A Recap Report for EMRO
About EMPWR

EMPWR is a tech start-up developing an engagement-based platform solution with the sole aim of reinventing the future of wellbeing in MENA. Founded by Ally Salama as the region’s first mental health magazine in 2019, today it has earned recognition by Harvard, WHO and the United Nations in its efforts to provide and facilitate mental health solutions for major stakeholders in the ecosystem, advising government and corporate entities on best practices in creating safe environments where leaders of tomorrow can emerge & thrive.
Our Task for WMHD

Our aim was to introduce a youth-based approach and activation for the EMRO’s division for the federation, helping to bring a more diverse dialogue towards presenting solutions and tackling current mental health challenges in the region.

We achieved this by involving various stakeholders in the region, including service providers, executives of the federation and youth on the front lines working towards the common goal: making mental health more accessible in today’s digital world. We named our engagement: Making Mental Health More Accessible for Youth in MENA.

Thank you to our partners:
An Overview Of Our Agenda

- Introduction
- Key Words from WFMH Executives
- Introducing EMRO Service Providers & Partners
- Youth Discussion/Panel
- Further Introductions by EMRO Service Providers & Partners

Click on the image to play WMHD 2021 EMRO’s Youth Panel 😊
Participating Executives

Dr. Gabriel Ivbijaro - WFMH Secretary General
Dr. Ingrid Daniels - WFMH President
Dr. Nasser Loza - WMH President-Elect & Incoming President
Dr. Brigitte Khoury - VP, WFMH Eastern Mediterranean Region

WFMH Board Members and Executives carefully addressed youth in MENA their message surrounding this year's theme: Mental Health in An Unequal World, starting the importance of youth involvement in creating innovative solutions to tackle the mental health challenges facing today’s world, during and emerging out of COVID-19.
Participating Youth Leaders

- **Ally Salama**: Forbes 30 Under 30 Social Entrepreneur, Founder & CEO, EMPWR, Youth Mental Health Consultant, Speaker, Workshop Facilitator and Host of Apple’s #1 Leadership Podcast, "Empathy Always Wins".

- **Mahmoud Khedr**: Egyptian Immigrant in the USA, Social Entrepreneur & Co-Founder and CEO of FloraMind, an organization with the vision of empowering young people to flourish through their social, emotional, and mental health. Mahmoud previously worked at Facebook, Google, Echoing Green, and The NYC Mayor’s Office of Tech & Innovation. Everything Mahmoud has been involved throughout his career has been to end unnecessary suffering and empower people to flourish.

- **Yavuz Selim Topbas**: Yavuz Selim Topbas, Student President of the Toronto District School Board, representing 250,000 students as their leader. He is skilled in policy development, research, pedagogical development, and passionate about finance, corporate social responsibility, transportation policy amongst many more.

- **Yasmine El Garhy**: Egyptian-Canadian Yasmine El Garhy, she is the youngest certified life and addiction recovery coach by the ICF in the MENA & current therapist in the making.
Key Points Of Discussion

• Developing youth-run civil society organizations in EMRO region would be an incredible step in evolving the mental health sector.

• Developing regulatory and government policies that can support and empower youth in MENA.

• May of today’s current policies haven’t been adapted to the mental health state of youth today.

• Opening the discussion on the cost of the mental health burden in EMRO-based countries (billion of dollars), starting with providing a regulatory framework - providing schools with social workers aiding youth with the resources and tools needed.

• Looking at lost hours of labour and productivity: viewing mental health from a GDP perspective - that would help influence government upon intervening in tackling today’s mental health crisis.
Key Points Of Discussion

• We have a very infrastructural base and cultural norms which are imperative when thinking about building solutions for mental health in MENA. Using Eurocentric models will not be effective, yet we need to be creative in our approach towards designing solutions around accessibility.

• Thinking about the community approach and policy approach in developing an ecosystem in MENA.

• The issue in policy model is the adult centric model - which needs to be altered towards a youth centric via a diversified lens and approach.

• Co-create the policies around mental health - including the youth's voice in developing policies ensuring their needs are being met.
Key Points Of Discussion

• Viewing our mental health challenge from an alternative lens: investing in infrastructure & space (jobs and community centres - government funded initiatives where youth can lead) relating directly to the wellbeing of youth in the region.

• Mental health challenges cannot exist in silo. We need to look at the environmental challenges and the holistic lens of challenges, be it systemic or socio-economic. We need to view how our mental health challenges are impacted by all factors of our society.

• Finally, we need to think about those people who will never have access to today’s Eurocentric model of mental health services provided via health teach? How will we be able to access those in remote location with little infrastructure and disposable income? How will we continue pushing forward to reaching them?
Points of Discussion by WFMH Executives:

1. WFMH is an all-rounded association aiming to support all stakeholders of the mental health ecosystem.
2. The federation has always concerned itself to the rights of people to get quality mental healthcare.
3. The federation has always concerned itself to the rights of people to get the adequate support and advocate for their place in society.
4. Highlighting on the care received and not the care given. Looking at the care accessed and not just on the current care provided.
5. Today’s young people are much more powerful with the digital tools and social media reach across populations across the internet.
6. It’s no longer an us vs them dilemma. It’s all about respecting the rights of those with mental disabilities, and that could be anyone reading this.
The role of lived experience in tackling inequalities and improving mental health in mental health services and beyond.

PROFESSOR ZAHIR IDRANI
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Bradford and Chair of the Bradford Council Economic Recovery Board

KEY MESSAGES
- Let’s characterise the pandemic as a health, education, skills and economic crisis to frame a mindset change in the way we view what we have all endured, whilst not forgetting those that did not.
- Let’s stop naming down the tremendous efforts made by all students whether in schools, normal education or higher education during what has been an unprecedented crisis, which have transformed into different sections of our communities. Instead, let’s create evidence and inspire our children, our relatives, our future, so in one way or another, we will all become dependant and learn for our very future.
- Let’s take the opportunities that have resulted from covid to reassess what we do, how we do it, for what purpose. Excellence takes many forms, so let’s evolve our strategies, processes and practices to achieve our objectives whilst maintaining quality and standards.

Supporting young people and promoting their self-esteem during the COVID-19 pandemic

PROFESSOR ZAHIR IDRANI
Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Bradford and Chair of the Bradford Council Economic Recovery Board

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Urgent action needed to scale-up mental health services in an unequal world

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Together we can bring youth more access to mental health support.