

Support mental health awareness initiatives

Silence is not always the best answer, especially if it comes at the cost of one's mental health. And yet too often, we see members of various communities choosing to bottle in emotions, struggles and daily life pressure for many reasons among which is the fallacy that talking about one's struggles is a sign of weakness, especially for men. However for some, appropriate help is unavailable or unknown.

It is therefore good that June is always highlighted as men's mental health awareness month. While mental health awareness cannot be left to a singular month, having a set time where it is given extra attention is key in the fight to improve and take care of mental health.

According to data released last year by the World Health Organisation, "anxiety and depressive disorders are the most common types of mental health disorders among both men and women and suicide remains a devastating outcome, claiming an estimated 727 000 lives in 2021 alone. It is a leading cause of death among young people across all countries and socioeconomic contexts."

The issue:

Mental health

Our view:

This campaign involves us all. The onus is not only on institutions of learning, employers and mental health organisations to seek out those amongst us that might not be doing well, it's on us all. Look out for your mental health and that of the people in your circle of influence.

The Ministry of Health's State of Uganda Population Report 2025 under the theme "Mental Health: A Silent Emergency" also estimates that about 24.2 percent of adults and 22.9 percent of children are affected by mental health conditions. And yet fewer than one in 10 people who need care receive appropriate support.

As we take a deep dive into the second half of the year, it is important to take a moment and check to see that mental health is not being sacrificed at the altar of hard work, provision, responsibility and making ends meet, political ambition, meeting company key performance indicators and other fleeting targets and goals.

To keep the fight for good mental health going, awareness is key. Communities cannot change what they don't understand. Equally important is a multi-pronged approach and collective participation from all stakeholders.

For instance, community leaders must promote initiatives that provide free mental health help for men but also for the rest of the populace. Employers must have provision for mental health promoting programmes for their staff, religious institutions must provide conducive environment for the community to put their mental well-being at the forefront, sermons should carry the message too. Schools should have trained counsellors for their learners and government must treat it as the important issue it is.

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