takeaways from each panel, a section with actions that can be taken towards ameliorating mental health of individuals, carers and workplaces. The final section acts as a mental health glossary in order to tackle jargon and make mental health more accessible for non-practitioners.

Section 1 describes the first panel, "**Balancing Act: Exploring the Intersection of Mental Health and Performance in the Workplace**". In which panelists discussed how, in today's fast-paced and demanding work environments, mental health in the workplace is critical for both individual and organizational success. They delved into the complexities of fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace culture that prioritizes mental well-being. The experts also demonstrated how investing in the wellbeing of a company's workforce, through policy and workplace culture, ripples out past the health of the employees to the health of the company.



Section 2 explores the second panel, "**Understanding the Ripple Effects of Mental Health in Schools**". The panelists investigated how mental health challenges in schools can reverberate beyond the classroom walls, affecting homes, communities, and society at large. Through this lens, the panel examined the interconnectedness of mental health in different domains of life and underscored the importance of holistic approaches to address these issues effectively. This perspective allowed for the panel to extend the discussion to not only the using the school environment as an opportunity to help shape future leaders and innovators to live happy, healthy, productive lives, but also supporting those that care and nurture them.



Achievements of the Forum

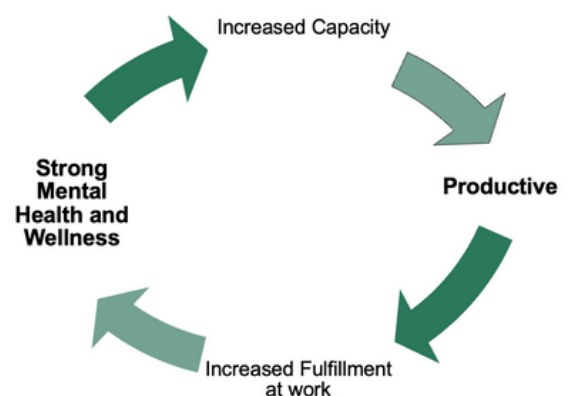
Raising Awareness of Mental Health as a Priority

Increase the understanding among participants of the significance of mental health as adults, positioning it as vital for individual and organizational success and well-being.

While recognizing that having strong mental health and wellbeing starts as a child in schools and in our family homes.

Exploring the Interconnectability of Mental Health and Productivity

Recognizing the cyclical nature of an individual's mental wellness and productivity. For example, an employee with strong mental health will have a more productive work life. Furthermore, an individual with a productive, positive work life will have stronger mental health.



Promoting Holistic Perspective

Expanding the view to encompass not only the worker, but the person they are in family and communities.

Shedding light on how workplace experiences affect individuals' broader lives.



Foster Collaboration

Facilitate the exchange of ideas, experience and best practices across sectors

Catalyze Action

Inspire participants to take proactive steps towards creating supportive environments for mental health in their respective workplaces and communities.

See actionable points (pg.#) for potential next steps

PANEL 1: BALANCING ACT: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE IN THE WORKPLACE



Facilitated by Solid Minds', Clinical Psychologist, Freya Zaninka De Clercq, panelists Celine Uwineza (Co-founder of Right Seat), Poullet Mpano (Director of People & Culture at Irembo), and Bruce Nelly Nkusi (Senior Underwriter at Eden Care Healthcare Rwanda), disclosed their experience and expertise on the topic of employee wellbeing and its relationship to organizational success. Ms. Uwineza utilized her experience to discuss the humanizing evolution of the department of personnel to Human Resources.

She stated that for business leaders and owners thinking about wellbeing is a must. However despite its importance to the company, as illustrated by Ms. Mpano, there are barriers to providing care in this setting.



“Everything starts with awareness. The more we talk about it, comment about it, and provide feedback about it, that's how it gets ingrained into how we work, how we behave and it comes with a change of mindset.”

Poullet Mpano (Director of People & Culture at Irembo)



Barriers to Care

- self-stigma, when an individual internalized shame in relation to their mental health struggles.
- The employee not feeling like they have the time to spend on their own mental health or not thinking it is worth their time.
- Not feeling comfortable disclosing personal information and experiences in a work setting.
- The expense to the individual to seek help outside of work



Mr. Nkusi discussed how removing the cost and providing confidential access to mental health support via an insurance company can act as a solution to some of these barriers. Additionally, by providing support early, not only reduces the cost of care, but also catches the individual before their health deteriorates and affects their productivity within the company.

Ms. Mpano confirmed that the utilization of such a system, though originally had slow uptake, resulted in overwhelmingly positive feedback. She explained that the effects of the intervention reached as far as decreasing employee attrition, increased the capacity of the workforce to go the extra mile when needed, increased employee engagement with other activities such as surveys, and attaching higher quality staff to the business



Celine Uwineza (Co-founder of Right Seat)

This is because Individuals want to work for organizations that create an environment for them to thrive in.

Through prioritizing the strengthening and protection of employee mental health - by recognizing and addressing mental health challenges, promoting resilience, and cultivating environments where employees can thrive - these companies were able to see the profound impact on individual and therefore organizational performance.

KEY TAKEAWAYS PANEL 1

- Companies and organizations are constructed from people. Healthy employees lead to a healthy company.
 - Seeing wellness as “a must” is pivotal to achieving these goals
 - This can be achieved through both big and small policies
- There are many complex barriers that may prevent an employee from engaging with support.
 - Understanding the employees by creating healthy lines of communication and creating policies that bridge these barriers is important.



PANEL 2: BALANCING ACT: EXPLORING THE INTERSECTION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND PERFORMANCE IN THE WORKPLACE



Nadiya Tucker, Solid Minds Senior Clinical Program Manager, guided the discussion with Dr. Alice Karekezi (University Lecturer & Parent), Alphonse Nshimiyimana (Placement, Transition and Partnerships Officer at the University of Rwanda), and Bruno Tayeb (General Manager at Happy Hearts) on how we can shape future leaders to be happy, healthy and productive, starting with the school environment.

Mr. Nshimiyimana illuminated that the current school environment is competitive, stressful and not conducive to learning and growing in a healthy way. Despite this the panel discussed what a fantastic opportunity the school environment is for imparting skills for communication and self care to ensure positive wellbeing in later life, especially when students enter the workforce.



Alphonse Nshimiyimana (placement, Transition and Partnerships Officer at the University of Rwanda)



Specifically, Mr. Tayeb explained methods for imparting effective conflict management skills in children, which they can carry with them into adulthood. Dr. Karakezi also recognised that the care for those providing the care is often overlooked and needs to also be prioritized.



Bruno Tayeb (General Manager at Happy Hearts)

As a panel, they were able to remove the compartments that we, as a society, have placed around our lives, for example work, school and home. This exposed the reality of the interconnected relationship of these spaces as we move through them. This discussion promotes a holistic perspective of the people we engage with in our respective work environments everyday, and issues a call to recognize each other as complex beings who, outside of the work we perform, hold other responsibilities in our homes and communities.

"Wellbeing is not only about one-on-one support. It is not only a medicalized one. It is also something social, we can learn to practice for ourselves, for selfcare and for our surroundings"

Dr. Alice Karekezi (University Lecturer & Parent)



KEY TAKEAWAYS PANEL 2

- The education system is shaping the future workforce and leaders. Providing students, teachers and parents with the skills can shape and heal future generations.
- It is fundamental that we care for carers and equip them fully for their important role as parents or educators.
- We need to carry a holistic perspective when we engage with our peers. We all operate in multiple spaces and what we receive in one can be carried to another.

ACTION POINTS



These are a set of actions that have been curated by this forum and can be utilized in the business and homes of the attendees.

Work Based Support

- *Create safe spaces for employees to have their voices and concerns heard*
 - *Ex: Surveys, Suggestion box*
- *Training/discussion session on well-being topics for both managers and employees*
 - *Ex: Stress management, self-care, work-life balance*
- *Create a culture that respects work life balance*
 - *Ex: formalize barriers, such as: not emailing out of office hours, leaving work on time, taking breaks*
 - *It is important that leaders set an example*
- *Normalized and regular check-ins for staff to see how they are doing.*
- *Dedicated wellbeing advocates/champions within the staff*
 - *This individual would can act as a signposter*
- *Plan wellness activities within the budget of the organization*
- *Create wellness initiatives into the culture of the organization*
 - *Ex: Destress/community days, normalize taking sick leave/ annual leave*

School Based Support

- *Positive mental health activities/initiative to be embedded in the school program*
- *Ensuring that leaders and educators are well informed about mental health and mental illnesses and how challenges manifest in the school setting*
- *Parent workshop/support that provides psychoeducation and skills to support their children in learning and life.*
- *Put measures in place to detect conditions/ learning challenges early on*

Clinically focused Support

- *Provide an employee assistance program to staff*
- *Allow for time off to attend therapy sessions*
- *Include mental health services in the life/medical insurance cover*
- *Put measures in place to detect conditions/ challenges early on*

GLOSSARY



BURNOUT

Burnout is a psychological syndrome emerging as a response to chronic interpersonal stressors during work. The three key dimensions of this response are an overwhelming exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and detachment from the work, and a sense of ineffectiveness and lack of accomplishment” (Maslach & Leiter, 2016)

EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION

“A situation where, owing to lack of energy, workers perceive they are no longer able to participate on an emotional level.” (Montero et al, 2009)

PSYCHO-EDUCATION

“Process of teaching clients with mental illness and their family members about the nature of the illness, including its etiology, progression, consequences, prognosis, treatment, and alternatives.” (Sarkhal et al., 2020)

STIGMA

“The endorsement of prejudicial attitudes, negative emotional responses, discriminatory behaviors, and biased social structures towards members of a subgroup” (Mak, et al. 2007)

Stigma related actions:

- labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination of the stigmatized individuals in a power situation” (Mak et al., 2007)

SELF-STIGMA

The internalization of the stigma responses from the general public by the target individuals. (Mak et al., 2007)

STRESS

A natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being.” (WHO, 2023)

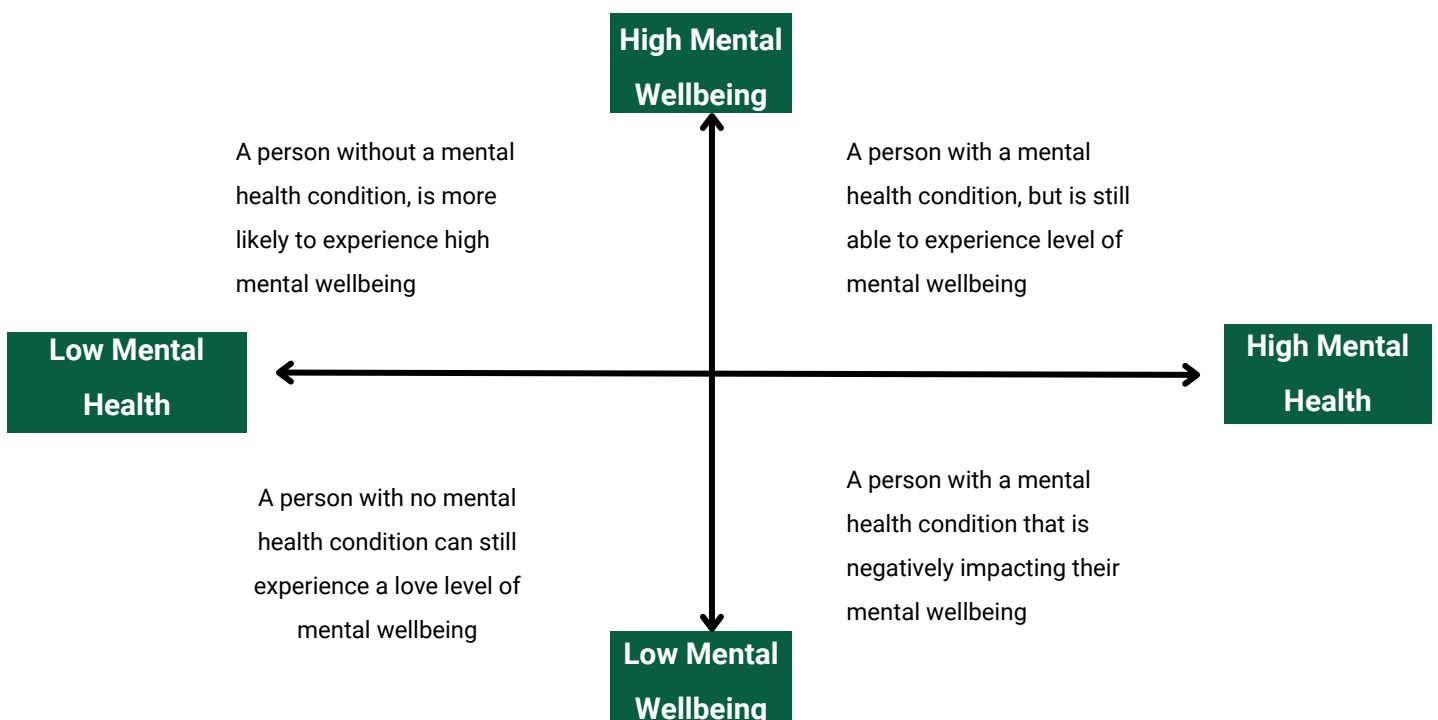


Wellbeing, Mental Health, and Mental Illness:

Differences and relationships

Term	Defintion	Example
Wellness	Well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning.	An individual can experience high or low wellness regardless of if they have a disorder.
Mental Health	Mental health is not the absence of mental illness, but rather a constance complex dynamic continuum that exists within everyone (WHO, 2022)	To be mentally healthy: A state of wellbeing in which an individual realizes his/her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community" (WHO, 2022)
Mental Illness/ Disorder	"A mental illness is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling, behavior or mood. These conditions deeply impact day-to-day living and may also affect the ability to relate to others" (NAMI, 2024)	A mental illness is a condition that an individual has, rather than a state of being. To have a mental illness is not dissimilar to having a physical illness

Wellbeing Vs Mental Health



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